

Inspection report

July 2004

Supporting People Programme

North Tyneside Borough Council

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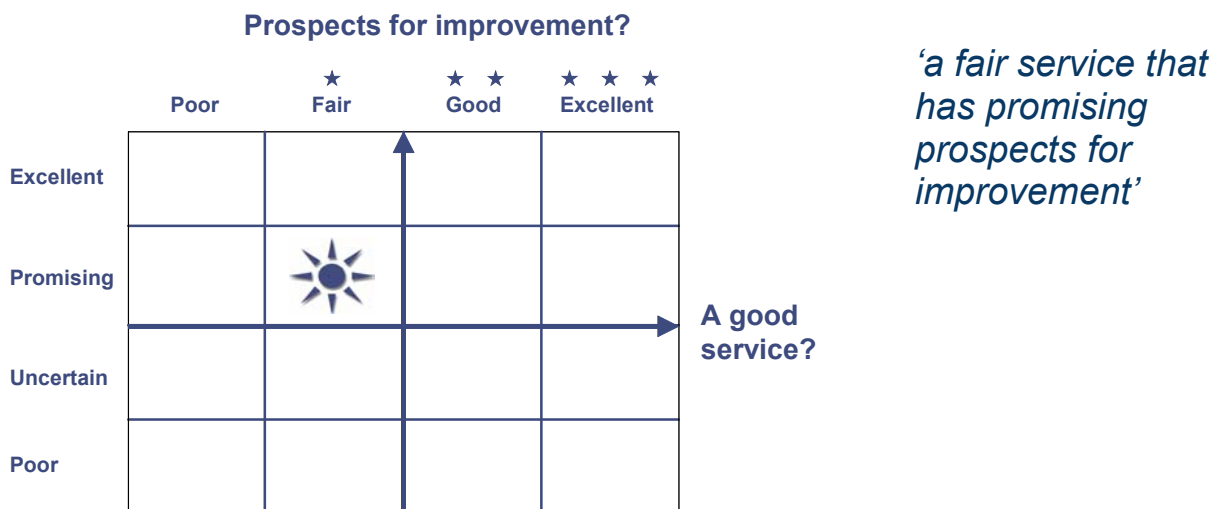
Summary

- 1 North Tyneside Borough Council is a metropolitan council in the North East of England. The population is 191,300 of which 3.04 per cent are from minority ethnic communities (all groups other than white British) which is 25 per cent of the national average.
- 2 The council is Conservative led with an elected Mayor and cabinet form of governance. The council employs 9,000 staff across all services. The council has a gross budget of £449.5 million for 2004/05; this includes £100.7 million for social services and £38.4 million for housing.
- 3 '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. 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.
- 4 North Tyneside Borough Council was inspected in the second year of the Supporting People programme and is among the 19 administering local authorities considered by the ODPM to have the highest service costs. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.
- 5 The budget for the Supporting People programme for 2004/05 is £9,209,920, a fall of 0.5 per cent from the previous year (after applying 2.5 per cent efficiency savings). The highest cost service is £1,684 a week for accommodation support for a person with a learning disability. The lowest cost service is 70p per week for community alarms. The council receives an additional administration grant for the programme of £214,861 for 2004/05.

Scoring the service

- 6 We have assessed North Tyneside Borough Council as providing a ‘fair’, one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Scoring chart¹: North Tyneside Borough Council - Supporting People Programme



What works well

- 7 During our inspection we found a number of positive features in the way that the Supporting People programme has been implemented to date. These include:
- ◆ The programme has been implemented successfully, with providers having interim contracts and receiving accurate payments made on time.
 - ◆ The relationship with service providers is positive, they are increasingly involved in the programme and have indicated high levels of satisfaction with general information and support from the Supporting People team.
 - ◆ Governance arrangements are increasingly effective, through a new partnership protocol, with the commissioning body and core strategy group working effectively and an adequately resourced Supporting People team delivering an improving programme.
 - ◆ The service review programme focuses on high cost services and is suitably resourced with additional help from agency and external staff. External staff provide independent reviews of internal services. There is a robust framework, including a costings workbook necessary to undertake value for money assessments.
 - ◆ A solid policy framework is being established with the production of a comprehensive draft Supporting People business plan, consultation strategy, risk management strategy and risk register.
 - ◆ A clear framework has been produced to develop a five year Supporting People strategy.
 - ◆ The Supporting People website is easy to use and provides comprehensive local information and useful links to other organisations. A service provider directory and general leaflets for Supporting People and charging provide useful information.

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

- ◆ A fairer charging policy is in place and the fairer charging assessment team send information to potential applicants and provide assessments on fairer charging and other benefits upon request.

Areas for improvement

- 8 However, we found a number of weaknesses with the Supporting People programme that need to be addressed. These include:
- ◆ The cost effectiveness and value for money of existing Supporting People services has not yet been demonstrated. Although it is accepted that some contracts may be inappropriate and ineligible costs are being funded no savings have been identified through service reviews. The council has not taken the opportunity to negotiate immediate savings with providers.
 - ◆ The commissioning body did not fully consider all available options before deciding to pass a 'no inflation' 2004/05 budget increase to all service providers. No criteria for providing increases in cases of demonstrable financial hardship were agreed.
 - ◆ The service review programme only recently started and although now adequately resourced, no final reports have been presented to the commissioning body with recommendations for any service re-configuration.
 - ◆ The research and identification of local housing support needs and gaps in existing provision is weak. Joint commissioning of services to meet identified needs and agreed housing support priorities is only just developing.
 - ◆ The involvement of users, carers and advocates in the programme is currently weak, although this is being addressed.
 - ◆ Work to ensure equalities and diversity issues with 'hard to reach' groups is only just beginning and there is no over-arching corporate strategy. The council has not got clear plans to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 9 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has promising prospects for delivering further improvements. We found the following strengths:

What works well

- ◆ The council's corporate track record of responding positively to serious weaknesses of financial and performance management identified during comprehensive performance assessment.
- ◆ Supporting People corporate objectives, partner priorities and the aims of the community strategy are clearly integrated.
- ◆ The council, partners and providers responded to this inspection openly and honestly and demonstrated a positive attitude towards improving services.
- ◆ Governance arrangements are generally effective with strong leadership demonstrated by the council, social services directorate, commissioning body and manager for Supporting People to improving services.
- ◆ The recent development of key policy documents, particularly the Supporting People business plan, provides a solid basis for future improvement.
- ◆ The service review framework includes robust procedures to assess the value for money of Supporting People services.
- ◆ The relationship with partners and service providers is increasingly positive and inclusive.
- ◆ The recent pace of change and track record with improving Supporting People arrangements is impressive.

Areas for improvement

- 10 There are, however, some areas in which the council needs to improve. These include:
- ◆ no service reviews have been completed and the value for money assessment framework has not been tested;
 - ◆ the lack of early progress means many recent improvements are not yet fully operational;
 - ◆ the commissioning body has limited experience of taking difficult decisions about future services, including re-configuration, although the commissioning body is made up of senior managers with experience of making difficult decisions;
 - ◆ there has been no regular performance and financial monitoring reports to the council, commissioning body and core strategy group with evidence of clear action being taken as a result;
 - ◆ local needs for housing support have not been identified and priorities agreed to address them; and
 - ◆ there is no clear corporate strategy to ensure diversity and needs of 'hard to reach' groups are identified and met.

Recommendations

- 11 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:

Within three months from the publication of this report:

- ◆ Take action to review the eligibility of costs and contracts which are not subject to imminent service review, undertaking validation visits where necessary. Identify savings, and with providers negotiate any amendments to existing interim contracts prior to full service review.
- ◆ Review the 2004/05 budget and identify any potential financial difficulties being experienced by providers. Plan how the under spend for 2003/04 can best be utilised for benefit of the vulnerable people of North Tyneside. Ensure priorities are ranked.
- ◆ Strengthen performance management and reporting arrangements of the Supporting People programme by clearly defining the role that councillors should play through scrutiny committee arrangements and by producing regular reports to analyse performance information.
- ◆ The commissioning body should ensure that the service review timetable is resourced and adhered to, and that services are re-configured, as necessary, to ensure that support services are housing related and provide value for money.
- ◆ Take corporate action to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Within six months:

- ◆ Ensure that the framework for delivering the five year strategy is resourced and adhered to, ensuring that:
 - ◆ providers, partners, stakeholders and user representatives are involved; and
 - ◆ housing support needs, including those of black and minority ethnic (BME) and other 'hard to reach' groups are identified and suitable provision is prioritised for these needs within the plan.
- ◆ Develop and integrate service delivery and corporate diversity strategies to ensure that all groups of users, potential users, community and advocacy groups are identified, and have access to Supporting People services.
- ◆ Implement effective arrangements for involving users, carers and advocacy groups including 'hard to reach' groups who do not currently receive or are underprovided for in relation to housing related support.
- ◆ Introduce effective and integrated joint commissioning arrangements for housing support services.

Within 12 months

- ◆ Develop and deliver improved services on the ground in response to identified needs that plug the gaps in housing support provision for client groups who are currently not provided for.

- 12 Report the findings of this report to the council, commissioning body, staff, partners, providers, stakeholders and users setting out proposals for addressing these recommendations and all other weaknesses in this report within 12 months.
- 13 We would like to thank the staff of North Tyneside Borough Council, particularly Beverley Gosling and Andrea Carmen, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

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Report

Context

- 14 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

- 15 North Tyneside Borough Council is a metropolitan council in the North East of England. The population is 191,300 of which 3.04 per cent are from minority ethnic communities (all groups other than white British) which is 25 per cent lower than the national average. The population has declined by 1.5 per cent since 1991 compared to a loss of 4.4 per cent regionally and a gain of 2.5 per cent nationally. A decrease in the proportion of children has been matched by an increase in older people. Nearly 18 per cent of the population are 65 years of age or over compared to 16.3 per cent nationally.
- 16 Unemployment stands at 3.6 per cent compared with the national average of 2.6 per cent and the area is ranked 79 out of 354 on the government's index of deprivation. The coastal strip is relatively affluent but 26 per cent of the population live in the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the country. Major employers in the area are from the manufacturing, retail/wholesale, health and social care, education, finance and call centre sectors.

The council

- 17 The council comprises 60 councillors. The Conservative Party has 27 councillors; the Labour Party has 26 and the Liberal Democrats 7. The Conservative Party governs the business of the council through an elected Mayor and cabinet.
- 18 The council has a gross budget of £449.5 million for 2004/05; this includes £100.7 million for social services and £38.4 million for housing. The council's overall net revenue expenditure for the year 2003/04 was £213 million of which the budget for health and social care was £48 million. The council employs 9,000 staff across all services.
- 19 The council has worked with its partners to develop priorities. They appear in the community plan (the shared plan) and are:
- ◆ to have more opportunities to be listened to, make a difference and be kept informed;
 - ◆ to live in a clean and pleasant environment;
 - ◆ to have improved transport provision;
 - ◆ to live in a safe and crime free neighbourhood;
 - ◆ to have access to safe, decent, affordable housing;
 - ◆ the creation of more jobs and training opportunities to encourage access to work and entrepreneurship;
 - ◆ to have access to a wide range of learning opportunities;
 - ◆ to have improved health and health care for those in our community; and
 - ◆ to enjoy access to a wide range of leisure and cultural activities.
- 20 These are further developed in the corporate performance plan and clearly recognise the importance of Supporting People by the council's priorities to:
- ◆ support all sections of the community including those with diverse needs; and

- ◆ invest resources in our young people.

The service

- 21 The council acts as the administering local authority for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in their area.
- 22 The Supporting People programme subject to inspection is designed to meet the housing related support needs of vulnerable people.
- 23 The grant allocation for the Supporting People programme for 2004/05 is £9,209,920 a fall of 0.5 per cent from the previous year (after applying 2.5 per cent efficiency savings). Adding £292,650 under spend from 2003/04 gives a total available budget for 2004/05 of £9,502,571. The highest cost service is £1,684 a week for accommodation support for a person with a learning disability. The lowest cost service is 70p per week for community alarms. There are 55 providers and 183 Supporting People services. The council receives an additional administration grant for the programme of £214,861 for 2004/05.

How good is the service?

- 24 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:
- ◆ Governance of the programme.
 - ◆ Delivery arrangements including strategy and needs assessments.
 - ◆ Financial monitoring and management of the grant.
 - ◆ Service reviews carried out by the administering authority.
 - ◆ Value for money.
 - ◆ User involvement, partnerships with providers and others.
 - ◆ Customer care, access to services and information.
 - ◆ Diversity.
 - ◆ Outcomes for service users.

Governance of the programme

- 25 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme:
- ◆ Accountable officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
 - ◆ Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
 - ◆ Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
 - ◆ Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
 - ◆ Councillors: approve key decisions of the commissioning body.
 - ◆ Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.
- 26 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 areas each district council is entitled to one representative. Each named representative has one vote although the administering local authority has a veto where there is a demonstrable financial risk to the administering local authority.

- 27 A new partnership protocol has strengthened governance arrangements which are now operating effectively although some weaknesses remain. Previous weaknesses with the commissioning body, core strategy group, accountable officer, administering authority and an under staffed Supporting People team restricted the development of effective Supporting People arrangements.
- 28 The comprehensive partnership protocol details the commissioning, decision-making and administrative arrangements that underpin the Supporting People programme. This was developed by the commissioning body and core strategy group and was sent to partners and providers for consultation and comment. It has been agreed by the commissioning body and is due to be sent to the council's cabinet and partners' decision making bodies for final approval. There is already evidence of improved working arrangements.

