

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions - 'Supporting People' : Guidance 14

This guidance contains details of new projects to be commissioned by DETR, in connection with the development of policy about Supporting People.

The projects contained within this guidance will be commissioned in the course of the next year, and cover research activity for the next three to four years. It is being sent to a wide range of research organisations, consultants and other bodies who might wish to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) in order to be considered as potential contractors.

For each project there is a brief description of the nature of the work, the kinds of skills we would expect to be needed to undertake the work and the anticipated timetable for the commissioning of the work. There is also a named research officer for each project who is the contact point for that project.

This is a large programme of work, and some of the projects need to be undertaken within quite limited timescales. In addition, a number will involve close cross-disciplinary working, whether within an organisation or involving several organisations. Organisations may wish to cooperate with one another in either completing the EOI or later on, in responding to invitations to pre-tender or tender.

The research programme described below replaces the Supporting People research programme described in the Housing and Regeneration Newsletter 1999 - 2000 (available from Jonathan Hanton, Housing and Regeneration Research Programme Officer, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Zone 2/B1 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU. Tel: (020) 7944 3283, Fax: (020) 7944 3109 or 3529.

If your organisation submitted an EOI in any of the Supporting People research projects described in that newsletter in section 1(7), you are encouraged to submit a new EOI, making it clear which project or projects you are interested in being considered for.

Organisations who have not previously expressed an interest are encouraged to consider which projects, if any, they wish to submit an Expression of Interest for. Organisations sending in such submissions will be considered by the Department when decisions are being made about suitable organisations to invite to compete for specific projects or programmes of work.

If you have any enquiries about the Department's contracting processes please contact Jonathan Hanton.

If you have any queries about the research, please contact the person named in relation to each of the projects.

Supporting People Policy

Supporting People is the Government's new policy aimed at delivering a coherent and flexible policy and funding framework for providing support to vulnerable people in different types of accommodation and tenure.

It will bring together various funding streams into a single budget to be administered by local authorities (for example, the support element of Housing Benefit, the Housing Corporation Supported Housing Management Grant, etc). Local authorities will work in partnership with other statutory agencies, the probation service, voluntary organisations, housing and other service providers to plan how the resources available could be spent most effectively, at a local level, on support services.

Supporting People Research Programme

The research projects described below are to be commissioned in support of the development of policy, monitoring and evaluating policy implementation and the development of good practice.

The Department intends to commission, at a later date, a full evaluation of the Supporting People programme, once it is fully implemented. The projects discussed below will clearly contribute to establishing a baseline against which the impact of the programme can be assessed.

Project One - Parts 1 - 4

Audit of Sector in 2000/01:

Timetable: Research already commissioned or being commissioned.

Research contact: Gavin Smart, tel: (020) 7944 3473,
email: gavin_smart@detr.gsi.gov.uk

This has several components, discussed below.

However, please note that Parts 1-4 are already being commissioned and therefore expressions of interest are not required. A description of this work is provided for information only.

Please make it clear whether your organisation wishes to express an interest in Parts 5 & 6 or only one of them.

The audit will provide an overview of the current state of the sector(s) that will be covered by the Supporting People regime. The focus will be not just on the amount of provision, but its appropriateness and its adequacy, in relation to the extent of need.

The audit will also provide a baseline measure that would be available for use in the evaluation studies planned for subsequent years.

Objectives

Part 1 - Estimates of current supply of accommodation and support by client group (national and regional estimates and methodology for production of local estimates) and good practice guidance for use by local authorities.

Part 2 - Current need for accommodation and support by client group (national and regional estimates and methodology for production of local estimates) and good practice guidance for use by local authorities;

Part 3 - Using supply and demand data to estimate the levels of unmet need;

Part 4 - Identifying the extent of inappropriate/unpopular provision.

Outputs

- National and regional estimates of need, provision, inappropriate provision and programme cost.
- A methodology for the local assessment of need for support.
- Guidance for local Social Service, Housing and Probation services on assessing local needs.

Project One - Part 5

Pattern of ownership (RSL, local authority, charitable, etc) and implications of ownership for the amount of regulation and scrutiny of provision necessary.

Timetable: Commission September/October 2000.

Research contact: Gavin Smart, tel: (020) 7944 3473,
email: gavin_smart@detr.gsi.gov.uk

Objectives

- To map current provision of services to be funded through Supporting People.
- Identify gaps in current data on provision and design appropriate research and statistical approaches to provide the missing information.
- Identify and describe the various regimes of regulation and scrutiny under which different providers operate.

- Produce sound policy conclusions commenting on any changes required in the recording of provision information, in all sectors, and/or changes needed in the different regimes of regulation and scrutiny.

Outputs

- Research report reviewing current patterns of ownership across all provider sectors.
- Conclusions making recommendations for policy change necessary to improve regulation and scrutiny (if necessary).

