

Supporting People Inspection Report

December 2005



Supporting People Inspection

Bradford Metropolitan District Council

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

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Supporting People Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 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 and their partners will need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: www.spkweb.org.uk

Summary

- 1 Bradford Metropolitan District Council is in West Yorkshire, in the north of England. It has a diverse population. Around 22 per cent of the 477,800 population are from minority ethnic communities, predominantly of Pakistani or Indian heritage.
- 2 No political party has overall control of the Council. It is Conservative led with 38 Conservative, 29 Labour, 15 Liberal Democrat, 4 British National Party and 4 Green Party councillors. Bradford has transferred its housing stock in a large scale voluntary transfer to Bradford Community Housing Trust. A care trust, established as a partnership between the Council and the primary care trusts with pooled budgets, has responsibility for delivering care services to people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems.
- 3 The Council employs around 20,000 staff.
- 4 Bradford Metropolitan District Council acts as the administering authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The Council works in partnership with Bradford's four primary care trusts (PCT) and the West Yorkshire Probation Service.
- 5 Supporting People funding available in 2005/06 is £19.48 million (a reduction of £1.015 million, or 5 per cent, on the previous year). To fulfil its role as the administering authority the Council received an administration grant of £333,511 in 2005/06, plus an additional £32,000.
- 6 The Council commissions 325 services in schemes providing support for around 9,250 vulnerable people. Seventy-five per cent of the services are for vulnerable older people in the form of sheltered housing and community alarms. A high proportion of expenditure is on people with learning disabilities (37 per cent of the grant) and people with mental health problems (16 per cent of the grant). There are no services funded through the programme for minority groups of people such as travellers, older people with mental health problems or people with HIV/AIDS.

Scoring the service

- 7 We have assessed Bradford Metropolitan District Council as providing a ‘poor’, no-star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Table 1 Scoring chart¹

		Prospects for improvement?					
Excellent						‘a poor service that has uncertain prospects for improvement’	
Promising							
Uncertain	☀						A good service?
Poor							
		Poor	Fair ★	Good ★★	Excellent ★★★		

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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.

- 8 During the inspection we found a number of weaknesses, some of which are significant.
- There are known gaps in services for some client groups and a heavy concentration on accommodation-based services which restrict client choice and the ability to be flexible about meeting needs. Little progress has been made to plug the gaps or reshape provision.
 - There are few measured or known improved outcomes for service users. The programme does not have a mechanism in place to capture the outcomes that the Supporting People programme delivers.
 - There is limited understanding of the housing-related support needs of some client groups, such as black and minority ethnic communities, travellers and people suffering from HIV/AIDs.
 - Despite contracting services of greater value than the Supporting People grant, the council has been slow to drive through value for money improvements. Comparisons show the average unit cost of services in Bradford to be higher than regional and national comparisons.
 - Very few of the 325 services have had a service review completed. Service reviews are the tool which the Supporting People programme uses to drive up quality standards, reshape provision and unlock funding from legacy services.
 - BMDC has been slow to put eligibility criteria and value for money policies into place and this has hindered the service review programme.
 - Ineligible care services or services which have an element of care are being funded from the Supporting People grant intended for housing-related support. The Council is slow to identify the full amount involved and make arrangements with health and social services for a planned movement of funding to its proper source. Some reductions in contract values have been negotiated in 2003/04 and 2004/05.
 - Little information is available to explain what the Supporting People programme is for existing and potential service users. There are no general leaflets in the Council's offices and no information on fairer charging - the financial help that should be available to service users who are not entitled to a passporting benefit. Fairer charging systems are very late to be put into place.
 - There is no comprehensive local directory of services funded through Supporting People grant. A homeless directory is available but it does not include the full breadth of Supporting People services provided. It does not, for example, include information for older people on sheltered accommodation. Information is available on the ODPM's national directory of Supporting People services.

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- Although financial management is strong, there is no performance management system in place to measure achievement of objectives, monitor progress against indicators that may be jointly owned by health or probation or measure outcomes for service users or the community. ODPM's national key performance indicators for the Supporting People programme are collected and monitored.
- Service users have limited opportunity to influence the strategic development of the Supporting People programme.
- Feedback arrangements, following consultation, are weak. Little feedback is currently provided for example after consulting with service users as part of service reviews.
- The core strategic group is insufficiently focused in its approach. Work focuses too heavily on the detail of operational issues rather than ensuring that robust policies and procedures are developed for the programme and looking ahead to what more is needed.
- The risk of funding reductions is not being adequately shared in the contracts agreed between the Council and service providers. Contrary to good practice, contracts place all the risk of grant reductions on service providers. No agreement has been reached on the wording of steady state contracts.

9 Strengths of the programme include the following.

- Governance arrangements are now well-established and there is good engagement from both the health and probation sectors. Service providers have a strong voice in the development of the programme and are well-represented on the Core Strategic Group.
- A five-year strategy is in place which provides a platform for future development of the programme. Stakeholders have been engaged in its development.
- Enquiries are appropriately signposted and arrangements are in place to deal with enquiries out of normal hours.
- Accurate payments are being made on time to service providers.
- Additional resources have been attracted to the programme. Council reserves and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding have assisted the programme in meeting its contracted commitments. Additional administration resources were secured from the ODPM specifically to catch up with service reviews and this has been matched by additional funds from the Council.
- Council grant payments to the voluntary sector have been closely aligned to the Supporting People programme enabling the development of complementary services to existing housing-related support.
- Cross-authority and regional links with other councils working on Supporting People are strong. Bradford is benefiting by gaining access to more reliable benchmarking information on costs and other work such as eligibility criteria and a value for money assessment tool.

- 10 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for delivering improvements. We found the following strengths.
- The Council, in fulfilling its responsibilities for the Supporting People programme, is aware of what remains to be done and has put in place a series of plans with actions, named responsible officers and timescales to deliver improvements.
 - The Council's Supporting People five-year strategy which sets out where the programme wants to get to. It includes good analysis of need and supply and has clear objectives.
 - Other plans are in place to move the programme forward. These include an annual plan to deliver important elements of the strategy, a project plan structured around the Audit Commission key lines of enquiry, and a risk log which identifies risks, assesses their likelihood of occurrence and impact, and sets out proposed actions to manage them.
 - There is a large team in place with competent staff ready to make a big push forward with the service review programme. Other council staff are being seconded to assist with the review of low -risk schemes. Less intensive procedures are in place to allow them to be processed quickly.
 - The pace of development within the programme is improving. A large number of service reviews are underway and expect to be concluded shortly.
 - There is a clear commitment to the programme from the Council and its statutory partners. The Improvement Committee has identified two lead councillors to become involved with the programme and closely monitor progress.
 - The programme has strong links with cross-authority and regional work. Bradford will benefit from their ongoing programme of work. The Supporting People team is receptive to information sharing and learning from good practice.
- 11 However there are some significant barriers to improvement which include the following.
- The track record of the programme is one of making progress but slowly and late. There is little change so far from legacy provision and outcomes for service users are not measured.
 - The service review programme is proceeding slowly and few value for money improvements have been achieved.
 - Performance management of the Supporting People programme is weak. No measures or targets are being routinely monitored to determine how well the programme is progressing against its stated objectives. Though planned and work has begun, the framework is only in its early stages of development.
 - There is uncertainty about how well, and how quickly, the Supporting People programme in Bradford will unlock funding from legacy provision. It is the key to providing the capacity needed to develop new services and reshape provision in Bradford. To date limited progress has been made.

10 Supporting People Inspection | Scoring the service

- The Council is still contracting for services of greater value than the grant it receives from ODPM. Any savings made from the service review programme will initially be swallowed up addressing the budget deficit.
- Bradford is unlikely to achieve the ODPM milestone of reviewing all services by April 2006.
- A clear, agreed plan is not in place on how to move responsibility for funding ineligible care services to health and social services while maintaining needed services to vulnerable service users.
- Two important items are missing from the strategies and plans.
 - How the programme will determine and rank priorities for new service development? How, for example, will it decide between competing bids where there are clear unmet needs across all the client groups?
 - A commissioning or procurement strategy for the Supporting People programme detailing its approach to procuring new services. How will new services be procured? What approach will be taken or encouraged? How will procurement and contracting be used to encourage culturally sensitive and accessible future service provision?

Recommendations

- 12 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs² and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council shares the findings of this report with customers, service providers and councillors, and addresses all weaknesses identified in the report. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation

R1 Strengthen service user involvement across the Supporting People programme by:

- *establishing involvement and engagement channels for all client groups including and particularly those who are hard-to-reach;*
- *ensuring that information feeds into assessments of need;*
- *developing feedback loops to ensure service users are told what changes result from their involvement;*
- *developing a structured approach to involving service users in the strategic development of the programme; and*
- *evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of arrangements at least annually to the commissioning body.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are as follows.

- The programme will be shaped by the service users. Services will be developed that service users need and want.
- Needs information will be kept up-to-date.
- Service users will feel engaged.
- Improvement mechanisms are built into the process.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by June 2006.

² Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high costs is over 5 per cent.

Recommendation

R2 Prepare for commissioning new services for service users by:

- *estimating how much funding will be unlocked through the service review programme and when;*
- *developing a means of ranking priorities for new service development;*
- *developing a commissioning or procurement strategy for the Supporting People programme, including how value for money will be achieved through procurement, and the approach to cross-authority and joint commissioning;*
- *beginning work to understand the market and prepare for the commissioning process; and*
- *agreeing steady state contracts which ensure that risk is handled properly and sensibly where both parties are subject to risk, consider how best it can be shared.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are as follows.

- Planning for the development of new services begins early. New services can be procured as soon as the funding is available.
- Strategies are in place ready for new service development.
- Steady state contracts are acceptable to both parties ensuring continuity of quality support services for vulnerable people.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by June 2006.

Recommendation

R3 Strengthen monitoring of the service review programme and the delivery of value for money by:

- *establishing progress milestones for key components such as eligibility and value for money, of the programme and reporting to all commissioning body and core strategic group meetings until reviews are completed;*
- *ensuring all services are subjected to a fair and thorough assessment of value for money;*
- *establishing robust quality assurance procedures; and*
- *identifying and quantifying ineligible services and agreeing plans with Social Services and Health to move funding to the correct budgets.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are as follows.

- A tight grip is maintained on the delivery of the service review programme. Any slippage can be quickly identified and remedial action taken.
- Reviews are fair and consistent.
- Funds in legacy services will be unlocked.
- Services to vulnerable individuals will be protected.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by February 2006.

Recommendation

R4 Improve performance management arrangements for the Supporting People programme by:

- *establishing and monitoring:*
 - *indicators that will measure the outcomes and benefits for service users;*
 - *indicators that will measure progress against the objectives of the Supporting People five-year strategy;*
- *tracking:*
 - *indicators that the programme shares with its partners in health and probation;*
 - *contributions to local programme objectives including the neighbourhood renewal programme, youth offending team, drug action team;*
 - *progress on government commitments and local government targets such as reducing emergency bed days and preventing homelessness;*
- *establishing targets and measures for efficiency and value for money improvements; and*
- *reporting progress against targets, at least six-monthly to the commissioning body, and at least quarterly to the core strategic group.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are as follows.

- The programme will know how it is progressing.
- The programme will know the contribution it is making to wider objectives.
- Poor performance will be easier and quicker to spot.
- Investment decisions will be better informed.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by June 2006.

- 13 We would like to thank the staff of Bradford Metropolitan District Council who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 19 September to 23 September 2005.

Regional contact details

Audit Commission

Kernel House

Killingbeck Drive

Killingbeck

Leeds, LS14 6UF

Telephone: 0113 251 7130

Fax: 0113 251 7131

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Report

Context

The locality

- 14 Bradford is situated in West Yorkshire, in the north of England. The district is the fourth largest metropolitan council in England. Although two-thirds of the district is rural, 80 per cent of the 477,800 population live in the urban areas of Bradford and its four main towns of Keighley, Bingley, Shipley and Ilkley.
- 15 Bradford has a diverse population with 21.7 per cent of the population from minority ethnic communities (England 10.4 per cent), primarily of rural Pakistani and Indian heritage. The district has a young population, with high levels of under 16 year-olds when compared with other areas nationally and a lower than average number of over 65 year-olds. Overall population levels are forecast to rise over the next few years. Sixty per cent of residents describe their religion as Christian and 16.1 per cent Muslim.
- 16 The area has high levels of deprivation. It ranks as the 31st most deprived council out of the 354 in the country as a whole. Almost one-third of the area is in the 10 per cent most deprived in England. At 3 per cent, unemployment is at its lowest level for some time, although still higher than the national average of 2.4 per cent.

The Council

- 17 No party has overall control in Bradford. With 38 seats, Conservatives are the largest party and lead the Council. The remainder of the 90 councillors comprise 29 Labour, 15 Liberal Democrat, 4 British National Party and 4 Green Party. A leader and cabinet – known as an Executive – govern the business of the Council.
- 18 The Council's annual revenue budget for 2005/06 is £616 million with reserves and balances of over £75 million. The Council is managed by the Chief Executive and his leadership team of three assistant chief executives. It has around 20,000 staff.