Administering Local Authority

- 29 The council is not effectively fulfilling its role as the administering authority. The role of elected members is unclear. This will be resolved by a memorandum of understanding between the council and commissioning body in the partnership protocol.
- 30 Although regular briefing from the director of social services has kept the Mayor (who is also portfolio holder for health and social care) advised of Supporting People issues, most councillors have little understanding. There has been no regular, formal reporting to cabinet or relevant scrutiny group. Despite receiving some reports and training, the council generally lacks awareness of Supporting People issues. The partnership protocol proposes three elected members champion the Supporting People programme and receive briefing papers from the commissioning body prior to any cabinet consideration. However, there is no formal requirement for regular performance monitoring on key issues to scrutiny groups.

Commissioning Body

- 31 The commissioning body is now generally effective although some weaknesses remain. It has clear terms of reference and all key commissioning partners are members. Meetings and representation have been inconsistent since the introduction of Supporting People arrangements, largely due to internal social services re-structuring. The probation partner has been consistently represented. Attendance by health representatives (from the primary care trust) has been inconsistent, although they are now fully represented on the commissioning body and have been active in developing the partnership protocol and risk management strategy.
- 32 Key issues are being addressed and the commissioning body is meeting bi-monthly (rather than quarterly) to develop the Supporting People programme. The commissioning body has not yet been faced with taking difficult decisions such as re-configuring services after service reviews.

Core Strategy Group

- 33 The core strategy group is now operating effectively although a few weaknesses remain.
- 34 We observed an efficient and effective meeting. There was a clear understanding of issues and some healthy debate with evidence of provider representative views being taken on board. Reports were presented clearly, positively, openly, confidently and debate was encouraged. The agenda comprised key issues necessary for the core strategy group to give strategic direction. However, the number of reports being considered was too extensive for detailed discussion. Policy reports should have been developed more steadily over the last 18 months.

- 35 There is broad membership of the core strategy group although joint commissioners will only be represented when posts have been filled. Membership includes two provider representatives, although providers we met at a focus group were unaware of this representation. Currently there is no formal mechanism to ensure that provider views are represented.
- 36 Reports to the core strategy group do not always clearly state if a decision is required. Officers present reports and feedback from the core strategy group to the commissioning body although there is no formal report highlighting key issues and recommendations requiring commissioning body approval.

Accountable Officer

- 37 Since the inception of the Supporting People programme there have been three accountable officers, including the current post holder, who is the strategic and central services manager. The director of social services as chair of the commissioning body has covered the role between post holder appointments and during a manager's recent absence. The lack of stability has limited the direction and progress of the Supporting People programme since inception although recent progress has been considerable.
- 38 The Supporting People programme is delivered through the Supporting People team. This is considered in the next section.

Delivery arrangements

Supporting People team

- 39 The Supporting People team is now operating effectively. Low staffing levels during the implementation period restricted the development of the Supporting People programme. The Supporting People team, correctly, focused on legacy services, ensuring providers received prompt payments under interim contracts. Insufficient resources prevented other services developing as detailed in the remainder of this report.
- 40 The team was under staffed due to recruitment problems and there was an under spend with the Supporting People administration grant. This has been addressed. A new director of social services became operationally responsible for Supporting People in September 2002. The Supporting People team was reviewed alongside broader, essential corporate and departmental staff re-structuring.
- 41 A 'steady state' Supporting People team was not fully operational until October 2003 when a new lead officer was recruited. The team comprises five staff and shares an administrative post with the social care contract team. An additional team leader post is to be advertised. Extra support has also been provided for service reviews, commissioning and research work.
- 42 The team has responded positively and enthusiastically to more focused leadership and direction. There are regular team meetings and Supporting People staff have been appraised under the corporate performance and development review system, and also have monthly one-to-one meetings with their manager to ensure priorities and personal development needs are addressed. An 'initial plan' was used to focus on team priorities between December 2003 and June 2004 when a draft Supporting People business plan was produced.
- 43 Evidence from our survey of service providers and from a forum with providers held during the course of the inspection shows that they value the support and clear guidance that they receive from the team.
- 44 The team has a clear sense of purpose but the recent pace of change has not allowed new procedures to be fully implemented. There are still some skills gaps which aim to be addressed through personal development reviews.

Five year strategy

- 45 Strategic direction has been weak due to the lack of Supporting People team capacity to agree priorities to meet identified local needs. A shadow Supporting People strategy was developed in consultation with providers, users and professional staff through inclusive forums, workshops and newsletters. It was rated as an 'exemplar' by the ODPM.
- 46 Until recently little work was done to develop a five year Supporting People strategy. There is now a clear framework for developing the strategy by the required deadline of March 2005. A project group will oversee development comprising representation from social services, housing, corporate policy unit, research unit and the community and health forum. Key leads will progress each service area. Bi-monthly reports will be presented to the core strategy group and commissioning body, with inclusive forum meetings at key stages.
- 47 Although the framework is comprehensive, including all the essential planning elements, it is not yet operational. The programme has a tight and ambitious timescale to produce the strategy by March 2005. The programme to develop the strategy will be launched at the July inclusive forum.

Existing services

- 48 Understanding the housing needs of the local population is fundamental to ensuring that sustainable services are developed and commissioned. Identification of local housing support needs and prioritisation of programmes to meet those needs is weak.
- 49 The council has recognised this weakness and arranged research to bring together all sources of needs data to inform agreeing new priorities within the five year strategy framework. Supply mapping has recently improved and a 'directory of service providers' produced. However, Supporting People services are still based on legacy provision and there is a lack of robust information on which to base new programmes to ensure that resources are targeted to meet local needs.
- 50 Research to identify gaps in provision is part of the development plan for the five year strategy. This will include qualitative research around the client groups using short/medium term services. The gaps in provision will be prioritised as the strategy develops.
- 51 A 'housing needs and markets survey' for the whole of health and social care is being commissioned and a consultant appointed to develop joint commissioning arrangements. This work will take four to five months and is planned to feed into the draft five year strategy during October/November 2004. Research will focus on existing data, interviews and focus groups with users and provider organisations. It is unlikely that this approach will identify unmet needs from harder to reach groups where there is an existing lack of data and contact with advocacy groups.
- 52 Legacy service provision demonstrates above regional average Supporting People provision for frail older people, offenders, people with physical or sensory disabilities, refugees, generic provision, people with drug problems and also floating support services for people with alcohol problems, people with learning disabilities, women at risk of domestic violence and young people at risk.
- 53 Provision is below regional averages for accommodation based services for people with learning disabilities, single homeless with support needs and floating support services for older people and people with drug problems.
- 54 The probation service has advised that local provision for offenders is 'the best all round provision in Northumbria'. North Tyneside provides the second highest level of supported accommodation for offenders and the second highest level of tenancy support.

- 55 There is no specific supported housing provision for mentally disordered offenders, older people with mental health needs/dementia, people with HIV/AIDS, rough sleepers, travellers and young people leaving care. However, people with these needs may get access to existing provision such as a wider range of young people services offered by specialist providers. Social services also funds 'The Gateway', a project that offers assessment support and advice and a signposting service to vulnerable young people who require accommodation advice.
- 56 The number of people with HIV/AIDS is estimated to be small within North Tyneside and the council advise that there has not been demonstrable need for Supporting People services. This will be considered as part of the five year strategy and will include the type and range of support/care people may need in their homes. General services for HIV/AIDS are considered and provided on a regional basis and any developments will be considered in this context.
- 57 There are no static sites for travellers and no issues have been presented to the council on the need for specific housing and support services. The main support provision would currently be educational needs of children. This group, however, will be given consideration in the development of the five year strategy.
- 58 Commissioning arrangements are generally weak. There is no comprehensive commissioning strategy across health and social care for all groups of services users. Only mental health services have a commissioning strategy with local integrated teams. Social care commissioning arrangements for mental health services are quite sophisticated and have involved service users and carers as part of the framework.
- 59 The council recognises that it needs to develop the social care commissioning framework. A framework has been agreed by the joint social services PCT board for commissioning across North Tyneside. An external consultant is helping to develop this. Four new commissioning manager posts have been established in partnership with health. The 'commissioning needs and market analysis' will form the basis of needs mapping and future commissioning.
- 60 The restriction on Supporting People funding has deterred providers from investing in preparing new development proposals. Pipeline programmes are under developed and based on legacy provision rather than robust identification and prioritisation of current local needs.

'There is no scope to develop new services in a climate where Supporting People teams are going through cost reduction exercises'. - Service provider.

- 61 The council as administering authority has not given direction to assessing strategic relevance, priorities and the eligibility of existing services. The council recognise that some costs within existing services may be ineligible for Supporting People funding. The commissioning body has not yet challenged and re-configured existing services following service reviews to ensure that key priorities are addressed.

Financial monitoring and management

Contracts and payments

- 62 Contracts and payments are being administered efficiently although a few weaknesses remain. ODPM milestones to implementation of Supporting People were achieved. Interim contracts have been given to all providers and all but one have been signed. Payments are generally being made accurately and on time. The majority of service providers we contacted are satisfied with arrangements.
- 63 Interim contracts are in line with the model contract. Although only one contract is unsigned the service is currently being reviewed to comply with grant conditions. The ODPM grant conditions state that services not subject to a signed contract by 31 July 2003 should have been subjected to an immediate service review.

- 64 The council is positively working with the cross regional group on a common steady state contract. There may be a gap between this contract being agreed and the first service reviews being completed and requiring a new contract.
- 65 A postal survey to all providers prior to this inspection found that 85 per cent of respondents were satisfied with payment arrangements. At a provider focus group during inspection, and other meetings with providers, there were similar high levels of satisfaction. Providers confirmed that block gross contract payments are made accurately and promptly. Most providers we contacted during inspection were also satisfied with block subsidy contract payments with schedules being easy to reference for service users.
- 66 The council recognise that some schemes receive Supporting People grant for ineligible tasks, and there may be some inappropriate contracts, receiving block gross payments (for non-chargeable, short term housing support services) whereas support is clearly longer term and block subsidy payments would be more appropriate. This will be addressed through service reviews.
- 67 We found that payment of Supporting People grant to a service was incorrectly stopped due to lack of staff understanding of charging policies and procedures. Payment was stopped when a user of a short term service got a job. These are non-chargeable short term services irrespective of users' income. Staff incorrectly judged that ineligibility for housing benefit prevented the service continuing to receive Supporting People funding.

Financial monitoring and management systems

- 68 Weak financial control and budgetary systems have been recognised and addressed by the council. The council has developed new corporate financial systems as part of the recovery plan for the corporate performance assessment. The council has been rolling out financial budget training and new systems but this has not yet cascaded down to all relevant staff. Until recently financial reporting and management control through the core strategy group and commissioning body was weak.
- 69 The council has robustly addressed previous failures of corporate and social services financial systems. New procedures are open and transparent with clear lines of reporting, delegation and accountability. Budgets are openly published on the council's intranet. The first regular financial report was presented to the June 2004 core strategy group meeting. It is due to be presented to the commissioning body. At the time of inspection it was too early to say whether new procedures are robust and effective.
- 70 The 2003/04 Supporting People budget was under spent by £292,650, 3.16 per cent of the budget. The under spend, added to the 2004/05 budget, means that the target 2.5 per cent efficiency saving for 2004/05 has already been met. In effect the total available budget is £9.5 million, a six per cent increase on the actual expenditure for 2003/04 (even including 2.5 per cent efficiency savings). The commissioning body decided to pass 'no inflation increases' to all providers without fully considering all options, including agreeing criteria to fund increases where a service provider can demonstrate financial hardship. The decision was taken by correspondence with members.
- 71 Positively, the social service department decided not to pass on to other providers any increase in charges for the care-call service it provides. One provider responded:

'I would like to comment on how refreshing it is that North Tyneside Supporting People team and a warden call services have obviously liaised with each other and reached an agreement. Your invitation (to a workshop seminar regarding grant allocation) was most welcome and pleasing in the sense that to date no other local authority (we deal with) has provided such a workshop to discuss this issue and look for a way forward'. - Service provider.

- 72 The necessity for prudence and contingency planning is understandable given uncertainty over future Supporting People funding. However, the decision to apply across the board 'no inflation' increases to providers does not recognise potential financial difficulties faced by some organisations. The use of service reviews to ascertain cost effectiveness, and the opportunity for an early review by those experiencing difficulties provides some safety net, but providers we spoke to were concerned about this decision.
- 73 The administration grant for 2003/04 was under spent by £60,049, or 26 per cent. The budget for 2004/05 (including carrying forward the previous under spend with the ODPM's permission) is £274,861, a 61 per cent increase on 2003/04 expenditure. The budget takes into account increased staffing levels and additional temporary staff/agency fees to carry out service reviews and research. The budget includes the previous under spend which will not be available in future years.
- 74 There has been significant investment though across the social services directorate to support the Supporting People programme including investment in commissioning, performance management, information systems, finance, training and development and improved accommodation which will enhance the directorate's support to the team and its work.
- 75 The council's information technology (IT) system has a clear audit trail for payment transactions. Payment variations and authorisations are generated by one officer, but have to be authorised by one of the two delegated managers before the IT system generates its acceptance and processes the change or makes payment.
- 76 A few providers advised us that there had been some delays in payments of subsidy contracts. The IT and accounting systems are robust but the Supporting People team acknowledge the need to continually remind providers about the need to respond in time to the payment report ten working days limit.
- 77 The council recognised that some contract management schedules were incorrect and has positively undertaken an exercise to up-date and validate scheme information. Schedules have been sent to all providers for correction. The exercise is still underway but is almost complete and has already ensured greater integrity and accuracy of information.
- 78 Apart from an 'initial plan', developed in December 2003, there has been no approved action plan, or development of local performance indicators, which the commissioning body can use to monitor progress. A comprehensive draft Supporting People business plan addresses this and includes local performance indicators on which to monitor performance. This plan is considered in the later section on improvement plans.
- 79 The new partnership protocol sets out clear risk management accountabilities and procedures for financial monitoring including action to be taken in the event of identified over spend or under spend. The protocol also sets out mandatory key performance indicators and service performance indicators for monitoring purposes.
- 80 A thorough and comprehensive 'risk strategy and register' has recently been approved to ensure pro-active action to manage potential problems in the programme. The register has identified all key risks, the impact and probability of the risk occurring, priority and actions to be taken to manage the risk. Regular monitoring reports will be presented to the commissioning body.