Skills

- Knowledge of the sector.
- Knowledge of existing datasets detailing ownership of housing with support and the provision of support services.
- Understanding of the systems of regulation employed by the government departments responsible for overseeing social services, local authority housing and probation services; the Housing Corporation; any other bodies overseeing the charitable/private sectors.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to liaise with a wide range of officers, provider organisations, representative bodies and individual provider organisations.
- Ability to construct appropriate methodological approaches to fill the gaps in existing datasets recording patterns of provision of accommodation and support services.
- Ability to make appropriate policy recommendations based upon research findings.

Project One - Part 6

Indication of extent to which current management and staffing of provision attains an agreed standard.

Timetable: Commission June/July 2000.

Research contact: Gavin Smart, tel: (020) 7944 3473,
email: gavin_smart@detr.gsi.gov.uk

Objectives

- Carry out staff skills audit of the Supporting People sector.

- Identify gaps in existing information, taking into account the Housing Corporation's Performance Indicators introduced in April 2000 and design appropriate research approaches to provide required missing information.
- Produce policy conclusions, to include any recommendations for systems of accreditation and/or training if research suggests these are required.

Outputs

- Research report reviewing current levels of staffing and staff/management skills.
- Policy conclusions detailing any recommended changes needed to improve the skills base of the sector.

Skills

- Experience of or ability to carry out staff skills audit research at the national level.
- Knowledge of the sector and formally recognised qualifications likely to be held by staff and management.
- Ability to devise an appropriate approach to identify level of skills and qualifications across the sector nationally.
- Ability to devise and agree agreed staffing and management standards in consultation with the Department.
- Ability to produce a methodology capable of assessing how current management and staff measure up to the agreed standard.
- Ability to make appropriate policy recommendations based upon research findings.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Ability to liaise with a wide range of officers, provider organisations, representative bodies and individual provider organisations.

Project Two - Development of a distribution formula for Supporting People revenue funding

Timetable: Commission by June 2000; interim outputs by December 2001; final outputs by December 2002.

Research contact: Andrew Parfitt, tel: (020) 7944 3273,
email: andrew_parfitt@detr.gsi.gov.uk

Objectives

The main objective is to develop a transparent and robust formula for the distribution of central government revenue funding for Supporting People to social services, housing and probation services at a more local level. In order to derive the formula, the study will require the development of defensible indicators of Supporting People need and effective mechanisms for the collection of local statistical data on the costs of provision.

Scope

The study will concern the arrangements for Supporting People from 2003/04. Although the overall policy framework is as set out in the consultation paper of December 1998, discussions are continuing on many of the more detailed aspects of implementation.

Consequently the approach adopted will need to have the flexibility to incorporate alternative assumptions on issues such as the overall level of funding, the principles governing the distribution between different client groups and the choice of delivery mechanisms.

The research falls into three parts:

Needs indicators

The aim is to identify defensible indicators of variations in the distribution of need at a local level. As an interim stage, a range of potential options for needs indicators will be developed, with the preferred indicator being identified following discussion with government and other relevant parties.

Of particular importance will be to distinguish the needs which are funded through Supporting People, those which are funded through other sources such as charities and contributions from the recipients themselves, and those which remain unmet (whether through people receiving no services at all, or at a lower level than they could potentially benefit from).

In developing the indicators, the study will liaise closely and draw upon the outputs of the ongoing Audit of Sector, as well as carrying out a thorough review of other existing research. Where gaps are identified, for instance in the needs of particular client groups, some primary research may be required.

Costs data

Data on the costs of provision will initially also be drawn from the Sector Audit, and a thorough review of other existing research. But, in liaison with government statisticians, a new statistical return will be developed for completion at the local level, jointly, by social services, housing and probation services. The first set of returns will be collected in September 2001, followed by a second set in September 2002, so as to inform the outputs of the study. The returns will strike a balance between comprehensiveness and ease of completion. They will be designed for

ongoing collection after the end of the study, with the capability of being modified to reflect changing circumstances.

Distribution formula

The distribution formula will draw on the needs indicators and costs data. Its development will require liaison with government statisticians, economists and finance specialists and will draw on experience of local government finance and the allocation of funding for social housing.

The formula will strike a balance between accuracy and simplicity. Its methodology will be defensible and readily explicable to non-specialists. The formula will be capable of being readily modified to reflect the ongoing development of policy in aspects such as the total volume of resources and its distribution between client groups.

A particular issue will be the appropriate geographical scale at which funds are allocated by the formula. This will be addressed in liaison with government officials, in the light of evolving policy requirements.

Outputs

The outputs will be a series of reports to government; a spreadsheet model of the distribution formula, the needs indicators and costs data; and a new statistical return on costs. The consultants will be expected to present their findings to a range of different audiences, including local authorities, specialist advisers and officials within DETR and other government departments.

Skills

A range of skills will be needed, making the project particularly suitable for a consortia of research organisations.

They include:

- ability to develop understanding of the policy context;
- flexibility to respond to ongoing policy development;
- relevant expertise in needs assessment, data collection and analysis;
- appropriate expertise in statistics, economics, finance and social policy;
- excellent oral and written skills.

Project Three - Monitoring and evaluation of preparations for implementation of Supporting People

This project has a number of stages. The preferred option would be for a lead contractor to be involved in both stages outlined below (1 and 2), perhaps adding to the research team as the project expands from looking at the few early preparation areas to a larger number of areas involved in first phase implementation.