- 19 Community priorities for Bradford are set out in the community plan, '2020 Vision', and have been identified as follows:
- the economy and jobs;
 - better education for all;
 - health and social wellbeing;
 - environment and homes;
 - community safety;
 - leisure and culture; and
 - building communities
- 20 The Council's aims, as identified in its corporate plan, are:
- educating and supporting children;
 - creating a more prosperous district;
 - safer and stronger communities;
 - improving the environment;
 - healthier communities and choice for older people; and
 - improving customer services.
- 21 In March 2005, the Council entered into a pilot local area agreement. Local area agreements aim to improve the relationship between central and local government and their partners, simplify funding streams, join up public services and encourage more flexible local solutions for local problems. Bradford has transferred its housing stock in a large scale voluntary transfer to Bradford Community Housing Trust. A care trust, established as a partnership between the Council and the primary care trusts with pooled budgets, has responsibility for delivering care services to people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems.

The service

- 22 Bradford MDC acts as the administering authority (accountable local authority - ALA) for the Supporting People programme in the area. The Council received a Supporting People grant of £19.48 million for 2005/06, which is a reduction of £1.015 million, or 5 per cent, on the previous year's allocation. The Council also received an administration grant of £333,511 which is a 4 per cent reduction on the previous year. An additional £32,000 has been awarded by the ODPM specifically to help the Council complete its service review programme.

- 23 The service is located within the regeneration and housing department and consists of a large team covering the Supporting People programme and access to housing services. In total there are 21 staff, some with dual responsibilities, organised into the following:
- Lead Officer;
 - service development – 7 posts
 - finance and IT – 4 posts;
 - research – 2 posts;
 - administration – 4 posts; and
 - access to housing services – 3 posts.
- 24 Unit costs for the services that are commissioned are significantly higher than the regional or national averages, when community alarms and sheltered housing are excluded. The average 2003/04 unit costs of services in Bradford were £147.79, compared to the regional and national averages of £100.47 and £76.37 respectively.
- 25 The highest cost service, at £810.42 per unit per week, is an accommodation-based service for young vulnerable adults. The lowest cost services are community alarm services.
- 26 In total the programme funds:
- 8,750 units of accommodation-based support, and
 - 509 units of floating support.
- 27 Three-quarters of the services are for vulnerable older people in the shape of sheltered housing and community alarms.
- 28 A breakdown of current spending shows:
- a high-level of expenditure on services for people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems;
 - low levels of floating support across all client groups; and
 - no specific Supporting People funded services for older people with mental health problems, travellers and people suffering from HIV/AIDS.
- 29 Strategic objectives and key priorities for the Supporting People programme in Bradford are set out in the Council's recently launched five-year strategy as shown in the following table.

Table 2 Strategic objectives and key priorities

Five strategic objectives	Key priorities
Establish and maintain multi-agency partnerships	Strengthen links with other forums
Place user needs at the centre	Meaningful user consultation
Shape direction on the basis of user needs	Understand the needs of black and minority ethnic communities
Accessible services	Match provision to needs
Effective monitoring, review and administration	Establish mechanisms to evaluate the benefits
Short-term goal – address the budget deficit	

How good is the service?

30 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:

- governance;
- delivery arrangements;
- service reviews;
- user involvement;
- access to services and information;
- diversity;
- outcomes for service users; and
- value for money.

Governance

- 31** The ODPM 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 development 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.
- 32** Governance arrangements for the Supporting People programme in Bradford are well-established with good engagement from both health and probation sectors. However, the commissioning body is not driving the agenda to ensure that critical parts of the programme are being delivered. An advisory group of service providers ensures that their opinions are heard and decision makers fully understand the impact of decisions on the services they deliver. Bradford is actively involved in cross-authority work which brings a number of benefits. The core strategic group is insufficiently focused on agreed priorities to develop the programme and service users have limited involvement in the strategic development of the programme. Performance management is underdeveloped. The impact is that good relations are developing between the partners but the programme is not being driven in important areas.
- 33** There is a clear corporate commitment from the Council to the programme and councillors understand the responsibilities attached to the council's role in administering the programme. In Bradford, service contract values exceed the amount of Supporting People grant and it has been necessary for the Council to support the programme financially to maintain the level of service provision. This has heightened awareness of the programme at Executive level particularly around budget setting. The Executive receives periodic reports and the councillor with lead responsibility for regeneration and housing takes responsibility for the programme.
- 34** Improvement committees (scrutiny) are firmly involved in the programme. They have received reports on progress and were involved in the development of the five-year strategy. Two specific councillors have recently been appointed by the social care improvement committee to strengthen links with the programme and take a lead on Supporting People issues.

- 35** Strong links exist with the local strategic partnership – Bradford Vision – and its themed boards through officers holding linked positions on other groups. For example the Deputy Chief Executive sits on main partnership board and the Safer Communities Partnership Board, the Accountable Officer sits on the Housing Partnership Board and the Older Persons Partnership. There are clear links between the Supporting People strategy and the community plan and the corporate plan.
- 36** There are two main governance weaknesses for the programme. Firstly, other than on financial matters, performance management arrangements are underdeveloped. This means that the group is in a weak position to understand what the programme is achieving and then use this information to inform its decisions. Secondly, the commissioning body is not driving the agenda. It is not pushing for progress in key areas with the urgency that is needed, for example, on achieving value for money from the services commissioned.

Commissioning body

- 37** The commissioning body is firmly established with appropriate levels of senior representation from the Council, health and probation sectors. The Assistant Chief Executive for Social Care holds the council vote, probation is represented by the Assistant Chief Probation Officer and the four PCTs have one representative, the Programmes Director who sits astride all four. This means that the body can function effectively with officers having sufficient delegated authority to make decisions and allow the programme to move forward.
- 38** Commitment from the three partner agencies is good and all consider that an effective partnership has developed. There are high levels of attendance from each of the partner agencies.
- 39** Clear terms of reference for the group were developed in 2004. Their role and purpose is further clarified in job descriptions and person specifications. A memorandum of understanding, agreed in July 2005, confirms protocols to be followed in the event of a dispute between partners. Conflict of interest procedures are also in place.
- 40** Strong governance links are made with the Council's arrangements for commissioning services from the voluntary sector. A sum of £600,000 is designated to commission services that are complementary to Supporting People's housing-related support services. Recommendations on which services to procure are made by the commissioning body to the community funding unit. The Head of Commissioning attends commissioning body meetings in an advisory capacity.

Advisory group

- 41** A group of advisors play a useful role in Bradford ensuring that members of the commissioning body are fully aware of the impact their decisions may have. It is a group that has evolved over time. Its membership is made up of service providers from the core strategy group and other relevant council officers such as the Equalities Officer and a representative of Bradford Social Service Joint Commissioning Unit.

- 42 There is some confusion over the membership of this group and its purpose, for example, whether it provided a scrutiny function of decisions taken or an advisory function beforehand, whether the group should meet with the Commissioning Body before or after their meeting. Both are currently under review.

Core strategy group

- 43 The work of the core strategic group is insufficiently focused on driving development of the programme. Meetings are too operational and are more of an information giving nature rather than detailed discussion around strategic developments with recommendations for the commissioning body.
- 44 This has already been recognised by the group and the role of the group is under review. In particular, it is considering how service users can best be engaged in strategic developments, performance management arrangements, and the role and relationship between the three strategic groups.
- 45 The group has a wide membership made up of 37 relevant stakeholders, including significant representation from the various service provider forums with 6 representatives from the non-statutory housing sector and one from the housing association liaison group. Probation and health are represented as are a wide range of stakeholders. Wide membership ensures that the views of a wide range of stakeholders are considered in the development of policies and procedures for the Supporting People programme.
- 46 Job descriptions for members make the role of the group clear including:
- The role of the group includes supporting the development of relevant policies and processes.*
- ... to look at the wider implications of the Supporting People programme, thinking ahead to the needs of the vulnerable people and considering any new and emergent issues.*
- 47 Its practice does not, however, concentrate on developing policies and the wider implications of the programme. The group has no clear programme of work drawn from the key policies and procedures that the programme still needs to develop. It is not asked to carry out pieces of work by the commissioning body. Nor does it currently take a progress monitoring role, for example of the annual plan. Papers to the commissioning body are not submitted from the core strategic group. This means that policies are developed late or with tight timescales on consultation.

Accountable Officer

- 48 The role of the Accountable Officer includes ensuring that the programme is adequately resourced and driven forward, ensuring delays are promptly brought to the attention of the commissioning body for corrective action. The programme in Bradford has developed slowly and the need for greater urgency and focus on service reviews has not been successfully raised with the commissioning body. Additional resources have however been secured for the programme and its administration ensuring that services to vulnerable people are maintained.

- 49 The role of championing Supporting People and raising its profile is being effectively addressed. The role is shared between the Accountable Officer and two other senior officers – the Assistant Chief Executive and the Director of Regeneration and Housing. Between them effective links are made to appropriate forums and partnerships ensuring that Supporting People is understood and its contribution considered as part of the development of strategies and plans on wider community and corporate issues. Consequently, Supporting People is integrated into wider plans such as the housing strategy, into the corporate plan supporting healthier communities and choice for older people and creating a more prosperous district, and into the local strategic partnership's safer communities sub partnership and others.

Cross-authority partnership working

- 50 Bradford has strong cross-authority ties and takes a lead in some aspects of partnership work. Attendance at cross-authority meetings and the regional implementation group is good. There are a number of benefits that have been gained from these connections, such as more accurate benchmarking data for service cost comparisons, sharing good practice on policies, multi-agency protocols to help meet the housing needs of offenders, and a cross-authority statement of purpose.
- 51 Probation and health are fully integrated into Supporting People and play an appropriate part in the governance arrangements for Bradford. Probation chairs local cross-authority meetings and line manages an officer jointly employed to co-ordinate cross-authority work between 15 local authority areas. Supporting People is well integrated into local multi-agency public protection arrangements for high-risk offenders.

Delivery arrangements

- 52 Some significant arrangements are not in place to effectively deliver the Supporting People programme in Bradford. The five-year strategy is in place showing clearly where the Council aims to get to, and most of the policies are now in place. Payment arrangements are robust and a sizeable team supports delivery. However, there are weaknesses in performance management including contingency planning; fairer charging policies and procedures; and a lack of urgency to unlock funding from legacy services.

- 53 Until recently the Supporting People team has struggled to adequately resource the full development of the programme. A high staff turnover made the position worse and meant that in some areas, such as service reviews, there were difficulties maintaining continuity. That position has eased and the Council now has a larger team in place to deal with the development and administration of the programme. It has a logical structure divided between functional responsibilities:
- service development – including service reviews and contract management;
 - IT and finance – including payments and value for money assessments;
 - research – customer consultation and needs assessment;
 - administration, and
 - access to housing.
- 54 As a joint team there are particularly close links with other housing functions delivered by the Council. These include the management of the homeless service, refugee and asylum seeker services, strategic housing, private sector housing. This means that there is good integration of Supporting People with other housing policies and strategies and close sharing of data, for example, on the housing-related support needs of refugees.
- 55 Accurate payments are being made on time and service providers are satisfied with the arrangements in place. Payments are made one week in arrears and three weeks in advance which does not fully comply with ODPM guidelines but is in line with council policy on payments and has not been mentioned by providers as an issue.
- 56 Structures are in place to engage effectively with service providers. Engagement is primarily through a network of provider groups, such as the non-statutory housing group, and many groups are represented on the core strategic group. Supporting People have strong links with this network.
- 57 Policies for the programme such as the eligibility policy and the value for money policy have only recently been developed, although they are now in place. An accreditation framework is in the process of being approved. This has slowed the service review process and contributed to delays in unlocking funding.
- 58 Fairer charging systems are very late to be put into place. An interim charging policy was agreed in 2003, but systems to promote access to fairer charging and process assessments are not in place. This is a significant weakness and may mean that since 2003 some new service users have been paying for services that they may be entitled to help with. It also means there is an increasing amount of money owing to service users in unclaimed assistance. A pilot exercise is underway to try and estimate the amount and the numbers involved. The impact is that vulnerable people do not become aware of the financial assistance they may be entitled to. Consequently, they are denied financial support or may choose not to access housing-related support services that will help them build or maintain their capacity to live independently in the community.