Fairer Charging

- 81 Fairer charging arrangements are generally effective but some weaknesses remain.

- 82 A general charging policy was agreed by cabinet in February 2003. A specialist financial benefits and assessment team within social services is available to ensure that users obtain detailed welfare benefit advice and access to 'fairer charging' support for Supporting People. There are positive working relationships with the council's housing benefit section to ensure integrated verification of claims. Workshops have been held with council staff and providers to raise understanding and the level of awareness.
- 83 The charging policy is available on the council's website and leaflets provide fairer charging information. The accessibility of information is considered in a later section.
- 84 Visits were arranged to sheltered accommodation where it was felt that there may be a number of service users not in receipt of housing benefit. This resulted in 15 financial assessments being made of which eight were successful.
- 85 Further work could be done to proactively contact users, carers, advocates and providers where users do not receive housing benefit to promote fairer charging take-up. This is included in the Supporting People business plan.

Achieving Savings

- 86 Systems within the council to ensure Supporting People savings, efficiency and value for money were weak and under developed. This has now been addressed. The question of value for money is considered in more detail in a later section.
- 87 Supporting People budget savings in 2004/05 will be met largely due to carrying forward the 2003/04 under spend. Service reviews will provide the basis for efficiency savings. Contingency provision has been made within social services budgets, through scenario planning, to meet possible further cuts.
- 88 Providers were advised by letter and then at a provider forum, about the 'no inflation' budget increase for 2004/05. Providers of high cost services were also encouraged at that time to begin to examine their costs and seek efficiency savings prior to service review. Positively, the Supporting People team has offered providers the opportunity to discuss issues directly and, where there is concern about financial viability, offer early service review.
- 89 Whilst it is recognised that the council wishes to base any financial decisions on an open, clear and robust framework (in particular service reviews) there is a gap between council requirements and provider expectation and understanding.

Service reviews

- 90 The service review process is central to ensuring that services are effective, provide good value for money and comply with Supporting People grant conditions.

Programme development and implementation

- 91 Limited progress has been made with the service review programme due to delay in starting a programme until additional resources were provided following social services restructuring. Service reviews only commenced in December 2003. To date, 29 reviews are at various stages although none has yet been completed and the complete process cannot be evaluated. The framework for service reviews is generally robust and strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 92 The programme has been reviewed to prioritise high cost services. All providers have been notified of the new timetable and have had the opportunity to comment on the proposal. One high cost provider had the proposed time of review put back by agreement due to resourcing difficulties.
- 93 The programme of reviews is due to be completed by March 2006. Several reviews are at various stages of completion although no final reports have been approved by the commissioning body. The revised programme is ambitious but

we are satisfied that the council is committed to providing temporary additional resources to ensure the programme is met. This includes providing external help to review internal providers to help ensure an equitable approach to both internal and external providers.

- 94 The review framework is thorough and robust. It incorporates a standardised tool-kit and a thorough 'costings workbook' has been developed to assist the assessment of value for money. The 'costings workbook' will be implemented following consultation and applied to current service reviews. The cross regional group is developing a number of standardised systems and documents to assist providers working across boundaries. This has included such things as accreditation.
- 95 Positive elements of the service review framework include:
- ◆ The prioritisation of reviews was based on a robust matrix incorporating using high cost services as its initial basis but also looking at other quality indicators such as numbers of complaints and performance returns.
 - ◆ Other partners have been involved in the review process including staff from the care management team and probation.
 - ◆ Service users and carers are consulted as part of the service review process and accessible formats for leaflets and questionnaires are used.
 - ◆ There is a clear process for carrying out service reviews which is communicated to both providers and service users.
 - ◆ There are mechanisms in place as part of service reviews to explore cost effectiveness in the absence of a full value for money analysis.
 - ◆ The report template produced includes appendices which can be used to give feedback of some of the key messages to both service users and providers pending the production of the full report.
 - ◆ Capacity building and training have been carried out with providers to ensure they are able to fully participate in service reviews and in order to effectively complete performance returns.
- 96 However, there are several weaknesses:
- ◆ The use of advocates to assist service users during service reviews is not always clearly understood by providers. The need for specific or specialist support is discussed at the pre-review meeting.
 - ◆ The framework is unclear how strategic relevance review and final service review outcomes are communicated to users.
 - ◆ There is a lack of robust procedures in place for monitoring social care contracts which are not integrated with Supporting People service reviews. The council accepts that monitoring arrangements of social care contracts are being developed and once finalised information will be accessible to both social care contracting and the Supporting People team.
 - ◆ There are some delays in agreeing accreditation applications resulting in a delay for the accreditation of two providers. The council confirm this is being actioned and will not delay the service review process.
 - ◆ The complete framework is untested as no final reports with value for money assessments and recommendations have been submitted to the commissioning body.
- 97 Additional resources have been provided through agency staff to accelerate the review programme. Staff are experienced and generally have necessary skills to carry out effective reviews. However, one provider we met felt that some Supporting People staff did not have sufficient understanding and knowledge about particular users.

- 98 Evidence from the review process shows that the framework is largely robust. However, no final reports have been presented to the commissioning body and there is no evidence of challenging decisions and service re-configurations.

Service providers and users understanding of the review process

- 99 Feedback from providers we contacted through pre-inspection surveys, scheme visits and a focus group were generally satisfied with reviews. 85 per cent of providers in our postal survey were satisfied with processes for service reviews.
- 100 Providers who had undergone review were generally complimentary about the process. Providers were well informed by the Supporting People team about the process and found the experience positive.

'Our first service is going into review in the next 2 weeks, and the preliminary contacts and work has gone well. We have been consulted and involved'. Provider

- 101 The commissioning body agreed to continue funding to one provider subject to service review following an administrative error by the Supporting People team, during platinum cut submissions.
- 102 There is growing evidence of service users being involved during reviews.

Value for Money

- 103 To date there is little evidence of improved value for money and cost effectiveness arising from the Supporting People programme. A robust approach to ensuring VFM from the Supporting People programme is in the process of being applied to service reviews. The council has identified high cost services by interrogating legacy services and has prioritised high cost services within the service review programme. However, to date there are no demonstrable outcomes from reviews, or other exercises, to show that value for money has been challenged and services reconfigured as a result.
- 104 Data submitted to the ODPM indicates that several Supporting People services have unit weekly costs higher than regional and national averages. This indicates that the programme may not be achieving value for money. There was a 42 per cent increase in Supporting People funding from £6.16 million at golden cut stage to £8.74 million Supporting People funding at platinum cut.
- 105 North Tyneside is over 25 per cent higher than average regional weekly Supporting People unit costs for:
- ◆ Accommodation based support: frail elderly people (£248 compared to £60 regionally), homeless families with support needs (£305 compared to £166), people with learning disabilities (£589 compared to £379) and single homeless with support needs (£221 compared to £128).
 - ◆ Floating support provision: older people with support needs (£20 compared to £9) and young people at risk (£128 compared to £97).
- 106 Very high specific unit costs include a learning disability scheme of over £1600 per unit per week and very high cost floating support services for the same client group of over £930 per week.
- 107 The service review framework is robust and should ensure that the added value provided by these high cost schemes will be evaluated. Currently, no service reviews have been completed and recommendations made following value for money assessments.
- 108 Conversely, North Tyneside is over 25 per cent lower than average regional weekly Supporting People unit costs for:
- ◆ Accommodation based support: offenders at risk of offending and people with physical or sensory disabilities.

- ◆ Floating Support: generic services, offenders at risk of offending, people with alcohol problems, learning disabilities, mental health problems and teenage parents.
- 109 The approach to ensuring value for money focus on service reviews. The council, and the social services department, has a history of poor financial management and budgetary control. Comprehensive overhaul of council procedures following comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) has led to significant improvement. Understandably, the council is conscious that any changes to Supporting People funding must be open, transparent and based on robust systems and decision making processes.
- 110 The council is aware that some services may have inappropriate contracts (for instance schemes with long term housing support receiving block gross payments) and ineligible costs being funded. Rather than make 'knee-jerk' decisions, service reviews are seen as the vehicle for challenge and change. Contingency funds are available within social services budgets to pick up some care funding following service reviews.
- 111 Whilst the council recognises that some ineligible costs may currently be funded, historically there were several residential schemes with social care budgets paying for lower level housing support. The council is not able to accurately quantify the savings to social care budgets following the introduction of Supporting People but estimates this to be over £1 million. They are committed to ensuring correct funding following service reviews. Positively, the social services revenue budget has funded approximately £700,000 on services that could have been eligible for Supporting People funding. These include a pipeline scheme that had received Housing Corporation capital funding and a number of independent supported living services.
- 112 The Supporting People team has prioritised 13 services for review which are classed as 'high cost' and potentially 'high risk'. The council recognised that value for money assessments can only be achieved by looking at the relationship between quality and cost. It is anticipated that the prioritised service reviews will be completed and reports presented to the commissioning body by August 2004. The new risk management strategy has identified potential risks and scenario planning will ensure that service re-configuration will be based on a sound framework.
- 113 Although other commissioning partners are aware of the likely need to find alternative sources of funding, no contingency funds have been provided by the health, probation or housing partners.
- 114 Whilst understanding the need for robust decision making processes based on service reviews, the council accepts that some elements of some services maybe funded inappropriately. The council could have done more to identify early savings by negotiation with providers. The council has a contingency fund within social service budgets and alternative funding could have been found to safeguard services. Early Supporting People savings could have helped other providers safeguard existing services and develop new provision.
- 115 Although there has been little tangible value for money work to date various positive developments have been taken on which to base assessments. These include:
- ◆ bringing high cost services forward for review;
 - ◆ a 'costings workbook' for service review building on the ODPM framework for comparing costs against regional and national benchmarks;
 - ◆ information through letter and provider forum about value for money and the need to consider their own savings;
 - ◆ some cross regional work to improve joint commissioning arrangements;

- 116 The council has not developed its own eligibility guide and currently uses the eligibility criteria as identified in the Supporting People 3 forms and 'focus for the future' guidance. The Supporting People team are currently drafting eligibility criteria.
- 117 Visits were made to 15 different service providers, including both high and low cost providers and the sample included provision across the sector and for different user groups. Most of the services we visited are Supporting People with a high level of need. Where possible inspectors talked to frontline staff and to the people receiving services or their advocates. This enabled inspectors to form a view on whether services were likely to comply with current grant conditions and were providing value for money. Key strengths arising from the visits included the following:
- ◆ Some very high quality services are being provided, with positive outcomes for service users. However, quality does not always appear to be influenced by the cost. Some low cost services are of a high standard and helping people to live independently.
 - ◆ Generally costs are funding qualifying housing related support services. However, it is questionable whether Supporting People grant should fund all costs involved in 24 hour cover. There is a question over whether this level of support truly meets the definition of housing related support.
 - ◆ Most schemes held regular house meetings with residents and involved them in determining local services and improvements within the scheme. Most service users felt that they had the opportunity to influence some local scheme matters. Most schemes issued tenant handbooks or induction packs/information, including how to make a complaint. In one scheme this information was also provided by audio tape.
 - ◆ Support plans are used to identify the individual needs of the service user. All apart from one scheme use support plans through key working sessions as a means to identify the individual needs of the service users and to programme their development towards independent living. This is done in full consultation with the service users, who have access to the support plans.
 - ◆ One scheme was developing a proposal for an attached floating support scheme to make best use of existing staff time.
- 118 Weaknesses included:
- ◆ There were some inconsistencies with staffing and resident numbers on records. Some schemes were not able to demonstrate the quantity of support time provided, and observations of a few schemes raised concern that support time did not match the time quoted on the batch 2 return to the ODPM.
 - ◆ Schemes had given little consideration to the ability to reduce staffing cover when residents attended external activities, or went on holiday.
 - ◆ There was no material seen that invited residents to be involved with the council to improve services or to develop the Supporting People programme.
 - ◆ Some schemes demonstrated weak recognition of user's independence with staff gaining access to rooms without permission or notice.
- 119 We found that schemes generally provided good value for money in terms of their costs being competitive coupled with evidence of high quality support and positive outcomes being delivered. The council recognises that it has further work to do challenging unit costs as part of service reviews.

User involvement and partnerships

- 120 North Tyneside Borough Council is increasingly involving providers and other partners more effectively in Supporting People programmes. However, users,

carers and advocates have had limited involvement so far. Links with other partners are generally well developed and Supporting People aims and objectives are closely integrated with council and local strategic partnership strategies.

Service users

- 121 The council has recognised that little work has been done to involve service users in meaningful ways. This has been due to the lack of resources within the Supporting People team. The views of users have not been routinely sought and they have little access to Supporting People decision making. Although there were several inclusive forum meetings during the early stage of Supporting People implementation there has not been a meeting since July 2003. An inclusive forum has been arranged for July 2004.
- 122 We attended several meetings with service user groups that were arranged for the inspection and are not standing user groups. Work to develop user involvement is sensibly being addressed by building on existing provider and partner networks. However, this work is still at an early stage.
- 123 The council has demonstrated commitment to engaging with 'hard to reach' groups. There has also been some preliminary corporate work to approach 'hard to reach' BME groups. The director of social services and the head of housing are undertaking a number of visits to different community groups over the next three months. This includes visits to the Parsi and Bangladeshi communities with further visits to Jewish, Sudanese and Chinese communities. These will be initial meetings on which the council can build involvement and engagement processes and identify what issues there are for these groups.
- 124 The council has also drafted a 'consultation strategy'. Providers and other groups are currently being consulted. It will provide a robust framework for future user involvement.
- 125 Service users are also being consulted on the development of leaflets for key service areas. A general Supporting People leaflet is currently being distributed. Following consultation specific leaflets will be drawn up for short term, long term and sheltered provision.
- 126 The introduction of service reviews has ensured that users are involved in the process. Information is provided about the review process to users and their views about the service are sought through on site validation visits. As no reviews have yet been completed it is too early to identify outcomes from user involvement.