Stage 1 - Monitoring and evaluation of early preparation areas

Timetable: Commission by May 2000; complete by April 2002.

Research contact: Jan White, tel: (020) 7944 3107,
email: jan_white@detr.gsi.gov.uk

The project will involve:

Close involvement in the preparatory activities of up to six local authorities, geographically spread across England. This will include different types of authority - county authorities and their relevant districts, and the full range of types of unitary authorities. Each local authority will have a local Project Manager co-ordinating the preparatory activity with whom the researcher will liaise. These local project managers are being funded jointly by the Housing Corporation, the DETR and Anchor Trust. The purpose of the study is to provide DETR with an insight into the issues arising across the range of areas, and an awareness of issues where authorities will need guidance.

The project will require regular attendance at, and reporting to, a DETR/Housing Corporation/Anchor steering group.

Outputs

- Regular reports both oral and written on the nature of, and implications arising from, work in the early preparation areas; discussion of issues arising and alternative solutions.

Skills

- Understanding of the policy context.
- Understanding of the implications of Supporting People for local social services, housing and probation services.
- Ability to liaise with a range of officers.
- Ability to clearly identify and discuss relevant issues.
- Good oral and written presentation skills.

Stage 2 - Monitoring and evaluation of a sample of first phase authorities

Timetable: Commission by January 2001; complete by October 2003.

Research contact: Jan White, tel: (020) 7944 3107,
email: jan_white@detr.gsi.gov.uk

The project will involve assessing the process of implementation, and early stages after 'go-live' in phased areas, if agreed, to contribute to final guidance and directions for the national rollout of Supporting People.

This project would run throughout the implementation stage and cover the first few months of delivery to generate a series of outputs, in the form of briefing papers on emerging issues as well as contributing to the final package of guidance and directions.

Outputs

- Regular reports both oral and written on the nature of, and implications arising from, work in first phase areas.
- Briefing papers on emerging issues; contributions to final package of guidance and directions.

Skills

- Understanding of the policy context.
- Understanding of the implications of Supporting People for local social services, housing and probation services.
- Ability to liaise with a range of officers.
- Ability to clearly identify and discuss relevant issues.
- Good oral and written presentation skills.

Project Four - Readiness review in phased areas

Timetable: Commission by October 2002; complete by December 2002.

Research contact: Jan White, tel: (020) 7944 3107,
email: jan_white@detr.gsi.gov.uk

The project will involve reviewing the position reached in phased areas approximately six months prior to April 2003 'go live' and highlighting issues and areas where further/remedial action is required. This short, focused project will concentrate on the

technical aspects of preparing for implementation, including assessment of the appropriateness of structures, systems (including IT) and operational arrangements.

Outputs

- A detailed and comprehensive report to DETR providing an assessment of the 'state of play' and practical recommendations for further/remedial action.

Skills

- Understanding of the policy context.
- Ability to liaise with a range of officers.
- Ability to clearly identify and discuss relevant issues.
- Assessing systems (including IT) and procedures.

GUIDANCE FOR POTENTIAL CONTRACTORS

Expressions of Interest

Far more Expressions of Interest in projects are received than can be included on the shortlists for invitations to tender for any project. The information contractors provide to support an Expression of Interest is used to select shortlists of invitees to tender.

Invitations to Tender

Normally 3-6 organisations are invited to tender for each project.

Formal invitations to tender include:

- the specification of the project outlining the objectives and why it is being commissioned, and the details expected to be provided in the tender;
- the standard contract conditions;
- the date for receipt of tenders; and
- the expected timing for the announcement of the award of the contract.

In some cases, a pre-tender consultation exercise is carried out in order to ascertain contractor interest in the project and to consult on the specification for the work.

Four weeks is the usual tendering period, although for projects that are required urgently, a shorter tendering period may be sometimes necessary.

Specifications will generally be output based, giving clear guidance on the Department's requirements but leaving it to tenderers to suggest the most appropriate

methods to achieve the objectives. In order to promote competition and value for money, it is the Department's normal practice not to disclose project budgets.

The letter with the invitation to tender gives the name and number of the Department's Nominated Officer for a project and contractors are encouraged to make contact if they wish to discuss the specification.

Tender Documents and their assessment

A tender assessment panel will examine the tenders for value for money. The panel has to be satisfied that the method and programme of work meet the project's objectives and are cost effective.

The panel will also take into account the following:

- the understanding of the issues being addressed;
- familiarity with previous relevant research;
- the experience of the research team; and
- the proposed costs and value for money.

Interviews may be held to assist with this assessment. Normally these will involve the tenderer making a presentation, responding to the questions of the interviewing panel and having an opportunity to make a final statement.

Awarding of Contracts

The assessment of tenders normally results in the selection of a preferred tender, although the Department is not bound to accept any tender. All of the tenderers are informed of the outcome of this decision.

All information in this guidance is checked and believed to be correct, but cannot be so guaranteed and the publishers shall not be liable for any loss suffered directly or indirectly as a result of its use.