- 59 Strategic objectives and main priorities are clearly set out in the five-year strategy which was completed in July 2005, behind the ODPM target of March 2005 although with prior agreement from ODPM. The strategy has been based on wide consultation with stakeholders. However, it is not clear how priorities between different client groups will be determined, for example which services need to be developed, expanded or reconfigured first? This lack of clarity may result in priority services not being developed in the order that their needs demand.
- 60 The strategy is well set out and provides good analysis of the supply of services matched against the needs of particular client groups. In some areas, such as travellers, people with HIV/AIDS and BME communities there is recognition that more work is needed to better understand their housing-related support needs. This improved understanding of provision and need will assist in making better informed decisions on commissioning.
- 61 Some planning arrangements are in place but there are weaknesses in reporting and monitoring arrangements. The strategy is supported by an annual action plan and progress is intended to be reported periodically to the commissioning body. It makes links to strategic objectives and covers objectives specific to 2005/06. A project plan structured around the Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry covers more detailed actions for the team. However, it is not clear how often progress is reported nor how the plan is monitored. Financial matters on the other hand are closely monitored and regularly reported to the Council and the commissioning body.
- 62 The lack of a performance management framework for the programme is a weakness. Work has started and there is a theoretical model of what constitutes a well performing, well organised, effective and outcome driven Supporting People programme. The details, however, are not in place. Performance on targets that may be shared between the partner agencies, for example, on emergency hospital admissions, are not tracked. Nor are there specific measures in place to monitor progress and achievement of strategic objectives and key priorities. Indeed, one of the key priorities itself is to establish mechanisms to evaluate the benefits of the Supporting People programme to the individual, strategic partners, stakeholder agencies and the community as a whole. Without a performance management framework, for example, the programme is unable to assess how successful it is at changing the balance of accommodation-based support to floating support where this is appropriate. Nor is it able to gauge how effective support is in delivering outcomes for service users.

- 63 Risks have been adequately assessed but more work is needed to ensure actions to mitigate risks are delivered and adequate contingency plans are in place for major incidents. A risk log has been developed for the Supporting People programme and one specifically for IT. They are comprehensive and consider potential risks from different aspects, such as strategic, operation, service review and others. For each, the probability of the event occurring and the likely impact has been assessed and actions identified to mitigate the risk with named officers responsible for the action. It is less clear how the Supporting People team ensures the actions are carried out and monitored. Other than for major IT failings, there do not appear to be any documented contingency plans in place. These are necessary to protect vulnerable individuals particularly in times of crisis, for example when a service has to close at short notice.
- 64 Contracting arrangements have not been fully resolved to ensure a smooth transition of services. Interim contracts are not in place for 11 of the 325 services involving around £6.7 million, or 34 per cent, of the annual grant. Ten of the eleven relate to one service provider and despite both parties being asked why contracts remain unsigned, the position remains confused. Nevertheless legacy services continue to be delivered with a negotiated reduction in the legacy value and the services concerned are currently under review.
- 65 Although in practice funding reductions have been shared between the Council and service providers, the risks of funding cuts are not appropriately shared in the wording of the contracts. Service providers disagree with the wording on the contract - both interim and proposed steady state contracts - which allows the commissioner to vary the value of the contract if the grant from ODPM changes.

Clause 9.2 ...³ for the duration of this contract the Contract Price may be adjusted in accordance with the Supporting People Grant determination from the ODPM in any given year.

- 66 Service providers consider this is unreasonable, they are required to accept all the risk of grant reductions without any consequent reduction in services to be provided.
- 67 ODPM's model contract allowed for variations in exceptional circumstances where the parties agree.

Other⁴ than as set out in the immediately preceding clause, the (contract pPrice)(SP subsidy) will not be varied in any other way unless there are exceptional circumstances and we agree.

³ Bradford Supporting People contract.

⁴ ODPM model contract: spkweb.

- 68 Good practice guidance⁵ advises that the key to success lies in ensuring that risk is handled properly and sensibly. Risks should be allocated to the parties best able to manage them. In this case both parties are exposed to the risk of grant funding reductions and the ODPM clause remains applicable. Variations in contract price need to be exceptional and by agreement. In other words if the price goes down, unless there are value for money savings already identified, a consequent reduction in the volume or quality of services should be negotiated. Steady state contracts need to provide some degree of certainty and longevity for the sector to remain sustainable.
- 69 Action is being taken to secure additional funding to address budget deficits and maintain the level of services to vulnerable people. Block gross chargeable contracts were agreed for a number of services where assumptions on void or chargeable units later proved incorrect. This has resulted in a lower level of income from chargeable services than anticipated and together with cuts in grant have resulted in the present deficit position. Currently, the deficit is being met by funding from council reserves and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. However, the Council recognises that the continued use of reserves is unsustainable. The Supporting People programme has been slow to unlock funding from legacy services because of ineligible services or poor value for money.
- 70 The budget deficit for 2003/04 was £565,000 rising to £1,379,000 in 2004/05 and expected to be in the region of £1,044,000 for 2005/06. Council reserves have been approved to make up the deficit and £300,000 has been secured from Neighbourhood Renewal funding for 2005/06 to maintain services at the current level for older people, frail elderly and women fleeing domestic violence. Two services have been decommissioned at the service providers request and some reduction in payment has been negotiated to realise savings from services currently subject to review.
- 71 No inflationary rises have been awarded to service providers in the last two years and the commissioning body also imposed an across the board 5 per cent cut in April 2005. Service providers who felt unable to maintain services under these conditions were asked to make representations to the Commissioning Body. Although the decision was taken following consultation with service providers, it was most unpopular and relations with service providers are showing increasing signs of strain. Two service providers negotiated a reduction in service levels.
- 72 Links between the team and housing benefit are good. They have worked together to help service providers prior to Supporting People going live in April 2003, and 99 per cent of transitional housing benefit claims were resolved in time for the platinum cut. Relevant members of the Supporting People team have viewing access to the housing benefits system to enable them to resolve queries themselves. However, the system does not allow for reports to be generated giving service user movements to and from schemes which would be useful to Supporting People for contract management purposes.

⁵ Think Smart, Think Voluntary Sector - Office of Government Commerce, Home Office.

- 73 Satisfactory complaints procedures are in place for the Supporting People programme. Arrangements are in place to record and deal with complaints about the Supporting People programme. In appropriate circumstances the complaint should first be considered by the service provider. A register is maintained to log and monitor action. Few formal complaints have been made so far.

Service reviews

- 74 The service review programme in Bradford has made slow progress and to date there are few tangible outcomes. Much work is in progress and the team's dedicated service review resources have been increased. A less intensive approach is being adopted to review low risk services with additional resources from another council department. However, given the track record of progress to date and the lack of detailed progress monitoring, the service review programme is unlikely to be completed by April 2006 ODPM deadline. In addition, work on high cost services has not progressed with the urgency and speed that it requires. The benefits, in terms of increased knowledge about services being delivered, improvements in quality and reshaping of services to meet user needs, and releasing funding for investment in new services are, therefore, not being delivered.
- 75 Legacy services have been analysed and a programme of service reviews established targeting high cost and high risk services first. The approach was subsequently amended to review by client group, again targeting services to people with a learning disability, the highest cost service group, first.
- 76 Reviewing care and support provision to the learning disability sector as a whole will delay any savings from value for money improvements. Extending the scope of the review of services to consider whole service provision to this sector including health and social care services can be applauded for considering the complete package of care and support services that individuals need. However, this appears to be a late consideration as the approach so far has not been joined up. Service reviews of all but one of the 39 schemes delivering housing-related support services have commenced and completed their early stages. Concurrent or joined up reviews of the health and social care elements of these schemes have not taken place. Nor is there a timetable or project plan in place to show when and how the project overall will be completed. The impact will be to maintain provision to service users with learning disabilities but delay the release of any surpluses through ineligibility or value for money. This in turn affects the whole housing-related support sector as service providers suffer across the board cuts to funding and prevents the development of new services where there currently are none.

- 77 Progress with service reviews has been hindered by high staff turnover and a lack of relevant policies. Turnover of staff meant that some reviews changed service development officer part way through. Reviews have been started long before necessary policies were in place meaning that the reviews could not be completed. In some cases it has been necessary to back track once the policy has been put into place, for example on eligibility matters. An accreditation framework is in the final stages of completion. This has resulted in a negative experience for service providers. It is one area that has particularly low levels of satisfaction and results from a number of frustrations which can be summarised as follows:
- providers do not know when the service review will be completed;
 - they do not receive feedback at each stage, for example after assessment of whether the service is strategically relevant or after a validation visit;
 - some of the forms are time-consuming and difficult to complete; and
 - few reviews have been concluded so they are uncertain about the future.
- 78 Detailed work on service reviews is however, being carried out with sufficient rigour and there are some positive signals from service providers who have experience of reviews. For example, one provider reported that their quality assessment framework had been undertaken well and that their Service Development Officer responds quickly and appropriately to their requests for information and advice. Another confirmed that the review had been handled well with sufficient notice given on the timing of the review, good information provided and a positive view of the on-site phase.
- 79 The current position of services reviewed through the four stages is:
- 325 services to be reviewed before the end of March 2006;
 - 123 have not been started (including 72 sheltered housing services);
 - 104 are at Stage 1;
 - 3 are at Stage 2;
 - 85 are at Stage 3;
 - 8 are at Stage 4; and
 - 2 services have been decommissioned, both at the request of the service provider.
- 80 Much remains to be done in a short period of time and it will be a major challenge for the team to complete this work on time. Managers do not consider that new contracts for all services will be in place by the end of the financial year and this will further exacerbate the current uncertainties in the provider market.

- 81 The Supporting People team has increased resources in an attempt to meet the short-term challenge. There are six service development officers dedicated to carrying out service reviews. One is funded by the additional ODPM administration grant specifically intended to be spent on catching up. This is match funded by the Council to provide the sixth officer dedicated to service reviews. In addition, the team has secured assistance from the Quality assurance team of the Council's community fund unit. They will carry out less intensive service reviews on the sheltered housing services enabling them to be progressed quickly.
- 82 Service review staff have the required skills and expertise to carry out the reviews. Recruitment was based on detailed job description and person specifications. Additional training is provided to cover any identified need. The team have been recruited from the four main provider sectors, including registered social landlords, council, voluntary and health sectors providing a balance and cross sector expertise.
- 83 An agreed service review process is now in place with value for money and eligibility policies recently agreed. An appeals process is in place for challenges to the findings or decisions to reconfigure or close a service following review although as yet, it is untested.
- 84 No formal quality assurance procedures are in place. All service reviews are checked for completeness by the Service Development and Research Manager, although the review process does not prescribe a check for consistency. There is no external moderation of standards within Bradford. Without these checks in the system, consistency, transparency and confidence may be missing from the process. This is particularly important in the current situation where relations with service providers are strained.
- 85 There is some evidence of joining up service reviews with other sectors but it is more disjointed for the major health and social care sectors. The Supporting People team work jointly with the Council's community funding section on dual-funded services to streamline work and ensure a holistic approach. For other dual-funded care and support services, reviews have proceeded on the support element only. Efficiencies in time and effort that can be gained from one review are, therefore, lost.
- 86 Engagement with service users and carers is an effective part of the service review process, although arrangements to feedback outcomes need to be substantially improved. Engagement may involve one to one meetings, group meetings or questionnaires depending on the nature of the services provided and the individual clients involved. Service providers are satisfied with their client's engagement on service reviews undertaken so far. However, little feedback is provided to service users and this needs to change if participation is to be effective.

- 87 Few tangible outcomes have been achieved from service reviews so far. Two services have been decommissioned at the service providers' request. Forty-three service improvement plans have been issued to providers for discussion aimed at improving the quality of existing service provision. It is too early for service users to see the quality improvements linked specifically to the service review process. When completed, service review outcomes are to be reported to the commissioning body.
- 88 Progress on the service review programme is not being monitored in the detail that it requires as it is key to developing the programme. Some reporting does take place although the agenda item on service reviews at the core strategic group meeting lacked any detail. There is no outline plan identifying the progress on each review, identifying milestones and assessing the timescales and resources needed to complete each. Nor is there a summarised version for the programme as a whole. Without these in place, it is more difficult to assess actual progress and recognise early that the programme is falling behind.
- 89 Some benefits have been derived from cross-authority working although there are no agreements on cross-authority accreditation. Eligibility and value for money policies have been informed by what is working best amongst Bradford's cross-authority partner councils. A draft accreditation policy is under consultation. It does not provide for accreditations by another council so fails to take advantage of possible savings in time and effort needed to review service providers who may provide services in other council areas. More cross-authority work is expected in a number of areas including accreditation and ⁶pass-porting, joint commissioning and a wider approach to move on problems. This work is very late given the ODPM requirement to complete all service reviews by March 2006.

Service user involvement

- 90 Service user involvement is a mixed picture with areas for improvement outweighing strengths. There is a strong commitment from the Supporting People programme to engage and involve service users although this work is progressing at a slower pace than would be expected. Links have been made with established groups and service users have been involved in the development of the five-year strategy and in service reviews. However, all client groups are not currently engaged with the programme and service users do not have a voice within the planning and delivery structures. Delays in the service review programme impact on the widespread engagement opportunities with service users that the service review programme provides. Finally and most importantly, feedback arrangements need to be strengthened to inform service users how their views result in real changes in the planning and delivery of services.

⁶ Passporting is a system where one council will accept the service review conclusions of another council without the need to repeat all or some of the work. This saves time and avoids duplication where the same provider delivers services in more than one district.