Service providers

- 127 Effective relationships with providers are well established. Providers and other partners are increasingly involved in planning and implementing the Supporting People programme. There is a clear commitment to involving providers effectively in Supporting People programmes. They are recognised as key partners. Providers are represented on the core strategy group and regular provider forums take place.
- 128 During inspection we contacted many providers by survey, focus group or individual scheme visit. The overwhelming view of providers demonstrated high levels of satisfaction with consultation, and levels of involvement and support from Supporting People staff. Observation of core strategy group meetings and scheme files supported this commitment.

'I've always felt that issues could be raised and discussed honestly and openly'. - Service provider.

- 129 92 per cent of providers in our postal survey were satisfied with consultation. However, only 64 per cent were satisfied with the opportunity for being involved in developing Supporting People services.
- 130 There is evidence of:
- ◆ providers being more involved, developing new policies and arrangements through provider forum workshops;
 - ◆ offers of one-to-one support where required, particularly for smaller providers;
 - ◆ regular letters, newsletters and advice to all providers about key issues;
 - ◆ providing hard copy (large print to a provider) where email unavailable; and
 - ◆ offers of training and support through a continuing programme of workshops.
- 131 Provider forums are regular and have detailed agendas which providers are able to contribute to. Providers who cannot attend forum meetings are sent minutes and have the opportunity to comment on key issues. Reports are also published on the Supporting People website.
- 132 Unfortunately providers we met were unaware that they were represented on the core strategy group. A national housing federation representative reports back to federation members. However, providers advise that they received no direct feedback from representatives and were not given the opportunity to direct key concerns to them. Providers were keen to see a more representative framework.
- 133 The council recognises that feedback needs to be developed and will discuss core strategy group representatives taking part in regular provider and inclusive forums. Core strategy group minutes will be put on the website although any closed agenda items will be removed.
- 134 Some internal providers we met were generally less aware of Supporting People issues than external providers.

Cross authority groups and other relevant groups

- 135 The council has developed cross authority links with the Tyne and Wear cross-authority group (CAG) and the regional implementation group (RIG) although there is little evidence of outcomes to date. The CAG have produced a statement for social services and are working with the Supporting People team to contribute to the five year strategy. There is a good track record of joint working across authorities as part of the CAG.
- 136 A CAG statement of aims is being re-drafted for use in the five year strategy. The CAG are undertaking some detailed analysis of the cross authority movement of service users via client records in an attempt to identify the needs and demands of services across authorities. This will then form a baseline position from which to consider commissioning services. The CAG accepts that movement between the authorities by service users is acceptable.
- 137 The RIG meets regularly. Work has focussed on sharing working practices and responding to the national agenda as well developing standardised systems and documents such as the steady state contract. There is agreement in terms of the accreditation of providers with services in one or more areas.
- 138 The probation service is a member of the homelessness strategy multi-agency steering group. This enables joint working towards addressing the lack of service provision. There are positive links with key partners such as Northumbria probation. Probation has historically had weaker relationships with local authority housing partners.
- 139 Working relationships between other partners are improving but require further development. For instance links with the primary care trust (PCT) are well established but there is not a close working relationship. The PCT, reflecting

national priorities, has had to focus on acute care and has not had the resources to devote effort into preventive care and housing support initiatives. Progress on joint commissioning is still being negotiated. There are close links with the mental health trust as the director is also head of adult services and is also on the core strategy group.

- 140 The Supporting People team recognises that links with the drugs action team (DAT) need to be developed.
- 141 Historically there was limited dialogue between social services and housing. This has improved significantly through representation on the core strategy group and more recently with a new head of housing being on the commissioning body and developing some joint initiatives with social services, such as a homeless project in Whitley Bay.

Customer care, access to services and information

- 142 Information and access to Supporting People services is generally weak although there are several strengths and a clear recognition of the need to develop services. Information about different Supporting People services and how to access them is generally uncoordinated and it is difficult for potential users, or their carers/advocates to easily get relevant advice.

Information for existing and potential service users

- 143 We found several positive elements demonstrating customer focus. For example there is easy access to a wide range of Supporting People information on the North Tyneside website. There is also a very helpful housing benefit calculator.
- 144 The council's website has an impressive Supporting People site. It is easy to use and contains an extensive range of useful information including contact details and sections on forums, an events diary, local documents and opportunity for feedback. Draft reports on the consultation strategy, complaints procedure and the new partnership protocol are already published on the site. The section on forums includes reports and presentations from recent meetings. A 'monitoring and review section' includes information to help providers facing a service review. There are very useful links to other organisations particularly the national website for Supporting People.
- 145 The website could be developed further. It is currently most useful to providers and stakeholders and there is limited basic information for potential users, carers or advocates.
- 146 Some new Supporting People leaflets have been developed. A general Supporting People leaflet is clearly written and easily understood. It has advice about being available in other formats and highlights that 'fairer charging' help is available.
- 147 Concerns were expressed to us about the information not being readily available for sight-impaired users. The general Supporting People leaflet and fairer charging leaflet will be available on audio tape. The council is discussing with providers ways of ensuring information is accessible.
- 148 Supporting People newsletters have a friendly in-house format. They do not provide detailed information but signpost readers to specialist contacts. Each contact has a named person, telephone number and email address.
- 149 The directory of service providers provides a good source of information for customer service centres and advice/advocacy organisations that are pivotal in assisting people to access services. It has just been developed and is not yet fully available at all contact points. It will be published on the website for open access. Further development will include a directory by client group and/or type of services for ease of reference. There are also other directories also available such as the GONE directory on housing and support services for substance mis-users.

- 150 Positively the council is developing more local and direct service for homelessness assessment, and have positioned the assessment officers within the four local offices in the borough.
- 151 The council recognise that there is a lack of awareness about Supporting People within community groups that provide support to minority groups.
- 152 During inspection we visited several reception areas and found that areas were welcoming and staff were helpful and attentive. However, leaflet and general advice were not well managed to help customers find what they were looking for. There was weak signage offering advice or information in a variety of other formats. For instance there was no notice offering translation or interpretation services at some offices although this is available through language line. Other offices did not have the new Supporting People leaflet on display.
- 153 A new complaints and appeals procedure provides a clear and comprehensive framework for dealing with disputes. It will be operational when launched at the inclusive forum in July 2004. There are clear timescales for tracking the receipt and progress of complaints. There is a system alert when action has not been taken within pre-set time bands. All comments are recorded even though no formal complaint is made.
- 154 There is no system to collate information from provider complaints procedures although this is outlined as a performance measure in the draft business plan.

Fairer Charging and assessments

- 155 Information about fairer charging and assessments is generally positive but could be developed further. The council website includes the charging policy but this is not easy to read for customers. General information on charges is found on the new leaflets but these were not widely available during inspection.
- 156 The council benefits assessment team is a very positive service and helpful for users. They will contact users on request and undertake a comprehensive welfare benefits assessment. There is close integration with the housing benefit team and staff are able to verify required documents. This very positive service could be developed even further by proactively contacting users not in receipt of housing benefit to assess eligibility for fairer charging payments.
- 157 It is positive that there is an opportunity for clients or potential applicants to check their entitlement to housing benefit on the authority website. This could be further developed by linking to the Supporting People programme.

Better Care: Higher Standards Charter

- 158 The better care higher standards charter has not been monitored or updated since 2001 and does not include Supporting People services. The charter was not available in any reception areas we visited. It is planned to update the charter by September 2004. A workshop has been arranged for June 2004 to progress the update.

Diversity

- 159 The approach to equalities and diversity in the Supporting People programme is weak. The council recognises that an effective equalities and diversity agenda has only started to develop from a poor base. Needs assessments of different groups are undeveloped and there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about different housing support needs in the context of local demography. Links with partner and community organisations are weak and they are not involved in identifying and prioritising local priorities. There is no comprehensive corporate strategy to improve services.
- 160 An honest view was expressed that the council 'had failed miserably in previous years' regarding equalities and diversity. The council has recently revised and improved its race equality scheme (RES) in line with the requirements of the

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. The social services department has a race equality action plan to work with community groups to inform future services but it is unclear how individuals, or groups, not part of existing weak consultation structures, will be able to contribute.

- 161 The council is giving some corporate direction to improve diversity issues. An equal opportunities advisor has been in post since August 2003 and has been working on the (RES) and service delivery issues. There is support from a policy officer working on community cohesion. A community cohesion group has recently been set up to address equality and diversity. Social services representation on this group has been inconsistent until recently. Although a group of 700 interested individuals have formed a corporate residents' panel it is unclear whether this includes representation from harder to reach groups.
- 162 The council is promoting community involvement and is establishing a youth council and area forums. In addition the council has been involved with the Police in conducting a community awareness day specifically focussed at BME groups.
- 163 There are improving relationships with several black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and other disadvantaged groups. Some needs analysis work is being carried out in order to identify the housing and support needs of people with mental health difficulties which will inform the five year strategy.
- 164 The council also recognises that the implementation plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has slipped. It is potentially in breach of requirements regarding plans to ensure the accessibility of offices by October 2004. However, training and helpful information packs have been given to staff and work is underway to progress action to meet requirements.
- 165 The shadow strategy makes little reference to the housing support needs of BME groups and there are no Supporting People funded services specialising in provision for any particular ethnic group.
- 166 An organisation development group has agreed the need for corporate training to be commissioned to raise equality awareness in the delivery of services. This will improve direct services to a diverse community.
- 167 The council recognise the need to improve the communication and involvement with the local community and 'hard to reach' groups. The Supporting People team are starting to establish links with community groups and organisations representing users with particular needs. They intend to integrate with council networks.
- 168 Despite some recent progress there is a lack of a corporate strategy on how improvement will be achieved, in particular how 'hard to reach' groups and individuals will be involved in developing service provision.
- 169 There has been some positive work with asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are generally well provided for by the asylum unit with links to health and the council. A local video has been developed by the asylum team to promote knowledge and understanding of racial harassment in schools. We also visited the refugee integration service and spoke to users who were very positive about help and support given by the team.
- 170 During inspection we met with a BME group. The group felt that there is a lack of awareness about Supporting People, and the services the programme offers, within local BME communities. The group felt that the council needs to have more proactive recruitment procedures and should raise community awareness of support and advice that is available.

Outcomes for service users

- 171 The Supporting People programme in North Tyneside was historically understaffed and is only recently developing to improve services. The priority was to provide a smooth transition to the Supporting People programme and ensure the

continuation of legacy support services. Consequently little work has been done to identify positive outcomes to service users.

Improvements

- 172 Although we found many examples of service users being satisfied with services and improved quality of life there is little direct evidence that this has been an outcome from Supporting People arrangements rather than continuing legacy service provision. There is a lack of robust information to demonstrate improved outcomes such as reduced hospital admission or reduced bed blocking.
- 173 New services have been developed during Supporting People implementation for families fleeing domestic violence, floating support services for young parents, women fleeing domestic violence, refugees, offenders and those who misuse substances. A teenage parents' service has been set up with Supporting People revenue. Support services within the housing and homelessness strategies have also introduced a 30 bed extra care unit for older people, a supported housing service for learning disabilities, SMART bungalows and planned wheelchair user accommodation.
- 174 There are some innovative schemes that are delivering positive outcomes for people. For example the refugee integration project has helped users settle in the area and the benefit assessment team has helped users receive fairer charging payments and other welfare benefits.
- 175 We received generally positive feedback from users during focus groups and scheme visits that housing support services had improved.

'At one time you were just given a radio and a white stick'. - Service user.

'When I started getting the visits I stopped trying to kill myself'. - Service user.

'It's a lifeline, it stops you feeling alone and afraid'. - Service user.

- 176 Other improvements include:
- ◆ the development of a council website and development of improved information (new leaflets) to help potential users/cares get access to fairer charging and housing support services, and
 - ◆ young people identified high levels of satisfaction with support services they received from homelessness support agencies acting in an enabling role and assisting the young people in moving on into independent accommodation.
- 177 Service reviews have only recently commenced and to date there has been no analysis of service weaknesses and action taken to prioritise service improvement. There has been no re-configuration of existing services.
- 178 Although there is a well managed council complaints system, this is not integrated with provider complaints procedures. Consequently there is no overall analysis of complaints/feedback that can be used to develop services.
- 179 A number of people identified poor quality of accommodation and support in one service area. The council have received positive feedback from the same user group but will look at these concerns during service review.
- 180 The responsibility for the council sheltered housing service is confused due to split responsibility between housing (property maintenance, rent collection and tenancy management) and social services (supervision of warden service). It is accepted that sheltered housing services will be reviewed as part of the overall strategy for housing needs for older people.

Case studies

181 The following case studies are just two examples of the positive impact some services have had and clearly illustrate how much people value services and the difference that it makes to their lives.

Supporting People Case Study 1

Service User Group: *Person with learning and physical disabilities*

Type of Service: *Floating Support*

Key Players: *Service Provider, LA housing, Supporting People*

Issues to be addressed:

Case A lived with her grandparents in a LA house. Her Grandfather died and her grandmother suffered a fall and was permanently admitted to residential care. Miss A was admitted to residential care but found this difficult to cope with.

Action Taken:

With Housing Association support and SP funding Case A was able to return to her home and develop her independent living. The LA transferred the tenancy to her name.