- 91 Effective links have been made with most established groups within the Bradford district for user involvement and consultation. However, this does not cover all the Supporting People client groups. Sensibly the programme utilises these existing service user forums such as Waddiloves service user forum for people with learning disabilities or Bradford District Care Trust public involvement forum to engage with people with mental health problems. This network is not comprehensive and some client groups are not routinely engaged, for example, travellers.
- 92 To improve engagement, specifically with hard-to-reach groups, the Council has supported a local advocacy group to hold events and carry out consultation. These have been successful in engaging with over 100 existing and potential clients and the messages informed the needs assessment and priorities for homeless people detailed in the five-year strategy.
- 93 There is a strong publicly stated commitment to engagement and consultation but no measures are in place to show whether it is being achieved. The five-year strategy places great importance on engagement with service users. One of five strategic objectives for the strategy is to shape the direction of the programme on the basis of user needs. This is underpinned by the key priority of carrying out meaningful user consultation. No measures are in place to show how these will be monitored.
- 94 Service users were also consulted on the five-year strategy through the other established forums such as the Bradford and District Care Trust learning disabilities user forum. Workshops were held which focused on hard-to-reach groups, including black and minority communities, refugees and young people at risk. It is, however, recognised that unlike service providers, service users do not have an adequate voice within the Supporting People decision making framework to contribute to the strategic development of the programme. This matter is being discussed by the core strategic group although no conclusions or decisions have been reached yet.
- 95 Service users are effectively engaged in the service review process through a variety of different methods. Their views assist in assessing the quality of the service and determining what improvements are necessary. Little feedback is, however, provided to service users following the review and this represents a weakness in current arrangements.
- 96 There is a lack of feedback to service users following consultation. Both service users and advocates told us that they received little feedback after being consulted or involved. This is not adequately addressed in the draft user consultation strategy. Feedback is an important element in the consultation process to maintain the interest of service users and show how their contribution is helping to change the way the programme is planned and delivered.
- 97 Twice a year, the Council organises an inclusive forum with an open invitation to service users. It is mainly a broader stakeholder event although a small number of service users do attend and contribute to discussions. The Supporting People programme recognises that this forum is not appropriate for some client groups to make an effective contribution.

- 98 There are a number of examples where users are being positively engaged by service providers in the detailed development of their services. These include the following.
- House meetings to discuss issues and request changes. Issues were then discussed at higher levels with staff acting as advocates for service users.
 - There has been some changes to internal scheme rules and extension of activities as a result of service user feedback.
- 99 No mechanism is in place however to capture good practices identified and ensure that they are shared across the programme. An opportunity to spread good practices is, therefore, lost.

Access to services and information

- 100 Access to services is improving, but current information available to existing and potential service users is weak. Briefings have been delivered to ensure front line staff are more aware of the housing-related support services available. Service user enquiries are adequately signposted. There is information on the council website and access routes to services out-of-hours. However, there is currently no leaflet provision on Supporting People particularly covering a range of issues of importance to service users including fairer charging. General information on the range of services available is limited and not focused around the individual.
- 101 Some effective work has been carried out to ensure frontline staff are aware of the Supporting People programme and its services. In conjunction with a service provider, the Supporting People team has held a number of awareness briefings for frontline staff to assist them in understanding what services are available, financial systems and how the programme aims to increase the quality of services. Following positive feedback similar briefings were offered to all service providers although the take up has been limited. Awareness briefings were also held with Bdirect - the Council's one-stop shop - frontline staff and managers. All mystery shopper enquiries were dealt with promptly and courteously with adequate signposting to the location where more specific information was available.
- 102 Probation managers understand the need to keep their staff well informed about Supporting People developments and this is reflected in communication arrangements. Similar arrangements are in place in the health sector with briefings being disseminated through established networks.
- 103 Information for potential and existing service users is, however, limited. A general purpose information leaflet on Supporting People in Bradford is in the final stages of development. None are yet on display in the council offices visited by the public. Procedures on fairer charging are still being developed and piloted. These are very late and there is no information available to people about the financial help towards housing-related support services and how to make an application. Consequently, some service users may not be able to obtain financial support, which they may be entitled to, or may choose not to take up a particular support service, because they feel they cannot afford it.

- 104** Satisfactory information on Supporting People is available on the council's website with links to the ODPM national website. An overview of Supporting People is available and there is electronic access to the 'homelessness directory'. This gives information on hostel accommodation in the district and where to go for advice. The website is not particularly easy to navigate and does not include the five-year strategy, although it can be found through a link to the national Supporting People website.
- 105** There is no common standard of information provision by service providers to service users. This factor is picked up as part of the service review process. However currently some information on Supporting People is provided by service providers although the standard is variable. Many of the schemes have developed leaflets and information sheets for their own services users. These are generally informative and some are very well written and presented. However, others are not user friendly with overuse of jargon, abbreviations and small print size. There is little consistency about the use of strap-lines offering information in other languages or formats. Where a strap-line is included, it is usually in English. This may defeat the purpose of enabling the information to be available to someone who does not read English well, particularly relevant in a district with a high number of black and minority ethnic communities.
- 106** Supporting People has been integrated with wider council information on the provision of services to vulnerable groups. Bradford's *'Better Care: Higher Standards'* charter for 2005/06 has been updated to include reference to Supporting People funded housing-related support services.
- 107** Access out-of-hours is reasonable and is provided through several different channels:
- a directory of homeless services with contact details is on the website;
 - the website also contains a link to social services out-of-hours team who can be contacted in emergencies, this number is also widely available to the police and health services;
 - Bradford Community Housing Trust provide a 24-hour access hostel and dispersed units; and
 - a number of direct access services are accessible out of normal office hours, these include homeless hostels and domestic violence refuges.
- 108** Local information is limited on the full range of services supported by Supporting People funding which may provide people with choice. A homeless directory is available which includes good detail on the range of homeless services and advice including 40 hostels. It does not, however, include all Supporting People funded services, for example it does not include any sheltered accommodation services for older people. In addition its title - the homeless directory - may mislead or put off people looking for appropriate support and should be extended to cover the full range of services provided. Information on Bradford's Supporting People services is, however, available on the ODPM's national directory of services. Broader packages of information covering all services - education, employment, housing, health - by client group are not available.

Diversity

- 109** Strengths and weaknesses are equally balanced in the Council's approach to diversity. Some services are specifically provided for black and minority ethnic groups, although more are needed. Information on housing-related support need is improving but there remain gaps, for example, on the needs of travellers or the needs of people suffering from HIV/AIDS. The ability of service providers to provide for diverse communities is assessed as part of the service review. More information is being provided to service users on the cultural sensitivity of services and more people from BME communities are accessing services. However, this information does not cover all housing-related support services, nor does it include details that are essential to vulnerable people with mobility problems. Without information on need, the Council cannot know whether or what type of service is required. Without information, people are denied choice.
- 110** Information on the housing-related support needs in Bradford does not adequately cover all client groups. It is improving but more work remains to be done. The five-year strategy has drawn together what is currently known about the diverse housing-related support needs of individuals and communities in Bradford. It accepts that there are gaps in intelligence and proposes actions to plug these gaps. The strategy analyses existing service provision comparing this with services needed to arrive at requirements for developing provision for all client groups including those who are hard-to-reach.
- 111** Assessment of need draws upon some major local studies including:
- 'breaking down the barriers' research into the housing needs of BME communities; and
 - the African and Caribbean housing needs survey.
- 112** The research has informed the strategy, for example, identifying a requirement for BME specific supported accommodation for older people.
- 113** The Supporting People programme has also supported broader council work to better understand the needs of its diverse communities, including 'the African community event' and the 'Fringes' research into the needs of people on the fringes of homelessness and the criminal justice system. Consultation events carried out by advocacy groups engaging with a variety of individuals with drug or alcohol problems, homeless people and rough sleepers have also been supported.
- 114** Delays in service reviews impact on the speed of improving service providers approach to diversity. One element of the service review process considers fair access, diversity and inclusion and makes recommendations for improvement. Because of the delays in completing service reviews, it is too early to see any measurable change. It is also unclear how contracting arrangements are to be used to encourage and develop the cultural sensitivity of services further.

- 115 There is an increase in people from BME communities accessing current service provision. However, the Council do not know whether the rise is due to an improving awareness of the services or the changing profile of individuals requiring support. This should form part of ongoing monitoring arrangements.
- 116 Some good work has been done to identify which services can cater for different cultural and religious needs and make that information more widely available. Information has been added to the homeless directory which identifies which services have facilities for example for different dietary requirement or other religions. Again, more work is needed to ensure this cultural sensitivity is threaded through all of Bradford's services.
- 117 The additional information sheet does not, however, provide information on which services are accessible to people with mobility problems. A number of services visited would be difficult to access for a person with mobility problems. The Council have not addressed the issue of how they will ensure services are accessible to people with a mobility problem in their five-year strategy. At best, this means that service users will not be aware of the choice they have, at worst no suitable service provision will be available.
- 118 There is limited information on the housing-related support needs of travellers, people with HIV/AIDS and older people with mental health problems. In addition, the five-year strategy proposes to gain a greater understanding of the current and future needs of BME communities.
- 119 In terms of existing services, some provision exists specifically for minority groups, for example, for refugees and for black and Asian women fleeing domestic violence. Also within Bradford district, there is a disabled peoples housing service which aims to match available adapted and supported properties with need.
- 120 Systems are in place to encourage the development of diverse communication skills. Staff are encouraged to develop skills that help them communicate better with people with special communication requirements. Staff and service providers have access to translators. Systems are in place to translate written material into other languages and formats. Two service development officers have undertaken training in British Sign Language. There are also financial incentives for staff who can speak more than one language and use it at work.

Outcomes for service users

- 121 Outcomes to date for service users are limited. Few new services have been introduced or existing services remodelled. The budget deficit has concentrated attention on maintaining service provision and not on changing it. No system is in place to capture the outcomes or benefits that the Supporting People programme delivers for service users in Bradford. A small number of new services have been introduced since April 2003 mainly through delivery of schemes where development was already in the pipeline. For individual service users, support plans have been introduced by service providers and are being used effectively.

- 122** The financial situation with the programme has limited development of new services. Service users see little change to legacy service provision. Since the introduction of the Supporting People programme the inability to guarantee revenue support has led to a temporary drying up of new capital supported housing schemes.
- 123** Some new services have been introduced to address needs in Bradford, mainly pipeline schemes for which specific funding was provided by ODPM. These include:
- 8 units of supported housing for women at risk of domestic violence;
 - 10 units of supported housing for people with mental health problems;
 - 26 units of sheltered housing for older people;
 - 87 units of very sheltered housing for older people;
 - a home improvement agency small repairs service; and
 - increasing the capacity of a floating support generic service from 12 to 20.
- 124** There is little choice for service users across tenure. Service provision is mainly accommodation-based - over 97 per cent of provision. This restricts choice for vulnerable people and the availability of support particularly for those in the private rented and owner occupier housing sectors. For example, service users ready to move on from accommodation-based support to live in general purpose accommodation but with a reduced level of support to help them successfully make the transition to full independence. Specific examples include:
- older people with mental health problems as well those who have mental health and a physical disability have difficulty in accessing appropriate provision; and
 - limited choice available for young people leaving care either in the type of service offered or the provider.
- 125** Little progress has been made in filling gaps in service provision. Gaps in services are identified in the five-year strategy, for example, for women with drug or alcohol problems. This means that individuals from the client groups concerned do not yet have access to the housing-related support services to improve their life chances and their ability to live independently.
- 126** Currently there is no system in place to capture and quantify the benefits that the programme is bringing to service users. Without such a system the programme is unable to monitor trends, measure achievement or progress towards objectives or take informed decisions on priorities or remedial action.

- 127** Move-on accommodation for users of existing services is becoming increasingly difficult to find in the Bradford area. Four out of five service providers surveyed identified the lack of move-on accommodation to be a problem. This issue is a particular problem for young people as age restrictions have been introduced on lettings policies and demolition programmes target bed-sit accommodation. Support services become silted up as service users cannot find accommodation to move on to, and service users become frustrated at being unable to live more independently when they are ready to do so. The Housing Partnership of Bradford Vision (the local strategic partnership) is considering this issue. Supporting People is represented on this partnership. Action is being taken. One hundred and sixteen additional properties have been made available to single people in the last two years and a bid has been made for Regional Housing Board funding to bring private sector empty homes back into use for move on accommodation. Clearly this is falling short of the current move on needs identified by service providers.
- 128** A particular strength of the programme in Bradford is the close links it has with the Council fund commissioning services from the voluntary sector. This means that there is consistency of priorities for services commissioned and more joined up planning and delivery. For vulnerable service users, it means a more rounded and complete service. One example is a structured play development service, not eligible for Supporting People grant, for women fleeing domestic violence allowing them much needed child-free time to engage with legal and statutory agencies at a time of crisis.
- 129** Support plans are being effectively used by service providers contacted during this inspection. Service providers have developed support plans for their individual service users and that the plans are being used to shape services around individual need. This ensures that support is focused on their individual needs to help maintain or develop their ability to live independently. Support plans are reviewed and updated regularly after each periodic interview. They are used to plan ahead as a diary and as reminder of the progressive steps needed to move an individual forward.
- 130** Service providers are using the quality assessment framework to improve the way they are delivering their services. They are actively looking to improve the quality of their services and involving service users to guide the process. However, although there are some early signs of improvement, it is too early to quantify any programme-wide improvements in the quality of services - around 50 improvement plans have been issued to service providers during the course of their review.