Outcome for Service User:

Housing support has enable Case A to maintain her tenancy and develop her life and social skills to such an extent that she is thinking of applying to the LA for permission to sub-let a bed room to another person with learning/physical disability. Without support paid for by Supporting People and provided by the housing association Case A would probably have remained in residential care indefinitely.

Supporting People Case Study 2

Service User Group: *Offender with mental health problems and history of drug and alcohol misuse*

Type of Service: *Accommodation Bases and Subsequently Floating Support*

Key Players: *Housing Association, LA housing, Health – CPN and Psychiatrist, Supporting People*

Issues to be addressed:

Case B had a long history of offences linked to drug and alcohol misuse. His offences were also due to long term mental health problems.

Action Taken:

Case B was referred to a housing association supported housing scheme by a hospital. He lived in the main project for seven months and was given support regarding drug and alcohol issues. There was close liaison with health services. He moved to a satellite property and responded well to increased independence. His risk level has reduced, no new offences were committed and his mental health stabilised. Drug use was no longer an issue.

Outcome for service user:

Case B has obtained an independent tenancy with North Tyneside Borough Council. He is no longer affected by drug and alcohol misuse and improved mental health is allowing him to lead a full and successful life.

Summary

182 Overall, we judge that North Tyneside Borough Council is delivering a fair one star service. There are number of positive features with the programme including

compliance with grant conditions and ensuring the smooth transition to Supporting people arrangements for legacy services. Governance arrangements are effective and will be further enhanced by the partnership protocol.

- 183 There is positive partnership working with key partners and providers. Contracts and payment arrangements are all in place and operating smoothly. Access to housing related support is beginning to improve with new leaflets, an impressive Supporting people web site and fairer charging help offered by a benefit assessment team. Schemes we visited showed a high level of support.
- 184 Key policy documents have been recently produced including a risk management strategy and register, consultation strategy, Supporting People business plan, framework for assessing value for money and a clear framework for producing a five year strategy.
- 185 However, there are a number of features that need to improve. Local needs for housing support including those of 'hard to reach' groups, have not been identified and assessed. Commissioning arrangements are weak and priorities to meet needs have not been robustly assessed and agreed with partners, providers and other stakeholders. The involvement of service users is under developed and work to ensure the equality and diversity of access to Supporting People services is only just starting.
- 186 The service review programme was delayed and no reviews have been completed. Value for money and the cost effectiveness of existing services have not been demonstrated as assessment is integrated with the delayed service review programme. The council has not taken the opportunity to negotiate immediate savings with providers where inappropriate contracts are in place and ineligible costs are funded by Supporting People grant.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the evidence of service improvement?

What has improved?

- 187 At service delivery level, the Supporting People team has achieved smooth transition from the planning phase to implementation of the programme in April 2003. There has been significant recent improvement in Supporting People arrangements since the team was strengthened. Although this has not yet led directly to clearly discernible benefits for customers, together with the recent development of governance arrangements it provides a solid base from which to develop Supporting People services.
- 188 There is some evidence of service improvement. It is estimated that an additional 647 people have been helped in addition to traditional supported housing and sheltered accommodation transferred into the Supporting People programme. This represents 11 per cent of the existing 5,731 users. The largest client group helped include older people and people with learning disabilities.
- 189 There is other evidence of improvement. We have previously mentioned improved outcomes for service users. In addition key improvements include:
- ◆ achievement of all Supporting People milestones; and
 - ◆ recent development of key policy framework documents including: service review templates, partnership protocol, risk management strategy, complaints procedure, consultation strategy, five year strategic plan framework and a draft Supporting People business plan;
- 190 Providers in our postal survey, focus groups and scheme visits generally expressed satisfaction with Supporting People arrangements. In general 92 per cent of providers (30 per cent response rate) were satisfied or very satisfied with arrangements. The only area of significant concern was 30 per cent dissatisfaction with the involving partners in developing Supporting People services.

Implemented plans and previous inspection recommendations

- 191 The council has responded positively to the 'poor' comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) inspection score in 2002 and has developed leadership and direction to provide a more solid financial management and a new performance management framework on which to develop services.
- 192 The council continues to make progress and many, but not all, important building blocks for further recovery are now in place. The council has worked with external agencies to provide support and challenge.
- 193 Corporate finances have improved from a £6 million budget deficit in 2001/02 transformed to a predicted £6 million surplus in 2003/04. A new financial and service planning framework has improved accountability for budgetary monitoring and control.
- 194 A wide scale corporate management restructure was necessary to change the culture of the council and provide more innovative leadership and direction to improve services.

'We had to break the mould; it was like drawing dinosaur teeth'. - Senior officer.

- 195 Managers are taking more responsibility for their actions and are encouraged through a risk management system to make more effective decisions.
- 196 Social Services used the 2003 Social Services Inspectorate's (now CSCI) inspection of older people services as a catalyst for change and service development. A clear action plan has monitored positive progress in addressing

recommendations. Care management has been redesigned to include a dedicated service for older people. There have also been improvements in children's services.

- 197 The council has integrated recommendations from previous housing inspections, into its service planning system. For instance, previous housing inspections recommended improving customer access centres, complaints procedures and developing local performance indicators.

Is the extent of improvement reasonable?

- 198 The scale and extent of improvement and benefits experienced by customers is less than could reasonably have been expected had the recent rate of improvement been in place for the last two years.
- 199 However, the scale of problems facing the council, and its impact on Supporting People, needs to be acknowledged. Limited improvement is understandable given the level of constraints faced by the council. The development of Supporting People arrangements needs to be seen in the context of the social services structure which was in complete 'disarray'. Comprehensive re-structuring has been necessary. The recent improvement of Supporting People programme is a considerable achievement in this context.
- 200 Given the scale of what was required and the limited resources available to an under resourced Supporting People team, they did well to ensure the continuation of legacy services, providing prompt Supporting People payments and agreeing interim contracts.
- 201 The Supporting People team has demonstrated willingness to work with other authorities, share experience and learn from good practice elsewhere. This is demonstrated by cross authority work.
- 202 The development of cross regional work on steady state contracts and service review standards frameworks are examples of joint work to develop more efficient and cost effective Supporting People services which will lead to improved user services.

How good are the current improvement plans?

- 203 A self assessment produced by the council prior to this inspection was thorough, open and honestly accepted weaknesses. It recognised that whilst there had been some successes and recent improvement much remained to be done.
- 204 Little work has been done to examine whether other service providers may be better able, in terms of cost and quality, to provide some housing support services. Service reviews are seen as the vehicle for challenging this but there is no existing evidence of this being done. However, the framework has been established through the draft business plan to ensure it will be done.
- 205 The council has a clear commitment to involving partners and providers and is increasingly engaging providers in developing Supporting People services through provider forums, representation on the core strategy group and individual initiatives. There is evidence of using feedback from providers to change proposals. For instance some changes were made to the review timetable on representation. However, work to involve service users and organisations representing 'hard to reach' groups is only just starting. This will be addressed through the consultation strategy.
- 206 The new framework for assessing value for money in service reviews is thorough but has not yet been tested.
- 207 A draft business plan has been produced by the core strategy group and commissioning body. It provides the overarching framework to improve the Supporting People programme. Following initial feedback from the core strategy group and commissioning body it will be circulated to providers and other

stakeholders for comment. It is timetabled to be approved by August 2004 and will be published on the website. The Supporting People team is already using it as a guide to prioritise their work.

- 208 The Supporting People business plan provides a thorough and solid base for development of the Supporting People programme. It is an impressive draft document which is intended to be kept under regular review. The plan has clear links with the community plan and corporate priorities and demonstrates a clear understanding the national context and need for achieving value for money, eligibility, addressing unmet need and recognising the need for equitably distributed national grants.
- 209 There are key priorities of:
- ◆ developing a five year strategy;
 - ◆ value for money – reviewing the cost and quality of legacy services;
 - ◆ service users focus;
 - ◆ working with providers and other stakeholders;
 - ◆ contracting and market management;
 - ◆ improving internal process and capacity;
 - ◆ financial planning; and
 - ◆ risk management.
- 210 Underpinning these priorities are clear actions with timescales and accountability. A range of performance measures and performance indicators has been identified to monitor progress.
- 211 The plan could be further developed by ensuring that the specified outcomes are clearer with more measurable targets so that success and achievement can be readily identified. For example the objective ‘to ensure the delivery of high quality and cost effective services that deliver value for money’ has an unclear outcome of ‘increased outcomes for service users’. It does not mention the outcome of achieving specific improvements in quality and targeted efficiency savings that can be used to meet identified additional needs. The plan should also identify any additional resources that are required.
- 212 The council has recognised the lack of robust information on housing support needs and joint commissioning arrangements to provide better value for money in developing Supporting People services. It is using a consultant to commission research and identification of needs and existing markets to inform a commissioning strategy.
- 213 Other plans include:
- ◆ the framework for the five year strategy;
 - ◆ the draft consultation strategy;
 - ◆ plan to produce a new better care higher standards charter;
 - ◆ local public service agreements targets;
 - ◆ new risk management strategy; and
 - ◆ housing and homelessness strategies.
- 214 The development of cohesion between housing and social services provides a good background for cross department work and strategies, with the common aim of improving services in Supporting People.

Will improvements be delivered?

Leadership and Aims

- 215 After a slow start to developing the Supporting People programme recent progress demonstrates that the council and the Supporting People team is now well placed to deliver improved services to the people of North Tyneside.
- 216 The aims and objectives of Supporting People are clear in the shadow strategy and draft business plan. They integrate closely with national objectives as well as corporate and community priorities.
- 217 There is clear integration with the community plan (shared plan) as the key plan for North Tyneside. The local public service agreement (LPSA) focuses on reducing inequalities, living with dignity, living in security and making a difference. It has 12 targets some which indirectly effect Supporting People and one directly. Six of the ten key strategic priorities in the housing strategy impact upon the services provided to users of Supporting People.
- 218 The aims and objectives within the older people future strategy reflect those within the council's housing strategy. North Tyneside's housing strategy and homelessness strategy reflect the regional strategy on the need to target the prevention of homelessness and support needs of homeless people, as well as provision for support to refugees and asylum seekers.
- 219 The local delivery plan of the strategic health authority reflects some of the main concerns of North Tyneside. In particular, the aim to enable older people to gain support and services within their homes, and the involvement of young people in planning their support services.
- 220 The primary care trust shares many priorities with the Supporting People strategy, particularly infrastructure support for mental health and older people home support.
- 221 Supporting People aims and priorities will be reviewed through the development of a five year strategy. There is a clear framework for developing a five year strategy. The framework is challenging. Partners, providers and users will be involved through representation on working groups.
- 222 The council has demonstrated effective leadership in responding to the serious issues facing the council following CPA. There has also been improved leadership within social services by the director who chairs the commissioning body and from the appointment of a new manager responsible for Supporting People in October 2003.
- 223 The council's focus has been on broader urgent corporate weaknesses such as financial management. This provided the context for weak Supporting People progress until the latter part of 2003. The last year has seen greater understanding and priority given to it. This has been helped by the Mayor also being the portfolio holder for health and social care and receiving regular briefing from the director of social services (commissioning body chair). However, there is a lower level of understanding of Supporting People and key issues amongst other councillors, as there is no formal performance reporting to scrutiny or cabinet. This will be partially addressed through the new partnership protocol but the council needs to ensure that regular performance reports are presented to appropriate scrutiny and cabinet meetings.
- 224 There are few clear priorities for developing specific Supporting People services. The council has not yet robustly identified Supporting People needs and gaps in provision and matched this to existing markets and supply of support services. Existing services have not yet been challenged to see if they can be better provided by other organisations. Consequently at the present time the council is not able to assess competing priorities and target resources effectively.

- 225 The council has recognised this and has clear plans to address it through researching needs, a clear service review framework and joint commissioning work. Priorities will be agreed within the five year strategy.
- 226 The council recognises that difficult decisions regarding funding and value for money need to be made:

'The freeze on budgets is good as it forces managers to review the quality of services and potentially rationalise providers of services'. - Councillor.

'We could and should be doing things better and it is a legitimate question for the government to ask'. - Councillor.

- 227 The primary care trust (PCT) accept that service reviews are likely to lead to cases where alternative source of funding will be required to finance ineligible Supporting People services. However, the PCT has its own budgetary limitations and has no contingency fund to support such cases. There may be a 'gap' between the commissioning body taking such decisions and obtaining alternative funding due to budget planning cycles. The council advises that these issues will be discussed at the earliest opportunity and the partnership protocol links to partner budgetary planning mechanisms will enable options to be considered.
- 228 Despite the progress of some work in various directorates in developing services for a diverse community, there is a lack of corporate direction or a strategy on how this is to be achieved. In particular, how 'hard to reach' groups and individuals are to be involved in developing service provision.

Capacity to deliver

- 229 Until recently the capacity and capability, within the council, social services and the Supporting People team in particular to improve services was poor. Significant improvement of corporate infra-structure and support services has led to a thorough re-structuring including replacement of a significant proportion of the management team. A comprehensive management development programme has been developed and is currently being rolled out across all managers and supervisors. A competency framework is under development.
- 230 The new partnership protocol is very comprehensive and provides the basis for effective governance arrangements.
- 231 The social service re-structuring has led to an additional 82 staff. The increased capacity of the Supporting People team has been added to by temporary resources to help with commissioning, research, service reviews and administrative support. Individual skills are being developed through training and development plans following performance and development review interviews.
- 232 The social services department has rationalised office location from nine to three bases. This provides for better internal communication and joint working, together with improved cost effectiveness and working practices.
- 233 The lack of early progress with Supporting People services meant that the team has had to 'catch-up' with developing policies and putting in place systems for taking the programme forward. The progress over the last six months has been impressive. Staff have responded to greater direction and support and are committed and enthusiastic to further improvement.