- 131 Service users told us how the support they are receiving is helping to improve their quality of life and their life chances. These included the following.
- One mother with limited spoken English who fled with her children from a violent husband. She is able to talk to her neighbours, is making friends and has enrolled at the local college. Her children are going to school regularly, something they have never been able to sustain before.
 - A person with learning disabilities and a history of violence towards his mother had gained in confidence and self esteem. Living independently with accommodation-based support, he is now going out for escorted walks, successfully went to supermarket to choose bedroom furnishings, and attends to own personal hygiene. After years of no contact, his mother now visits him regularly and they are rebuilding relations.
 - A frail 86 year old lady who continued to live independently in sheltered accommodation despite fainting recently and having to have emergency treatment to a cut on her leg. With adapted accommodation and the support of a warden she has the confidence to remain living independently which she values highly.

Value for money

- 132 Poor progress has been made in ensuring that the grant only funds eligible and value for money services. Value for money assessments are underway, but none have reached their concluding stages. Although the Supporting People programme is funding ineligible services, the Council is slow to estimate the amount involved and put in place a planned shift of funding over time to the proper funding source. The unit cost of services is above both the regional and the national average. Because of the budget deficit this is an area that required particularly urgent attention and prioritisation which it has not been given. Delays in improving value for money impact across the Supporting People programme. Money is not released to ease the deficit which means savings have to be found elsewhere and have resulted in across the board cuts. Some services which may already be providing good value for money are therefore required to make additional savings while others which may be poor value for money are able to absorb the cut easily.

How do costs compare?

- 133 In comparison, average unit costs of housing-related support services in Bradford are high, higher than regional costs and higher than national costs.
- 134 In 2003/04 in Bradford the average cost per unit of housing-related support was £34.43 higher than regional average of £25.38 and national average of £28.30. Removing the high volume sheltered housing and community alarm services from comparisons again shows Bradford districts average cost of £147.79 a week to be significantly higher than the regional average and national figures of £100.47 and £76.37.

- 135** In common with other areas, unit costs for some client groups are higher than others due to the intensive nature of some of the services provided. However, even on like for like client group comparisons, the unit cost of services for people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, women fleeing domestic violence, and people with drug problems are higher than regional and national comparators. Conversely, floating support services have significantly lower unit costs in comparison to regional and national averages but they form a small percentage of current service provision.
- 136** The data appendix at the end of this report provides further information and illustrates the cost and levels of provision against regional and national averages.

How is value for money managed?

- 137** Poor progress has been made in ensuring housing-related support services represent good value for money. Spending is closely monitored and the necessary policies are in place. Much work is in progress and the Supporting People programme started from the difficult position of having a budget deficit. However, few outcomes have been achieved so far.
- 138** To address the budget deficit the Council has taken a three-pronged approach:
- negotiating some reduction in value with particular service providers;
 - no rise for inflation, plus an across the board five per cent cut in the amount that the programme will pay for services; and
 - seeking additional funding from other sources.
- 139** While the across the board cut allows the programme to stay within budget and reduces the average unit cost, it does not contribute to the strategic development of the programme and makes the delivery of needed services less sustainable.
- 140** The service review programme has a sound rationale. It has been drawn up to target the high cost services first. Originally this was based on all high cost services and, latterly, refined to consider services by client group with services to people with learning disabilities being considered first. This has the potential for delivering the largest savings to the Supporting People budget. However, it does rely upon the delivery of effective service reviews to unlock savings.
- 141** Cross-authority work on benchmarking has been valuable in providing more recent and reliable cost data for comparisons. The Council is active in this work and very willing to share and learn.

- 142 Effective policies are in place that are based on the approaches developed in the region. The Supporting People programme has recently agreed a value for money policy and an eligibility policy to assist service reviews in identifying ineligible services and assess whether services are value for money. The methodology is being applied consistently and has been developed with partners and other stakeholders and approved by the Commissioning Body. It is based on an outline framework used by a number of Council in the region. This helps to bring some consistency of treatment across boundaries. Services are currently undergoing these assessments. This work has not concluded yet and, therefore, cannot demonstrate that services currently represent good value for money.
- 143 Some broad analysis has been carried out to determine whether services represent good value for money. It concluded that significant savings could be made. Comparisons were made using the mean average unit costs of services at regional and national levels and from different sources. Based on these calculations, if unit costs were based on mean averages, the cost of the same volume of services in Bradford is estimated to be between £2 million and £5 million less than the current contracted value.
- 144 Over £11 million of the grant is spent on services for people with a learning disability or people with mental health problems. From their knowledge of services provided and information from validation visits, the Supporting People team is aware that significant amounts of ineligible services are being funded by the grant. No demonstrable progress has been made to unlock this funding although some individual reductions in contract values have been negotiated. The impact is that the programme remains overcommitted with no capacity for service development and needing to attract funding and make savings from elsewhere.
- 145 It is a concern that Bradford has not been able to provide us with an estimate of the value of ineligible services currently being funded. Until eligibility assessments are complete the exact amount involved will not be known. However, we would expect the Supporting People programme, at this stage, to have a realistic estimate of the amount involved.
- 146 Plans to move the funding of ineligible care services to their rightful budgets are not as far advanced as we would expect to see in the third year of the Supporting People programme. Discussions have begun with Social Services and Health on how to remedy the funding position in the medium term while protecting the provision of services to individual service users. However, no firm agreement is in place on how this will be achieved.
- 147 Some savings (£250,000 in 2003/04 and £500,000 in 2004/05) have been negotiated with relevant service providers in acknowledgement of ineligible or high cost services or being funded. However, these are temporary arrangements until the service review is concluded.

- 148** Insufficient is done to ensure that the administration budget is delivering value for money. The Council receive a significant ODPM administration grant to deliver the programme. It is supplemented by the Council; by £186,000 in 2003/04, and £209,000 in 2004/05. The budget is closely monitored and actual spend against expected spend is regularly reported. However, no benchmarking or comparisons of costs are carried out to ensure that the administration of the programme is good value for money.

Summary

- 149** Overall we consider that the development of the Supporting People programme in Bradford is poor. The service review programme in Bradford has made slow progress and consequently few value for money outcomes have been achieved. This is particularly important for Bradford where the programme is faced with a budget deficit. Only a small amount of funding has been unlocked from legacy provision and this is restricting the ability of the programme to develop new services and reshape provision.
- 150** Despite significant levels of unmet need, to date, a relatively small amount of new services have been developed or existing services reshaped. Gaps in services, for example, for older people with mental health problems, have not been filled. Little progress has been made in developing floating support services to support people living in private sector property and help others successfully make the transition from supported accommodation to more independent living. Performance management arrangements for the programme are weak, including contingency planning. Fairer charging procedures are late in being introduced. Links have not been established with some harder to reach client groups to ensure they are effectively engaged with the programme. Service users currently do not have a voice within the planning and delivery structures.
- 151** There are some positive aspects in the programme's delivery. Governance arrangements are well-established with good engagement from both health and probation sectors. Links have been made with established groups and service users are involved in service reviews. Bradford is actively involved in Cross-authority work which brings a number of benefits. However, some of these are late in impacting on specific areas. Payment arrangements are robust.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 152** The Supporting People programme has a poor track record in delivering improvement. Its track record is one of maintaining service provision but being slow to introduce the necessary policies and procedures necessary to effectively implement the programme. Service reviews are progressing slowly. Funding is not being unlocked from legacy provision with the speed required to move the programme forward quickly. Few changes have been made to legacy provision.

- 153** The Supporting People programme in Bradford was slow to get started and has been trying to make up lost ground ever since. The programme started with a relatively small implementation team and has had problems recruiting and retaining staff with the necessary skills. Supporting People went live at a time of major change in Bradford and management attention in the early days was more focused on other requirements, such as establishing a care trust for the joint delivery of health and social care services and transferring council housing stock in a large scale voluntary transfer.
- 154** Payment procedures have been put in place but policies, such as the value for money policy and eligibility policy, were late in being developed. Without them the Supporting People programme has been unable to complete all the stages necessary to effectively evaluate and review legacy services. Service reviews are underway although progress is slow, hampered by the lack of policies, and few have reached the concluding stage where decisions are necessary on whether the service should be re-commissioned, remodelled or decommissioned.
- 155** Consequently, while existing services have been maintained, there has been little change to legacy provision. A small number of new services have been developed but gaps in provision have still to be filled. There is little change from accommodation-based provision and no evidence of budget spending changing to follow established priorities of the programme.
- 156** The Council and its partners are slow to put arrangements in place to plan a shift in funding to its proper source despite the fact that the Supporting People grant is paying for ineligible care services.
- 157** More positively, the programme has been successful in attracting additional money to maintain the level of support services provided to the vulnerable groups in the district. The Council has demonstrated a commitment to services by allocating significant sums from its un-earmarked reserves to temporarily fund the ongoing budget deficit. The Supporting People programme has also been successful in attracting Neighbourhood Renewal funding to sustain services in recognition of the contribution they can make to the achievement of government floor targets.
- 158** The most positive development with the programme, although relatively small scale in comparison, is the way it has aligned itself with council funding for the voluntary sector groups. This has succeeded in using Supporting People objectives to guide some of the spending on voluntary sector support with the relevant manager attending the commissioning body in a non-voting capacity. The result is the development of some complementary services which enhance Supporting People services provided. Reviews and monitoring have also been joined up.

- 159** A performance management system to monitor progress and track information on shared indicators is still to be developed. There is no co-ordinated tracking of common indicators which might be improved or influenced by the Supporting People programme, should one be in place, it would capture positive and negative trends. For example, emergency hospital admissions for the April to July period of 2005 are almost 5 per cent lower than the equivalent period in 2004. It is not possible, however, to determine the contribution that Supporting People may have made to this.
- 160** Progress against the Vision statements laid out in the shadow Supporting People strategy has not been measured or reported on. It is evident from what we have concluded earlier in the report that progress has been made in some areas. For example the vision included a statement:
- to integrate supported housing services within the wider local strategies and other provision designed to meet the multiple needs of vulnerable users.*
- 161** We have assessed earlier that the Council has been successful in integrating supported housing services into wider local strategies. In other areas, however, the Council has been less successful, for example:
- to improve quality of life for vulnerable people living in the Bradford district by delivering high quality, cost effective housing-related support services.*
- 162** Work is still in progress and no measures or targets were put in place to monitor what is being achieved nor has this been reported to the commissioning body.
- 163** It is noticeable that the pace of development is improving. New policies have been put in place recently, plans set out the major tasks still to do and the Supporting People team are focused on delivering outstanding service reviews. In addition, extra resources have been secured to deal with large volume, low-risk residual service reviews in an attempt to meet the April 2006 deadline.
- 164** The corporate track record in delivering improvements in services through partnership working is good. There are a number of examples including the joint commissioning of learning disabilities and adult mental health services through a care trust and improving the services and life chances of children in council care by introducing preventative measures and building five new children's homes. Strong links with the police, which is reflected in the Safer and Stronger Communities partnership, have resulted in significant reductions in volume crime. The general direction of travel on council performance is good, with several services improving, including notably education (albeit from a low base) and social services. Bradford's local strategic partnership has been commended by the Government Office.

How does the service manage performance?

- 165** Currently, performance management arrangements for the Supporting People programme are weak. There is no system in place to capture progress on objectives, measure outcomes for service users or agree jointly owned performance targets with partner agencies. Progress on service reviews, the key to delivering improvements in Bradford, is not being monitored as closely as it should be to drive it with the urgency needed. The Supporting People programme is however clear where it wants to get to and has developed plans to get there. It is aiming to improve the right things.
- 166** Information is critical to the commissioning body's ability to be able to manage delivery of the programme effectively. While an annual plan has been put in place for current year activity, it is not underpinned by relevant indicators and targets. There is no system in place to capture and quantify the benefits that the programme is bringing to service users. Without such a system the programme is unable to monitor trends, measure achievement or progress towards objectives or take informed decisions on priorities or remedial action.
- 167** Progress with the service review programme is vital to success but, given its importance, it is not being monitored closely enough. There is no detailed or summarised plan to illustrate how long the programme is expected to take, the time and resources needed for each stage against which progress can be regularly monitored and reported. Progress has been reported to the commissioning body but not in the detail that the issue now deserves. The commissioning body has not taken action to ensure that the policies and procedures were quickly put in place to ensure that service reviews could be progressed quickly. Nor have plans yet been agreed on how replacement funding will be found for ineligible services identified as part of service reviews.
- 168** Plans to improve value for money are in place but lack any detailed targets. Within the five-year strategy, achieving value for money is one short-term proposal for one of the programme's strategic priorities. It says:
- to achieve further efficiency savings using value for money assessments.*
- 169** Section 6 sets out a series of objectives and how they will be achieved through implementing the agreed value for money policy during service reviews. However, the proposal has insufficient focus. Without any targets to aim for, proposals are too loose and will be unable to be adequately monitored.
- 170** The five-year strategy sets the direction for the programme. It analyses existing provision, compares this against known levels of need, and sets out clear priorities for the future. However, it is a weakness that it does not identify which are priorities for service development across the client groups. Nor does it put in place a mechanism for determining the ranking. No system is in place yet to measure progress or achievement of objectives.