'The Supporting People team was largely leaderless for a significant period during implementation. This situation has dramatically improved with recent appointments'. - Provider in postal survey.

- 234 Governance arrangements had some weaknesses but have improved recently and will be further enhanced by the new partnership protocol.

- 235 There are positive working relationships with providers. However, users, carers and advocates not yet routinely involved in developing services.

Effective performance management arrangements

- 236 Performance management arrangements within the council and in the Supporting People team in particular have been weak. However, the introduction of the new corporate performance framework and improved financial management has assisted the Supporting People team to develop its services.
- 237 The Supporting People team now produces financial reports for the core strategy group and commissioning body. The Supporting People team have been collecting and monitoring performance information and have actively pursued missing returns. They have also positively encouraged early self assessment and use of the quality assessment framework (QAF) to drive improvements in services. They have carried out workshops and offered support in completing the QAF and performance information (PI) workbooks.
- 238 However, local performance indicators for monitoring and controlling progress of Supporting People arrangements are still to be implemented. There is no formal system to monitor progress of Supporting People priorities to the council.
- 239 We expressed concern about a provider who had been given incorrect advice regarding Supporting People payments to a user who obtained work. The council responded promptly to concerns we raised. All providers were promptly contacted to clarify the position.
- 240 Corporate risk management has been introduced with both strategic and operational risks identified and managed through a corporate board.
- 241 The council as yet does not have the information to know whether Supporting People services are cost effective and providing value for money. However, it has put in place systems through service reviews to effectively challenge service and demonstrate value for money. Whilst we accept that the framework is in place it is early days and there is currently no evidence of outcomes from services reviews. The commissioning body has not yet had to make any difficult decisions and re-configure services.

Summary

- 242 We consider that the council has promising prospects for improvement. This is based on a number of factors including:
- ◆ the council's corporate track record of responding positively to serious weaknesses of financial and performance management identified during comprehensive performance assessment;
 - ◆ the council, partners and providers responded to this inspection openly and honestly and demonstrated a positive attitude to improve services;
 - ◆ leadership and commitment by the council, social services directorate, commissioning body and manager for Supporting People to improving Supporting People programmes;
 - ◆ the recent pace of change and track record improving Supporting People arrangements;
 - ◆ the recent development of key policy documents, particularly the Supporting People business plan, to provide a solid basis for future improvement;
 - ◆ service review framework including robust procedures to assess the value for money of Supporting People services; and
 - ◆ the positive and increasingly inclusive relationship with partners and service providers.

243 However, barriers to further improvement remain. In order to ensure that the programme can deliver improved benefits for vulnerable people who need housing support, the council needs to make sure that the following weaknesses are tackled:

- ◆ no service reviews have been completed and the value for money assessment framework has not been tested;
- ◆ the lack of early progress means many recent improvements are not yet fully operational;
- ◆ the commissioning body has no experience of taking difficult decisions about future services including re-configuration;
- ◆ there has been no regular performance and financial monitoring reports to the council, commissioning body and core strategy group with evidence of clear action being taken as a result;
- ◆ local needs for housing support have not been identified and priorities agreed to address them;
- ◆ service users are not effectively involved; and
- ◆ there is no clear corporate strategy to ensure diversity and needs of 'hard to reach' groups are identified and met.

Appendices

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

Documents reviewed

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

- ◆ Supporting People Shadow Strategy.
- ◆ Corporate Performance Plan.
- ◆ Community Strategy (Shared Plan).
- ◆ North Tyneside Better Care Higher Standards Charter.
- ◆ Minutes of Commissioning Group, Core Strategy Group, Inclusive and Provider Forums.
- ◆ Supporting People Business Plan 2004/05 (draft).
- ◆ Consultation Strategy (draft).
- ◆ Supporting People Partnership Protocol.
- ◆ Framework for developing Supporting People five year strategy.
- ◆ North Tyneside Supporting People Service Provider Directory.
- ◆ Supporting People Risk Strategy and Risk Register.
- ◆ North Tyneside Supporting People Charging Policy.
- ◆ Housing Strategy and Housing Business Plan.
- ◆ Homelessness Strategy.
- ◆ Older Persons' Strategy.
- ◆ Mental Health Business plan 2003-2006.
- ◆ DAT Communities Plan 2003/04.

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:

- ◆ Visits to 15 service providers and analysis of batch 2 service providers.
- ◆ Observation of Core Strategy Group meeting.
- ◆ Reviewing the performance of customer services and advice lines.
- ◆ Review of complaints procedures.
- ◆ Focus groups with providers and user groups.
- ◆ Mystery Shopping of advice centres.
- ◆ Postal Survey of Providers.

List of people interviewed

We met a range of people involved with the service:

Linda Arkley	Mayor, North Tyneside Council
Margaret Bland	Anchor – Staying Put Manager
Andrea Carmen	Service Development Manager
Paul Cook	Manager, Children and Families
Zoe Campell, Michael Hendry and Tim Gretton	Service Review Officers
David Eltringham	Primary Care Trust
Wyn Gibson	Equal Opportunity Advisor
Maggie Fitzsimmons	Policy Officer (policy, performance and communication)
Councillor Margaret Hall	Chair of Health and Scrutiny
Oonagh Mallon	DAT Coordinator (telephone interview)
John Marsden	Chief Executive
Roy Marston	Accountable Officer
Kath McCarthy	Housing Benefit Manager
Councillor McIntyre	Portfolio Holder for Housing
Jeff McCartney	Asst. Chief Officer Probation - commissioning body representative
John Phillipson	Director Social Services
Sue Ramprogus	Director Mental Health Trust and Head of Adult Services
Phil Rees and David Howston	Housing Services
Debbie Shearer	Housing Support and Development Manager
Felicity Shoesmith	Planning Officer, Social Services
Richard Taylor	Partnerships and Accommodation Manager (Probation)
Paul Tanney	Head of Housing
Sheila Watson	Manager Client Provider Finance
	Cross Authority Supporting People Lead Officers – telephone interviews

Focus Groups	SSD Planning and Commissioning Managers
	User Forums – homelessness / young people
	Bangladeshi Women’s Group
	Supporting People team
	Mental Health Service User Group
	Blind Society Service User Group
	Learning Disability Partnership Board
	Provider and Stakeholder Forum

Demographic information

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

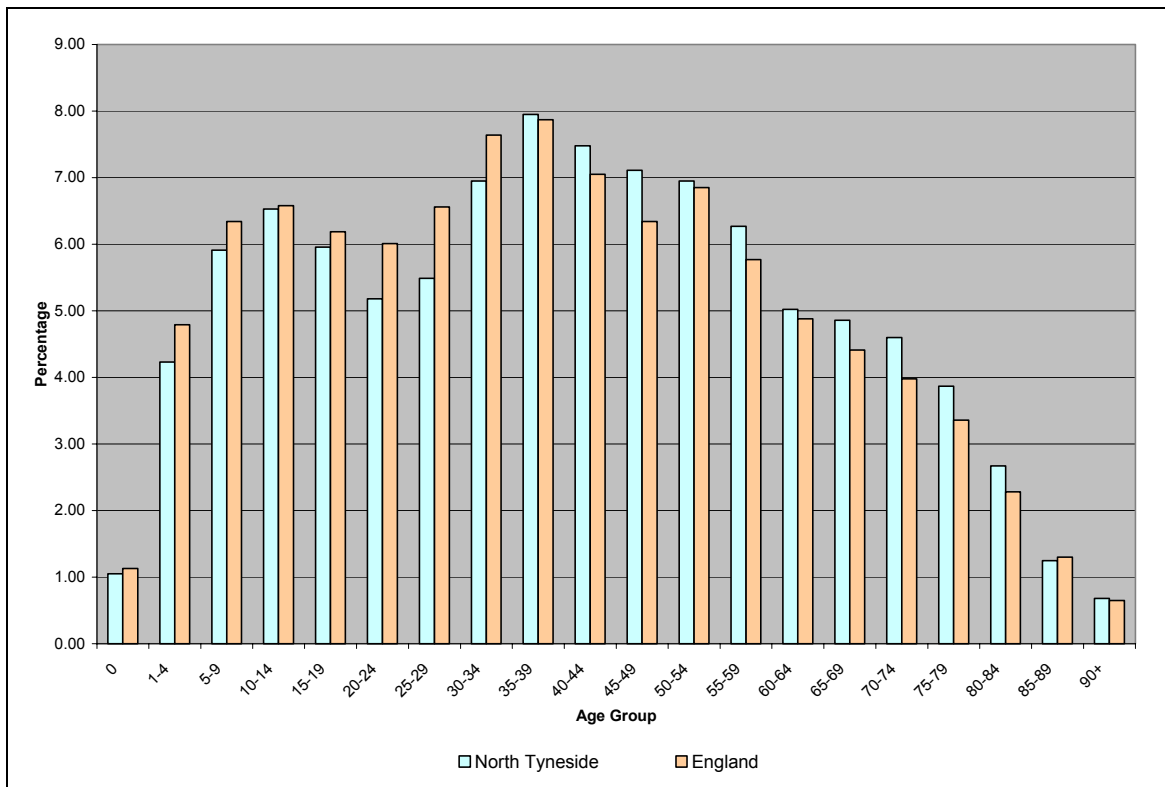
Measure	North Tyneside	England
Population (mid-2001)	191,300	-
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2001)	17.93	15.9
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2001)	3.04	12.5
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate April 2003)	3.6	2.6
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ²	79	-
Multiple deprivation – wards in the most deprived 10 per cent ³	6 of 20	-
Access to services - wards in the most deprived 10 per cent ⁴	0 of 20	-

² Indices of Deprivation 2004, average ward score for the authority.

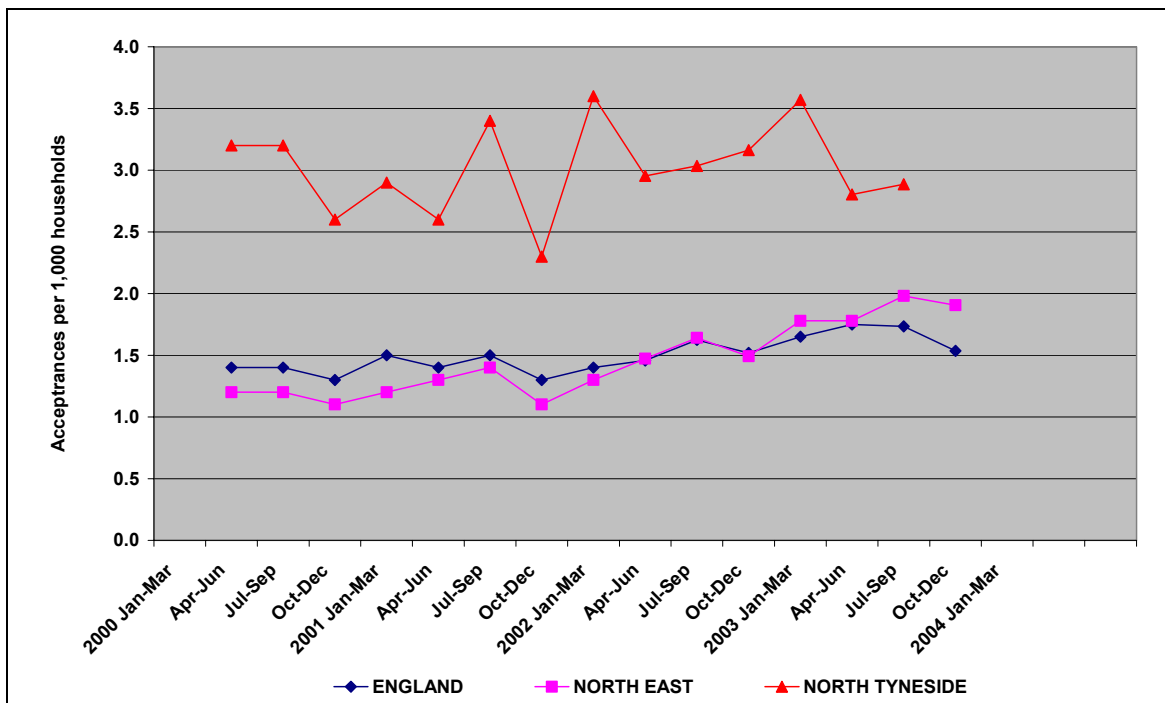
³ Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of index of multiple deprivation rank (out of 8414 wards).

⁴ Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of access domain (out of 8414 wards).