- 171 The strategy drew on the most recent available needs information and was consulted upon widely with service providers and key stakeholders. A number of stakeholder group workshops were held specifically around key client groups to help develop the strategy, including offenders and black and minority ethnic communities. The team has also established links with various other strategic and working groups operating across the district such as the Young Persons Housing Consortium and the Domestic Violence Partnership to assist the information flow. The service areas it seeks to improve are the result of an analysis of research and learning from these meetings.
- 172 While consultation was widespread, there is recognition of gaps and areas where consultation needs to be strengthened. Examples include travellers, people suffering from HIV/AIDS and improvements needed to better understand the housing support needs of black and other minority ethnic groups. A user consultation strategy has been produced to set out how clients will be engaged in future. Work plans are to be developed to support the strategy identifying how the Supporting People programme will involve and engage with each client group. Sensibly, it will seek to use existing established channels and develop new links where there are gaps. Bradford is also closely linked with cross-authority research work into the housing-related support needs of gypsies and travellers.
- 173 Plans to take the programme forward are in place although actions are not drawn together to ensure they are easy to monitor and manage. A number of plans have been developed by the programme to move the programme forward. These include the annual action plan, the project plan and the risk log. Without effective co-ordination, monitoring is more difficult and there is a danger that a required action may be overlooked.
- 174 To sit alongside the five-year strategy an annual action plan has been developed for the Supporting People programme. This plan identifies 16 objectives and 32 actions to deliver most of the important elements still needed by the programme. For example actions include:
- to review all Supporting People services in line with the timescales set within the revised review timetable;
 - to implement and utilise eligibility criteria as part of service reviews;
 - to identify gaps in provision where floating support could be a viable and appropriate option, using models of good practice; and
 - developing a new performance management framework to focus on outcomes for service users where possible.
- 175 A detailed project plan has been developed for the team structured around the Audit Commission key lines of enquiry. It has assigned responsibility for actions to named individuals although it does not identify the resources required to carry each one out. This will help the team concentrate on key areas for development although it is not clear how progress is monitored and how often this is carried out.

- 176 Some good work has been carried out to identify risks. More needs to be done to ensure identified actions are undertaken and contingency plans are in place for major risks. A comprehensive log of identified risks has been set up for the programme with actions to be taken to mitigate risks. It is not clear how managers ensure these actions are taken. There are no contingency plans for major incidences, other than in the event of an IT failure, to maintain payments to providers. These need to be put in place to ensure that action can be taken quickly in the event of an emergency, such as the sudden closure of a scheme, to protect the lives of vulnerable individuals.
- 177 Strong links have been made with other strategic partnerships and groups to ensure that Supporting People is integrated into their proposal and plans. For example Supporting People contributes to community plan and corporate plan objectives and Bradford's joint housing strategy.
- 178 Leadership of the programme is visible and prepared to take difficult decisions. However, it is not driving the programme with the urgency needed in critical areas. Faced with the budget deficit, the commissioning body adopted a financial strategy, including a five per cent cut in contract values, which will maintain the delivery of services and protect vulnerable individuals. This decision was taken in consultation with representatives of service providers and the commissioning body was well aware of its likely impact and unpopularity with service providers. The decision was clearly communicated to all providers and commissioning body representatives held a series of meetings with service providers to explain the reasons for their decision and listen to providers' responses. In addition, the commissioning body was successful in attracting other council funding to support the programme.
- 179 Financial management of the programme throughout is a strength. There is regular monitoring of both the grant and administration budgets. Projections ahead to the year-end are routinely made and reported to the commissioning body. This means the programme knows exactly where it stands financially at any point in time.
- 180 Corporately, the Council has a performance management framework with a series of departmental plans, objectives, targets and reporting arrangements. Supporting People is integrated into the regeneration and housing departmental plan although its targets are not particularly forward looking or challenging. For example, one target is to maintain the number of units of supported accommodation and therefore encourages maintaining the status quo. It puts in place a driver to maintain the number of units of housing-related support but does not focus on the real need to reshape services.

- 181 The Council in its delivery of the Supporting People programme learns from others but is less effective at capturing and spreading what it learns internally. Cross-authority links and working is strong. Bradford is keen to be involved and very receptive to sharing information and practices. There are clear benefits to be seen in the development of the eligibility criteria and the value for money policy. More will be in the pipeline as the cross-authority work programme rolls forward. Internally however we are not aware of any mechanisms in place to capture and spread good practice, for example, on what has worked well on a particular service review and how this could be applied to others.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 182 Positive indicators outweigh areas for improvement. The tools, skills and resources are in place and there is commitment to the programme from the Council. Improvement, however, depends on the programme's ability to free up capacity from legacy services which will be achieved but not in the short-term. We do have concerns that the pace of change has been slow.
- 183 The Commissioning Body is now much better placed to make informed decisions about the direction of the programme. Intelligence gathered for the development of the five-year strategy means that the programme now has an improved understanding of the housing-related support needs in the district and definite information on current supply. Better information and more informed decisions will result in better outcomes for the vulnerable people of Bradford and the community.
- 184 The Council is aware of its shortcomings in the delivery of the programme and is open about progress. Partnerships are in place with a high level of involvement and commitment from statutory partners. Service providers are well engaged in the programme and although unhappy about the cuts imposed on contract values do consider that communications is improving. It has been recognised that the business of the core strategic group is overly operational and its role and relationship with the commissioning body is under review. Service users, carers or advocates are not well engaged with the strategic development of the programme. The programme is aware of this and proposals on the best way to secure meaningful engagement are under discussion.
- 185 The effectiveness of the use of resources to secure improvement is mixed. On the one hand, a significant sized team is in place to develop the administrative centre for the programme and ensure the necessary policies, procedures, research, contracts and monitoring are in place. With the current focus on service reviews, the number of service development officers has increased and the team are adding capacity from elsewhere in the Council to carry out the number of low risk service reviews still outstanding. A light touch approach has been approved to enable these to be processed quickly.

- 186** On the other hand, the programme will only deliver real change if it unlocks resources from its legacy services and it has made a slow start in achieving this. Not only will the programme need to deliver efficiencies to meet future reductions in the ODPM grant but it also starts from the difficult position of having a budget deficit with contract values exceeding grant. Only very recently have estimates been made of the amount funding ineligible services or savings that can be achieved through ensuring existing services are value for money. These clearly show that substantial sums are involved (over £3 million for one client group alone) and if released are sufficient to allow the programme room for development.
- 187** The team has the necessary skills and experience to carry out the job. Our assessment of the people we met was that they were competent and had the experience and training needed to carry out the work effectively. There is a logical structure to the team with each area of responsibility.
- 188** Personal appraisal systems are in place and operating effectively. However, it is a weakness that clear links are not made to operational objectives. Appraisals assess individual performance and identify any training needs required. Adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that the individual then receives the necessary training and the benefits are assessed. Measurable targets are, however, not set for individuals linked to the objectives of team as a whole. Without these, it is less clear what is expected of an individual, how they contribute to the team, and how they determine their work priorities. Targets also enable performance to be assessed.
- 189** IT systems are robust and provide adequate support for delivery of the programme. Supporting People records are fit for purpose and there have been no issues around payments to service suppliers. Housing benefit systems are to be upgraded soon which is expected to improve the automatic information provision on client movements needed for Supporting People administration and not possible with the current system.
- 190** Council commitment to the Supporting People programme is clear. Against competing bids for resources, the Council has approved significant levels of funding from reserves to maintain services to vulnerable people in Bradford. In addition the Council supplements the administration grant to enable a sizeable team to be recruited to deliver the programme.
- 191** Senior councillors are now closely involved with the development of the programme. Officers report performance to the portfolio-holder and the Executive. Two lead officers appointed by the Improvement Committee are now taking a more active role with the Supporting People programme beyond advising to monitoring progress.

- 192** The Supporting People programme is looking outward and is keen to learn and benefit from good practice. Its strong links with cross-authority work will deliver additional benefits to the programme locally, for example in how best to capture outcomes the programme delivers for service users. In general, it knows where it is and what remains to be done although development has been slow. In Bradford effort has always been concentrated on catching up rather than driving ahead.
- 193** The Supporting People team is well integrated into the council structure and is not seen as a separate entity. Supporting People responsibilities are joined up with Access to Housing to form one team which focuses on housing-related support and a range of functions in relation to homelessness and housing advice. The team is also integrated into department planning and performance management arrangements.
- 194** A robust performance management framework has still to be developed for the Supporting People programme in Bradford. It is included in their plans as a priority and will be helped by the cross-authority work on outcomes for service users. Work has begun and there is an emerging structure around a theoretical model. However, a lot more work is need before the system can effectively monitor what benefits the programme is delivering for the district. Financial management is strong within the Supporting People programme.
- 195** The programme does not have a commissioning or procurement framework to show how it will ensure that new services are procured in a fair and transparent way and be good value for money. While the programme can be guided by the corporate procurement strategy, there is little within existing strategies or plans to show how new services will be procured in future. The corporate strategy gives overarching guidance on procurement on four key themes, including stimulating markets and achieving community benefits. Bradford will benefit by cross-authority work on market analysis and commissioning and procurement good practice identified by a neighbouring council leading an ODPM value improvement project. However, it does currently not have in place any details on how it will decide on the best way to procure future services, what options there are and what options should be considered. These are needed to ensure that effective, new services can be procured quickly and fairly.
- 196** There is some evidence of joint working although there is scope for improvement. The programme works well with the community funding unit delivering complementary services and reviews. Through the cross-authority working group, joint research is being carried out and protocols have been developed for offenders returning to live in the community. Some work has also begun with social services to consider the package of services needed by vulnerable individuals with learning disabilities. Little progress has, however, been made on joint commissioning for housing-related support, for example, across council boundaries, and there is no evidence of joining up monitoring and review arrangements in appropriate cases with health and social care arrangements.

Summary

- 197** On balance we judge that Bradford has uncertain prospects for improvement. Barriers to improvement outweigh drivers for improvement. The track record of the Supporting People programme in Bradford is poor. The service review programme has made slow progress, little has been achieved in delivering value for money despite the budget deficit and few outcomes have been delivered for service users. There is little change to legacy provision.
- 198** Managing the performance of the Supporting People programme is also weak. There is no framework in place to measure progress against objectives, monitor outcomes for service users or track trends in performance on any agreed performance targets with statutory partners. Plans are in place to deliver many of the improvements required and the plans address the right areas, for example developing a robust performance management framework and ensuring that all client groups are engaged with the programme.
- 199** In terms of capacity to deliver improvements, drivers for improvement outweigh barriers. A large skilled team is in place and many of the necessary policies have been agreed. Much work is in progress with the service review programme, additional resources have been secured and less intensive procedures agreed for low risk services. Significant strides forward are expected in the next few months although we doubt whether the ODPM deadline of all services reviewed by March 2006 will be achieved.
- 200** A number of key policies are not however yet in place. In addition to a robust performance management system, the programme lacks a mechanism to determine priorities for new service development. Nor does it have a commissioning or procurement strategy to show how new services will be procured in a fair and transparent way and secure improved value for money.

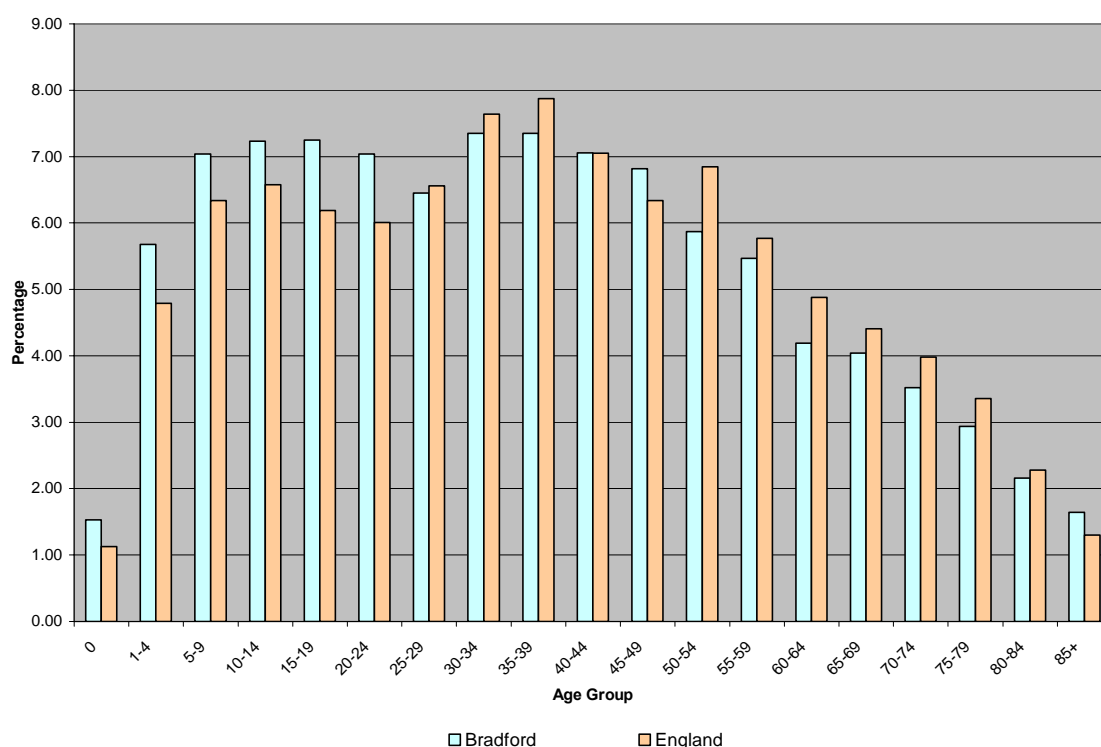
Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

Demographic information

- 1 This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting people, comparing the Council with England.

Measure	Bradford	England
Population (mid-2003) ⁷	477,800	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2003)	16.4	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than white – British 2003)	21.7	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁸	3.0	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁹	38	-

Figure 1 Percentage of the population¹⁰ in each age group compared with England



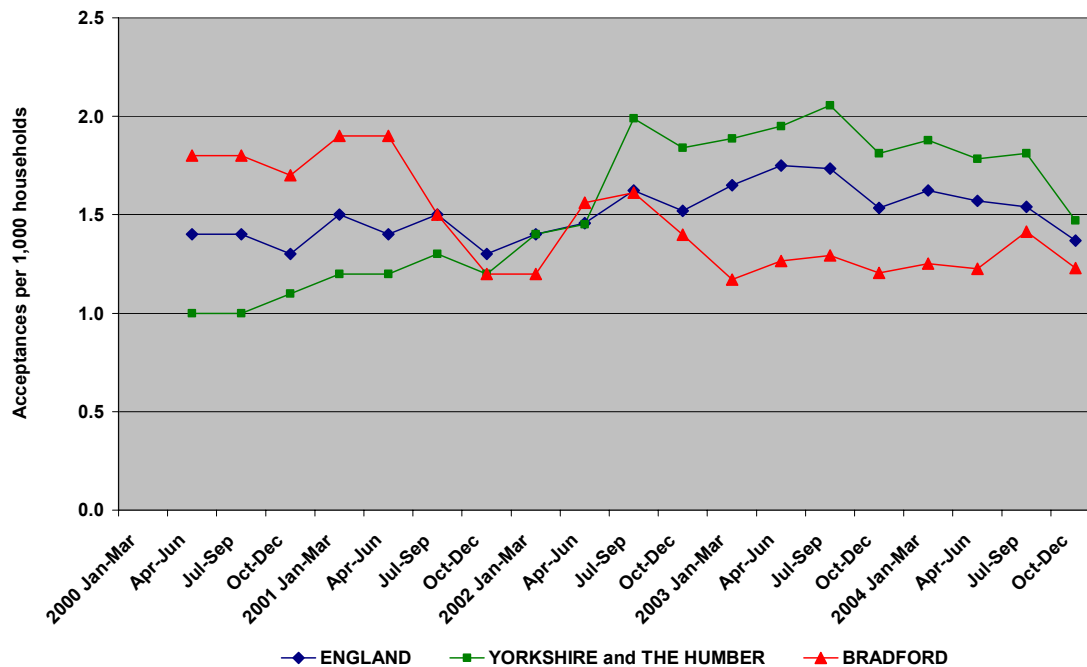
⁷ Source: midyear population estimates (2003).

⁸ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (July 2005).

⁹ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

¹⁰ Source: mid-year population estimates (2003).

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

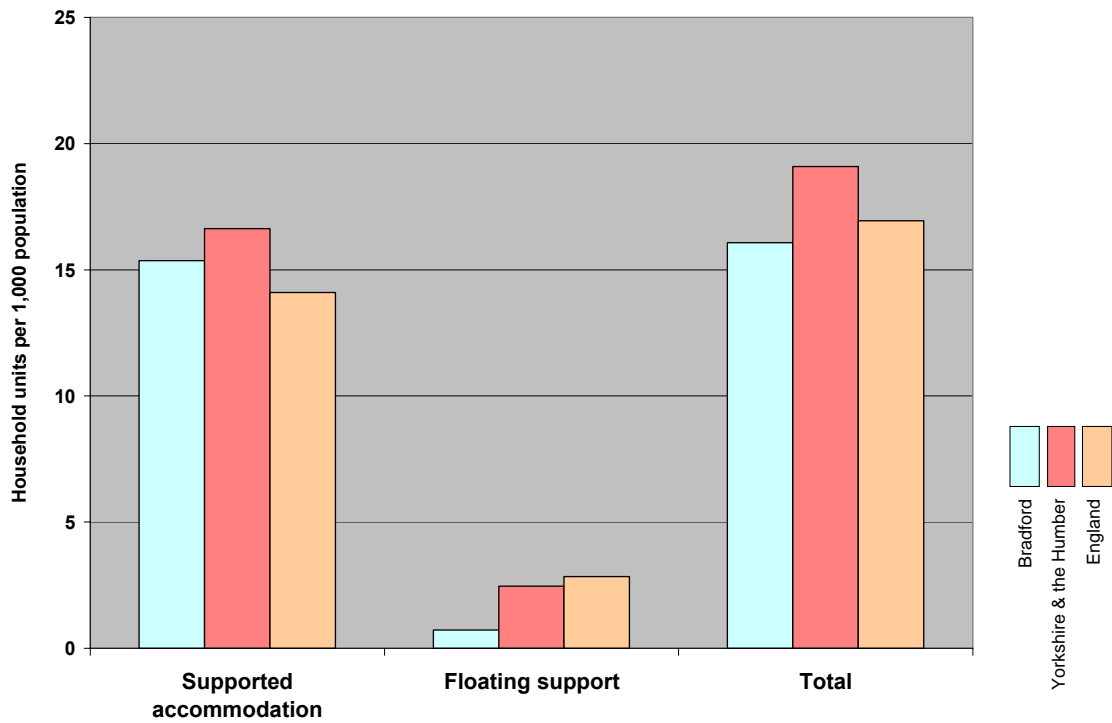


Performance information

- 2 This section highlights strong and weak areas of the Council's performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements.
- data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
 - Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores;
 - star ratings for social services;
 - Performance Assessment Framework indicators for social services; and
 - relevant best value performance indicators.

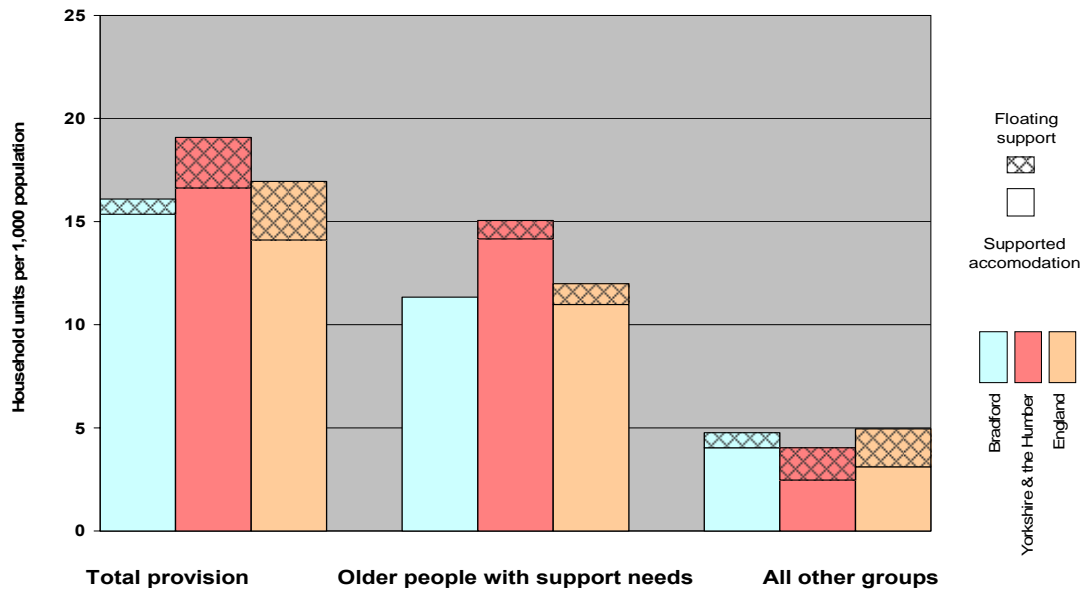
Supporting People data

Figure 3 Total service provision funded through Supporting People¹¹

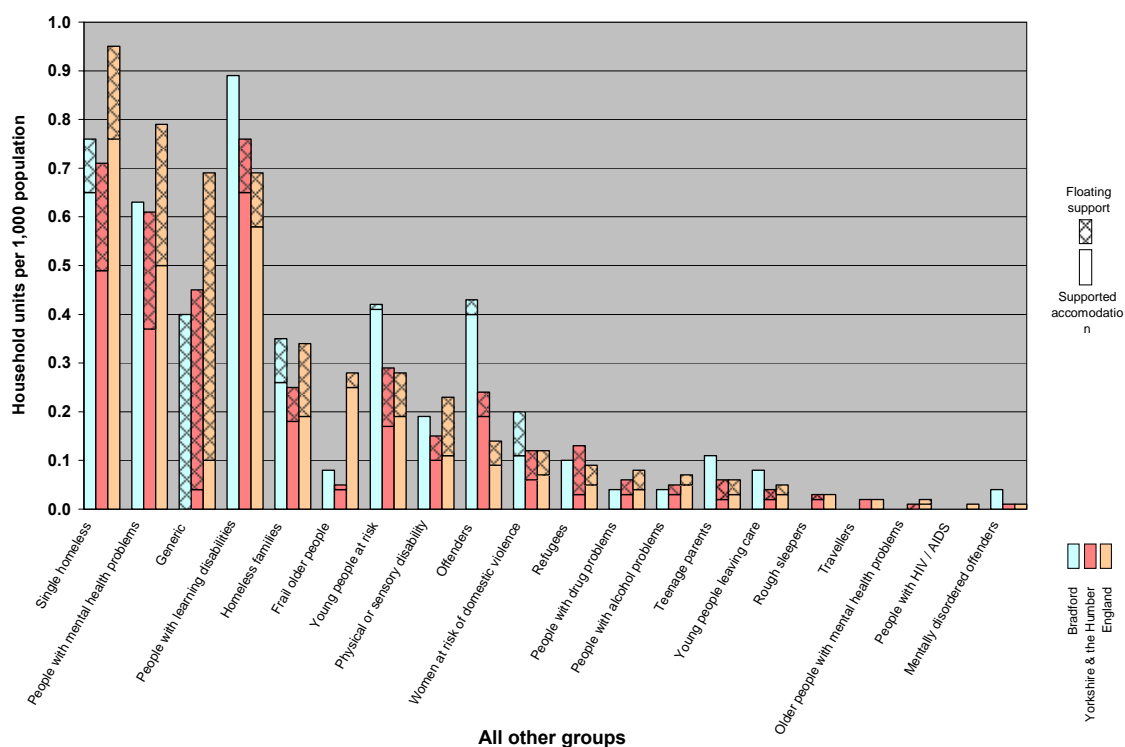


¹¹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 4 Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England¹²



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

Figure 5 Services for other groups compared with the region and England¹³

Table 3 Funding for Supporting People¹⁴

Bradford	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Final Supporting People grant	£20,921,205	£20,494,483	£19,478,884
Pipeline allocation	£214,260	£-	£-
Administration grant	£348,757	£361,537	£333,511

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

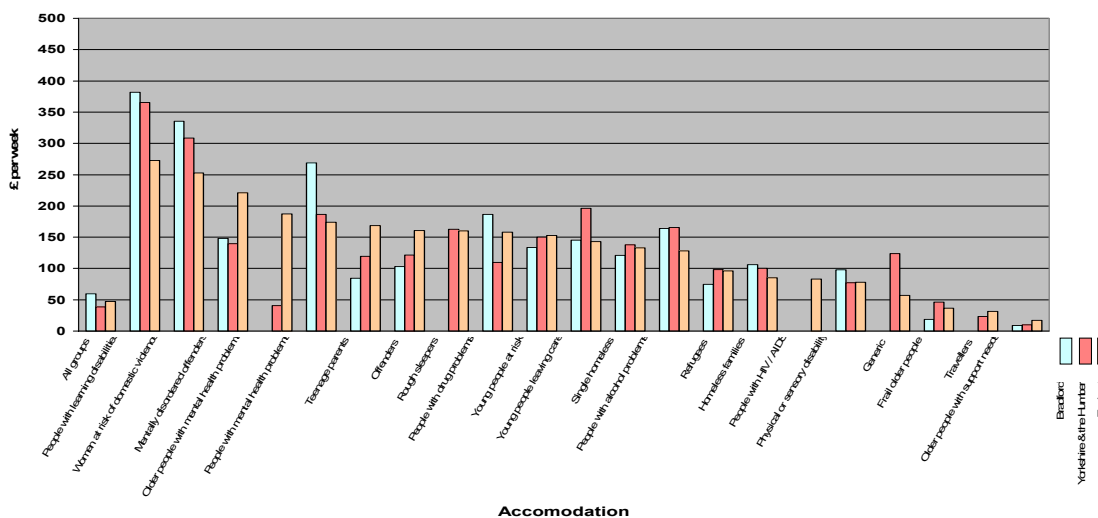
¹⁴ Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

Table 4 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)¹⁵

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Bradford	£0.85	£34.43	£49.86	£147.79
Yorkshire and the Humberside	£0.72	£25.38	£32.87	£100.47
England	£0.70	£28.30	£34.71	£76.37

'The data quoted is taken from ODPM sourced material 2003/04. This is the only data currently available. ODPM will be able to provide updated data from September 2005 and this will then be used'.