Percentage of the population in each age group compared with England



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



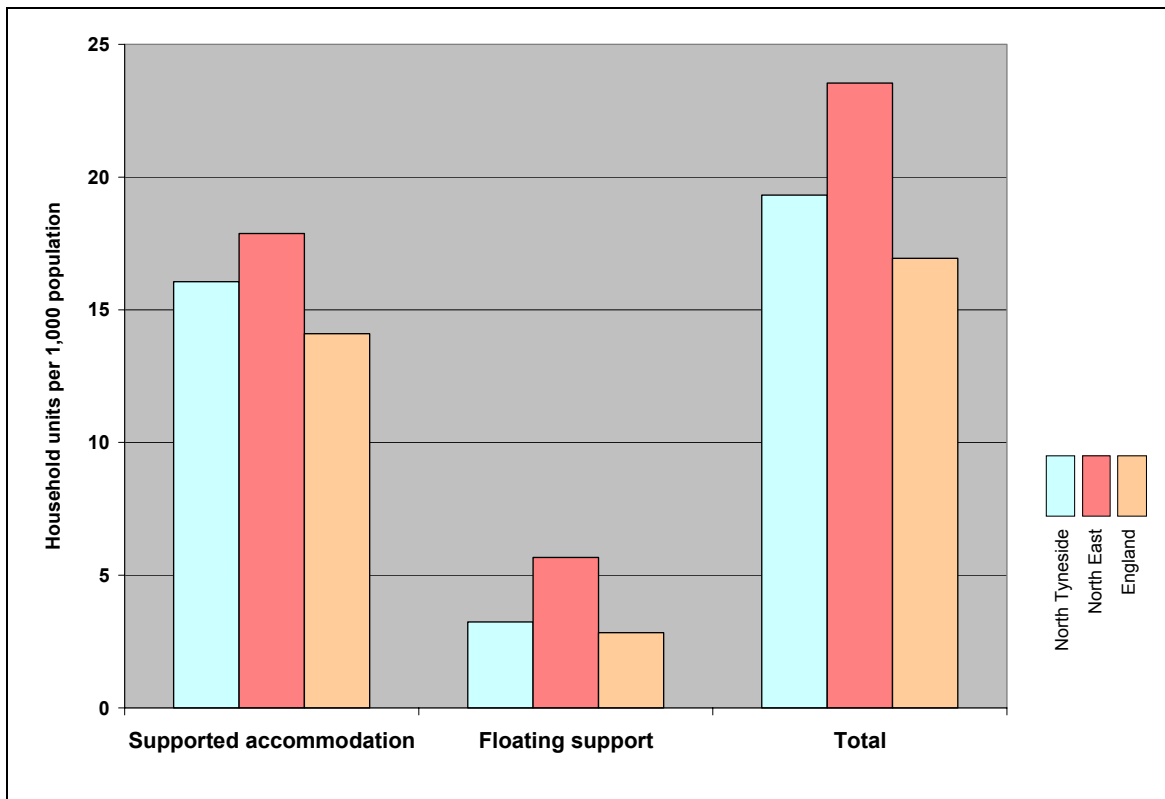
Performance information

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

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

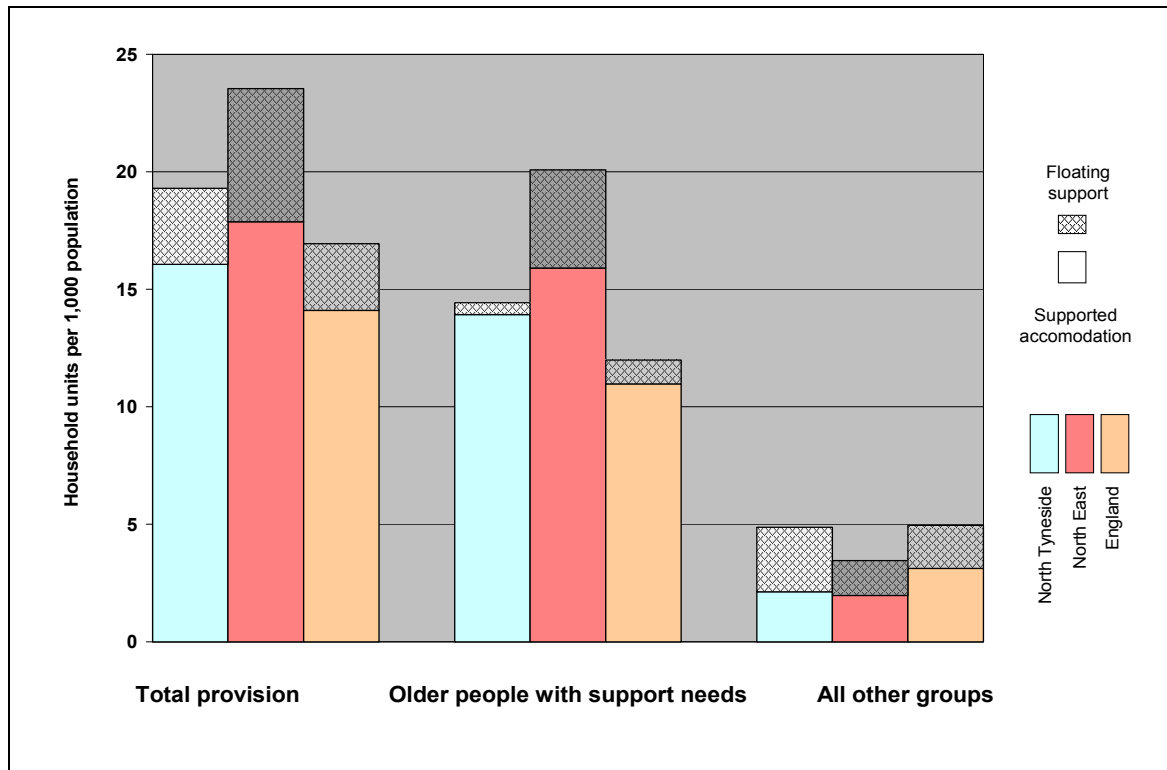
Supporting People data

Total service provision funded through Supporting People⁵

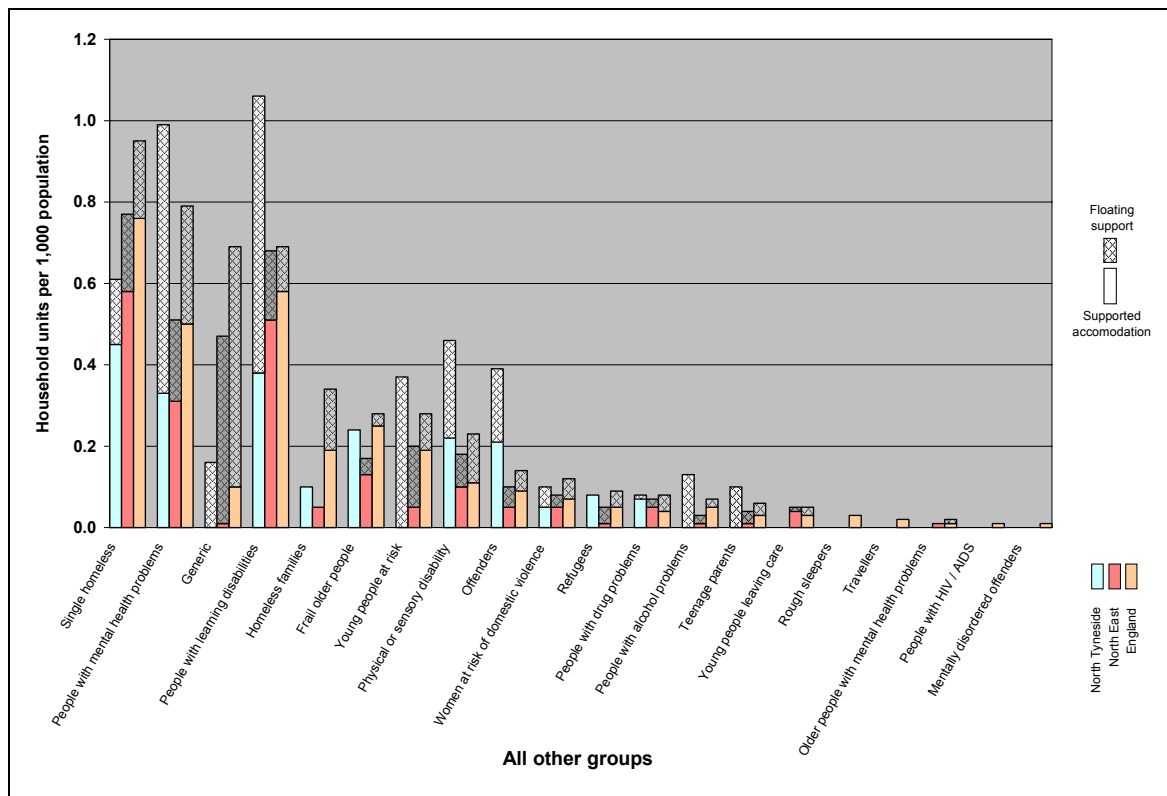


⁵ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England⁶



Services for other groups compared with the region and England⁷



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

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

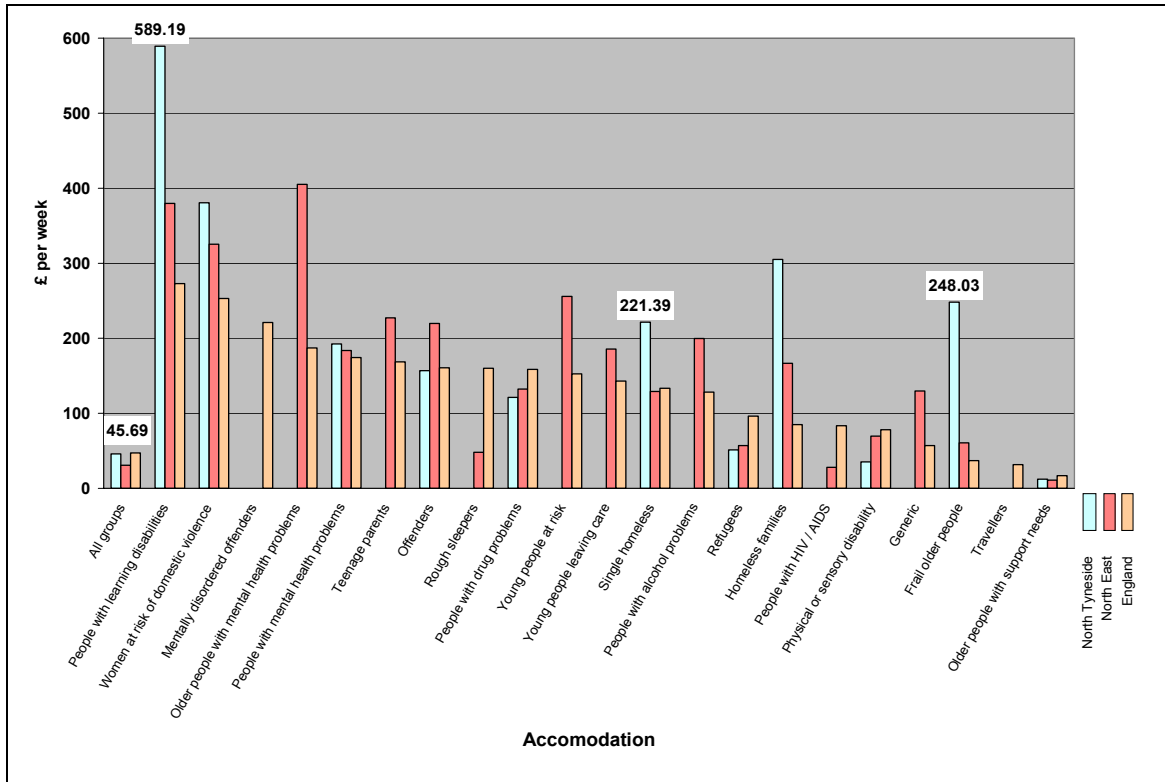
Funding for Supporting People in 2003/04

	Final Supporting People grant 2003/04	Pipeline allocation June 2003	Administration grant 2003/04
North Tyneside	£ 9,255,295	£ 48,072	£ 230,396.43

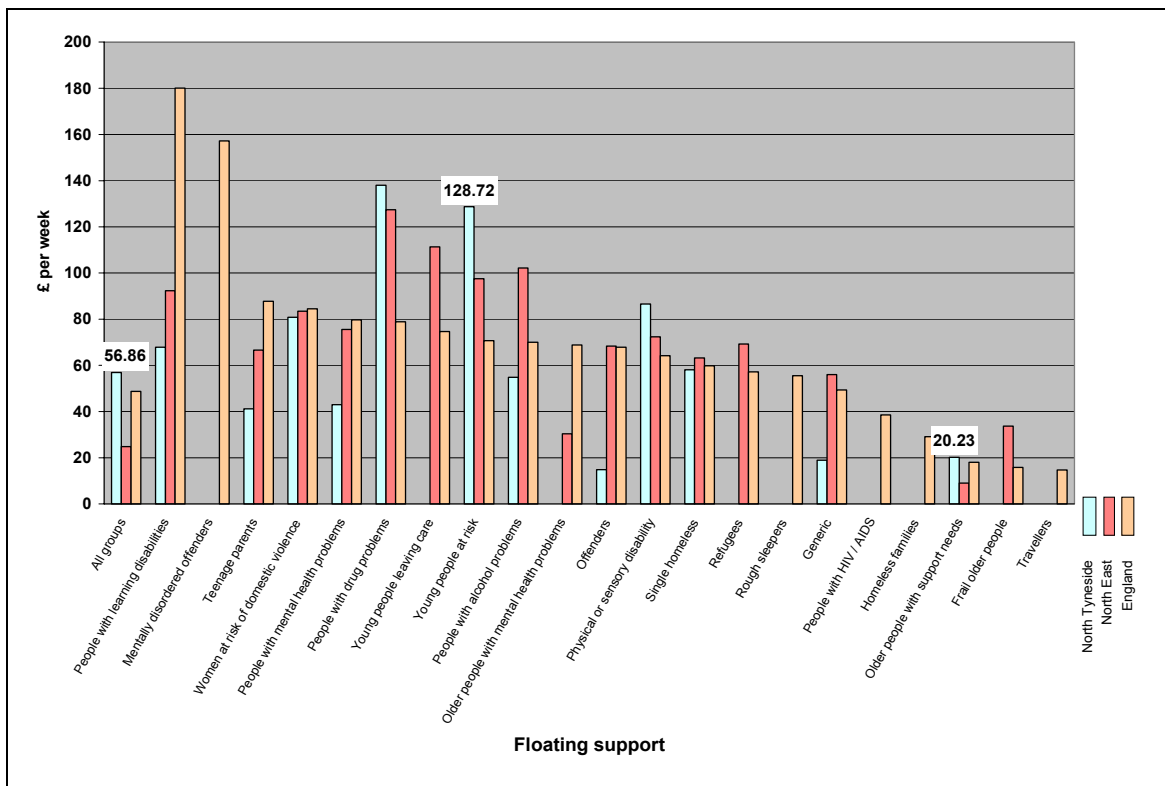
Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms & sheltered housing
North Tyneside	£ 0.93	£ 33.60	£ 44.29	£ 118.19
North East	£ 0.72	£ 17.86	£ 24.71	£ 62.45
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)⁸