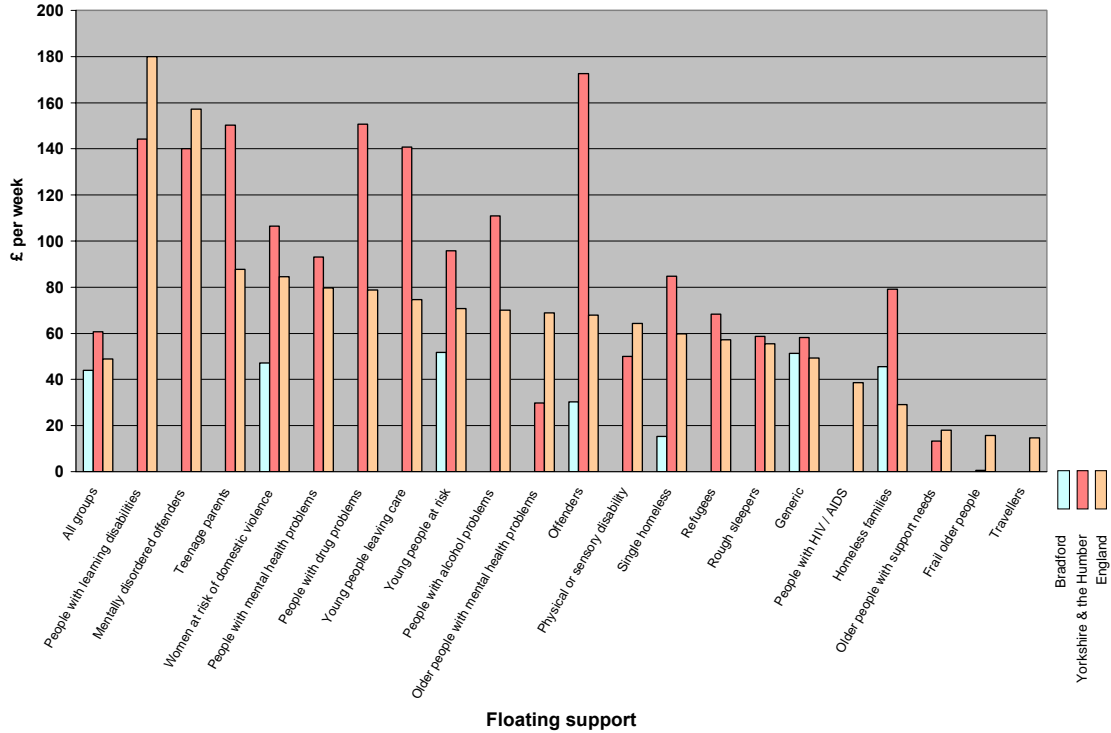
Figure 6 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹⁶



¹⁵ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

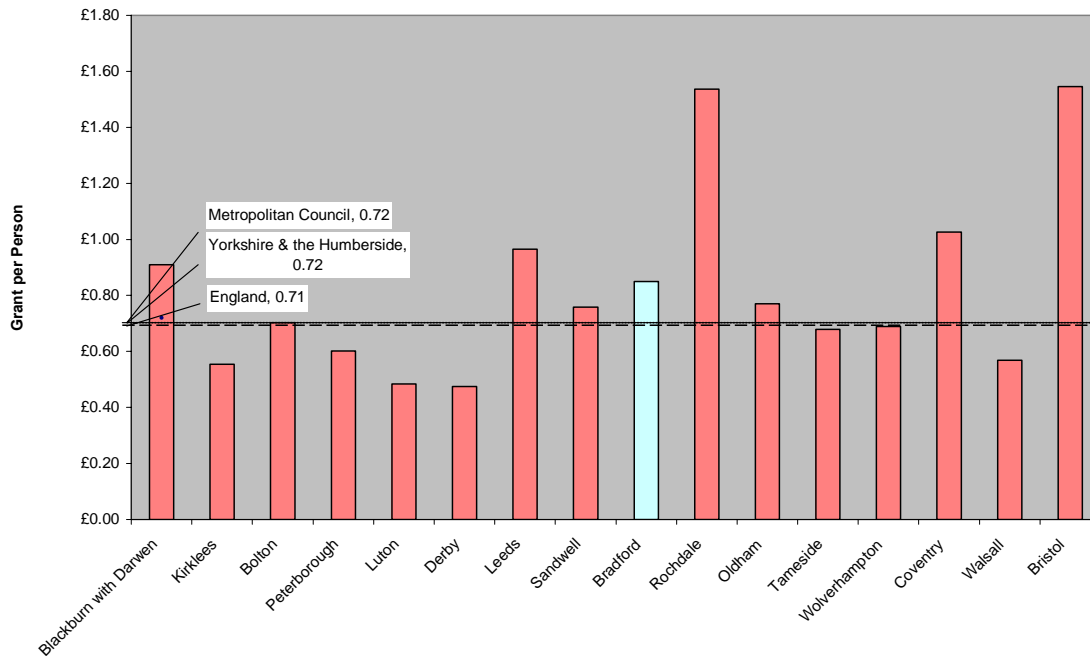
¹⁶ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 7 Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent) ¹⁷



¹⁷ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 8 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours¹⁸, all metropolitan councils and all English councils (2004/05)



¹⁸ A comparator group of similar councils.

Figure 9 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours¹⁹, all metropolitan councils and all English councils

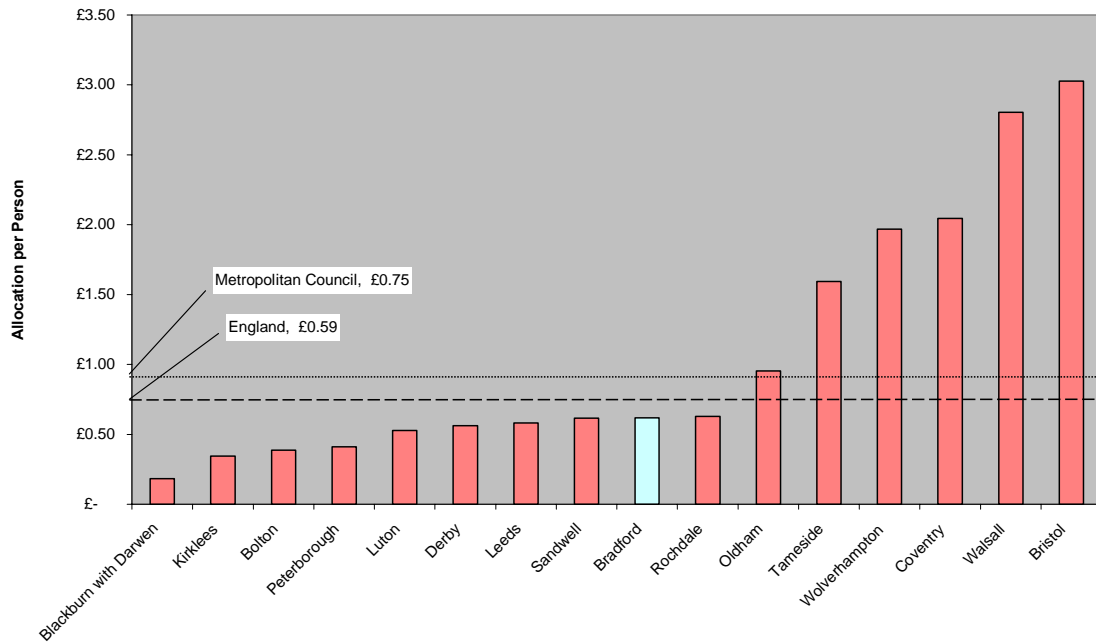
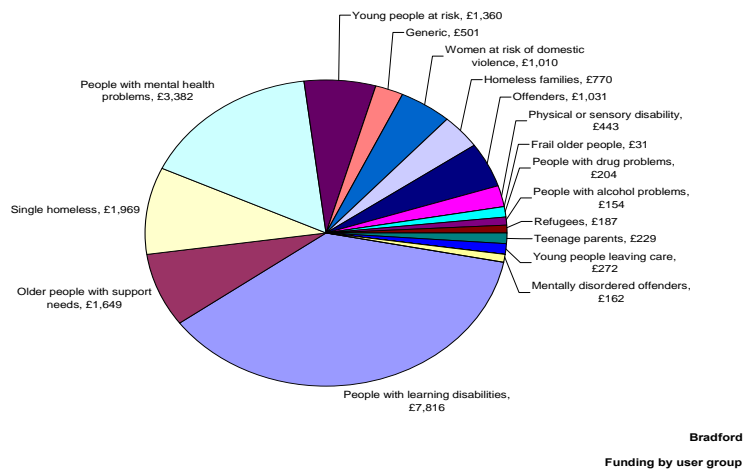


Figure 10 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)²⁰



¹⁹ A comparator group of similar councils.

²⁰ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 11 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)²¹

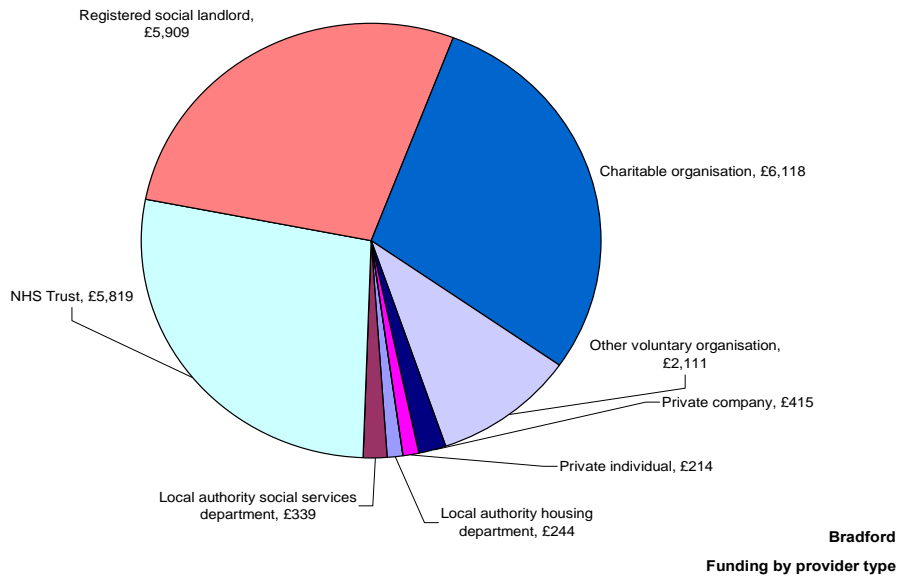


Table 5 Social services star ratings November 2004

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	Most	Promising	★★★ (2)
Children’s services	Most	Promising	

²¹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Social services performance indicators

Table 6 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

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

Bradford	
Significantly above average (•••••)	<p>Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31).</p> <p>Delayed transfers of care (D41).</p> <p>Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4).</p>
Above average (••••)	<p>Admissions of supported residents aged 18 to 64 to residential/nursing care (C27)</p> <p>Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30).</p> <p>Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54).</p>
Average (•••)	<p>Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40).</p> <p>Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6).</p> <p>Admissions of older people to residential/nursing care (C26).</p> <p>Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39).</p> <p>Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29).</p> <p>Older people helped to live at home (C32).</p> <p>Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51).</p>
Below average (••)	<p>Percentage change on previous year in total emergency admissions to hospital (A5).</p> <p>Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that their opinions and preferences were always taken into account (D57).</p> <p>Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that they can contact social services easily (D58).</p>

Best value performance indicators

Table 7 Performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04 compared with metropolitan councils

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

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

Appendix 2 – Documents reviewed

- 3 Before going on-site, and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that were provided for us. These included:
- the Council's corporate strategies that impact upon Supporting People, including the strategic plan;
 - plans and strategies from partner agencies, such as the probation service, that may impact on Supporting People;
 - needs research information, the five-year Supporting People strategy, the 2005/06 annual plan, the section's project plan and the service review programme;
 - minutes of the commissioning body and core strategy group meetings; and
 - draft Supporting People advice leaflets.

Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken

- 4 When we went on-site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
- a questionnaire survey which was sent to all providers of housing-related support services;
 - focus groups for service providers and frontline staff;
 - visits to supported housing schemes, to talk to service users, managers and frontline staff;
 - visits to a number of service user access points to test the level and extent of information available for service users;
 - observing a meeting of the core strategic group;
 - telephone calls to test how easy it is to access services; and
 - interviews with a wide-range of stakeholders, including the Assistant Chief Executive of the Council, the Accountable Officer, the Supporting People Lead Officer, managers and member of the Supporting People team, councillors, social services commissioning managers, representatives of the probation service and the primary care trusts, advocacy groups and the youth offending team.