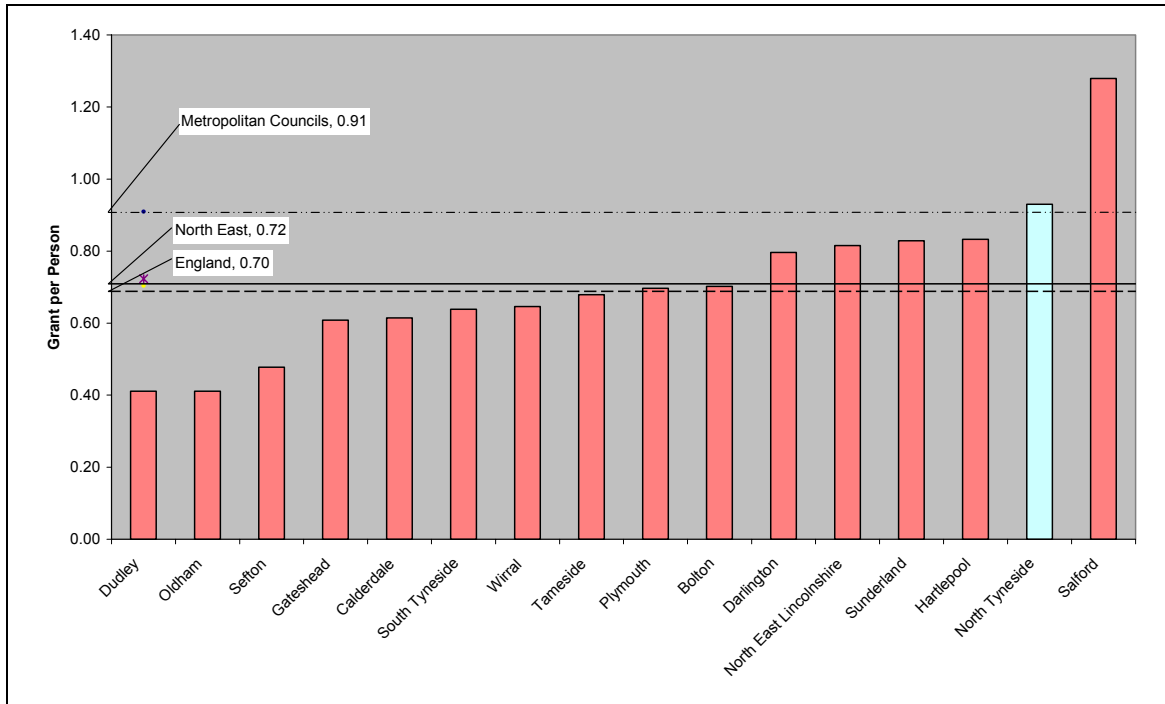


Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)

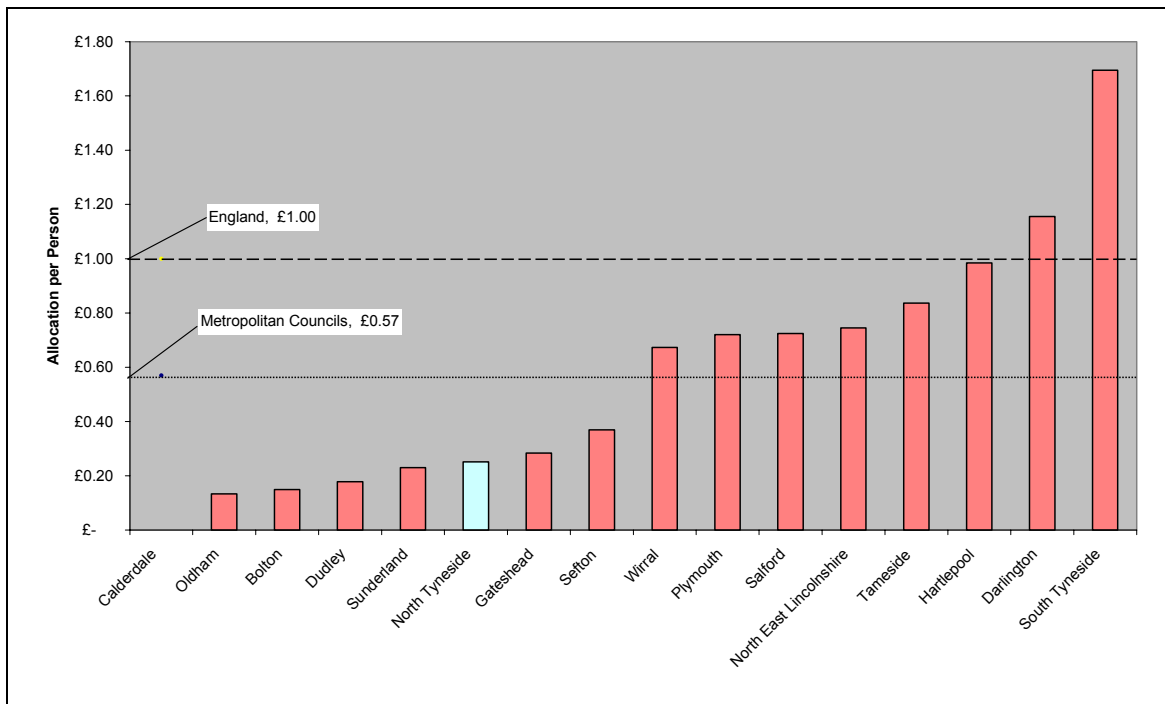


⁸ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours⁹, all metropolitan councils and all English councils (2003/04)

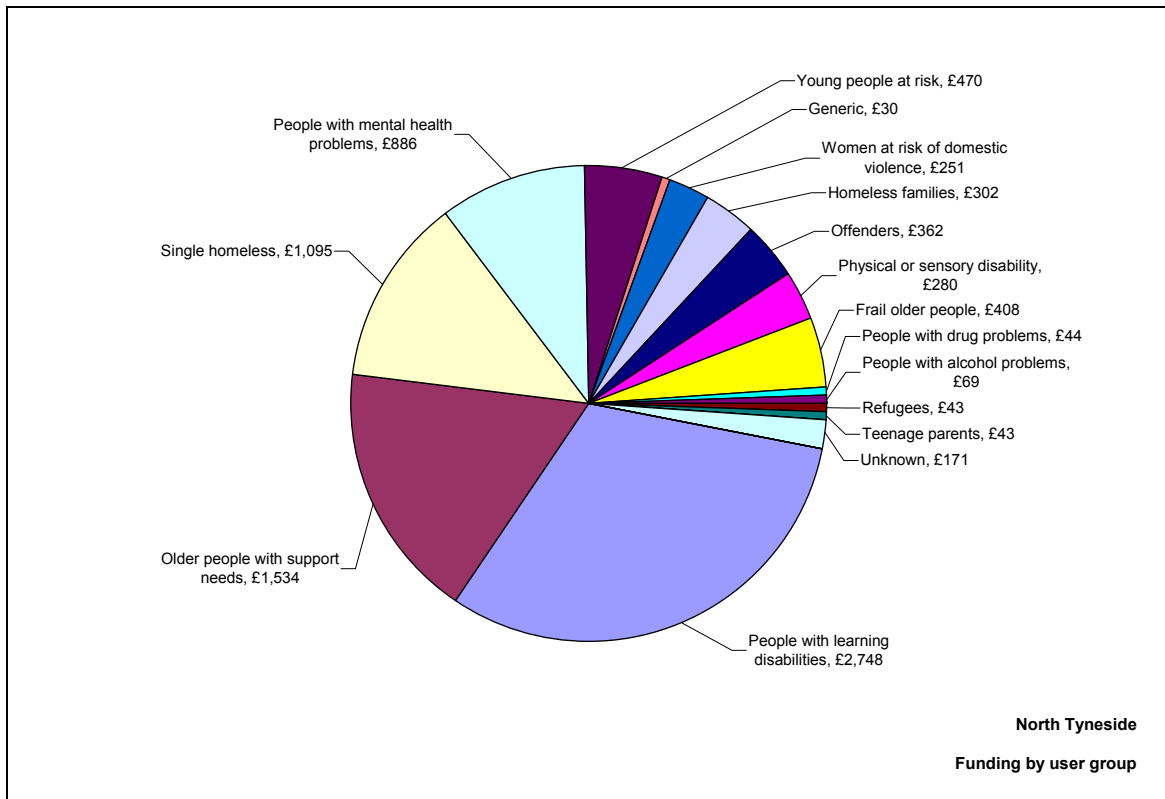


Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all metropolitan councils and all English councils.

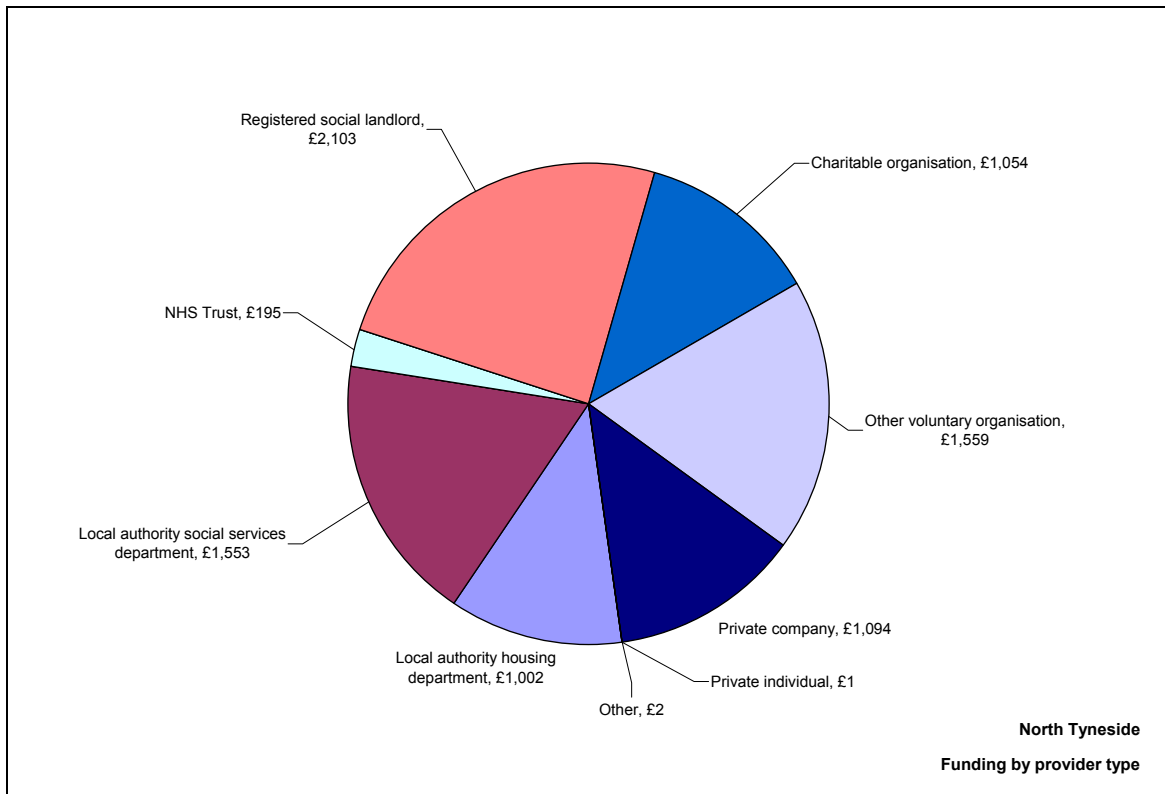


⁹ A comparator group of similar councils.

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	Uncertain	★
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.

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

Best value performance indicators

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

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

North Tyneside	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)</p> <p>Racial incidents recorded by the authority (BV174)</p> <p>Racial incidents that resulted in further action (BV175)</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p> <p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63)</p> <p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a)</p> <p>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>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)</p>

Supporting People – Housing related support services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).

Positive practice is something which makes a service more effective and, ultimately, more able to deliver what the customer wants. This section summarises areas of positive practice found during the inspection.

Supporting People Risk Strategy and Register

A thorough and comprehensive 'risk strategy and register' has been developed to manage potential problems in the Supporting People programme. The register has identified all key risks, the impact and probability of the risk occurring, priority and actions to be taken to manage the risk. Regular monitoring reports will be presented to the commissioning body.

Supporting People Business Plan

A Supporting People business plan provides the overarching framework to improve the Supporting People programme. It provides a thorough and solid base for development of the Supporting People programme. It is intended to be kept under regular review. The plan has clear links with the community plan and corporate priorities and demonstrates a clear understanding the national context and need for achieving value for money, eligibility, addressing unmet need and recognising the need for equitably distributed national grants. It has clear priorities, and actions with timescales and accountability. A range of performance measures and performance indicators has been identified to monitor progress.

Fairer Charging and Welfare Benefits Team

A general charging policy has been agreed by the council. A specialist fairer charging and welfare benefits team is available to ensure that users obtain detailed welfare benefit advice and access to 'fairer charging' support for Supporting People. There are positive working relationships with the council's housing benefit section to ensure integrated verification of claims. Workshops have been held with council staff and providers to raise understanding and the level of awareness. The charging policy is available on the council's web site and leaflets provide fairer charging information.

Council Supporting People website

The council's website has a good Supporting People site. It is easy to use and contains an extensive range of useful information including contact details and sections on forums, an events diary, local documents and opportunity for feedback. Draft reports on various strategies, complaints procedure and partnership protocol are already published on the site. The section on forums includes reports and presentations from recent meetings. A 'monitoring and review section' includes information to help providers facing a service review. There are very useful links to other organisations particularly the national website for Supporting People.