

Supporting People Inspection Report

March 2006



Supporting People

London Borough of Redbridge

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Contents

Supporting People Inspections	4
Summary	5
Scoring the service	6
Recommendations	11
Report	18
Context	18
How good is the service?	21
What are the prospects for improvement?	56
Appendix 1 – Performance indicators	64
Demographic information	64
Performance information	65
Appendix 2 – Documents reviewed	75
Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken	76
Appendix 4 – Positive practice	77

Supporting People Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 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 The London Borough of Redbridge is an outer-London borough with a population of 247,300¹. The borough has a diverse community, with 36.5 per cent of the population from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities².
- 2 The borough is ranked as the 163rd most deprived of the 354 English local authorities³.
- 3 Redbridge has a relatively young age profile, with 15.6 per cent of the population aged over 65 (compared to 18.5 per cent nationally)⁴.
- 4 There is a high level of home ownership in the borough (75 per cent) but a low comparative level of social housing (10 per cent)⁵.
- 5 The Council comprises 63 councillors and is controlled by the Conservative Party, with 33 seats. Labour has 20 seats, the Liberal Democrats have 9 seats and there is 1 Independent councillor. A leader and cabinet model governs the business of the Council.
- 6 The Council's net revenue budget for 2005/06 is £299.4 million, compared to £281.2 million in 2004/05. The community care budget is £38.1 million in 2005/06, compared to £36.2 million in 2004/05. The Council has 3,700 employees, excluding school staff.
- 7 The Council was assessed as a 'two-star' authority by the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in December 2005 and judged to be 'improving well'.
- 8 The Council received £4,258,705 Supporting People grant in 2005/06. In addition, the Council received an administration grant of £152,436 to fulfil its role as the administering authority.
- 9 There are 27 different providers with 43 contracts, providing 95 Supporting People services in Redbridge⁶. These services provide 1,648 units of supported accommodation (excluding community alarms) and 19 units of floating support.
- 10 The London Borough of Redbridge was inspected in the third year of the programme. This report, therefore, reflects the current context for the Council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money offered by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

¹ NOMIS, mid-2004 population estimates.

² Census 2001, people defining themselves as other than 'white'.

³ ODPM Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2004: Average Ward Score.

⁴ Census 2001.

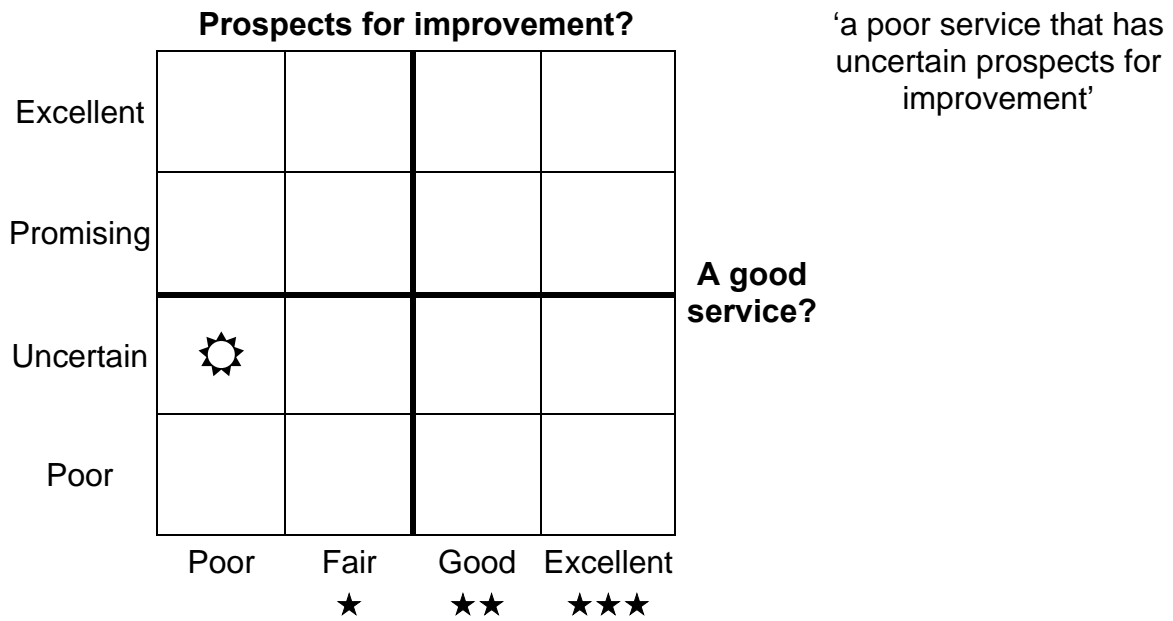
⁵ Census 2001.

⁶ At 31.10.05.

Scoring the service

- 11 We have assessed the London Borough of Redbridge 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.

Figure 1 Scoring chart⁷



Source: Audit Commission

⁷ 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.

12 We have assessed the Council's administration of the Supporting People programme to be poor because of the following.

- The Council has not yet made a comprehensive assessment of housing support needs in the borough and has not developed a comprehensive five-year strategy. The strategy that has been produced is for one year and does not contain a set of clear priorities or plans for future commissioning. There was inadequate consultation during the development of the strategy and the final strategy has not been circulated to providers.
- Until recently there was a lack of clarity in the roles of the governance bodies.
- There is no involvement of service providers, service users, carers or voluntary organisations in the governance arrangements (although there are plans in place to involve providers).
- There is a low level of provision for most client groups and no funding for some client groups – and a very low level of floating support services. The number of services has decreased since 2003.
- There was a failure to identify some supported housing costs for transitional housing benefit and, subsequently, for Supporting People funding.
- Relationships with providers have suffered through poor communication around service review outcomes.
- Local eligibility criteria have been agreed, but this is recent and with limited provider consultation.
- The Council has not yet agreed its future contracting arrangements or consulted providers on draft contracts.
- Only one 'fairer charging' assessment has been carried out since 2003.
- There is no risk assessment and only limited emergency contingency arrangements in place for Supporting People (although work on this is underway).
- There is a lack of move-on accommodation which is limiting the efficient use of some of the supported accommodation in the borough.
- The Council was slow to carry out service reviews and report them to the commissioning body over the first two years of the programme. The quality assessments made during the early reviews are now considered to be unreliable and this has resulted in the need to re-assess services.
- There is no feedback to service users about the outcome of their reviews.
- No service providers had been accredited at the time of the inspection.
- Service review panels have only been set up for the three largest areas of provision. It is unclear how strategic issues for other client groups are being addressed as there are no panels or overarching reports for these groups.

8 Supporting People | Scoring the service

- Action plans following service reviews have not been developed with the involvement of providers, and there has not been the capacity to check progress against the plans.
- There is no mechanism for collecting or disseminating good practice found during service reviews (although work to address this is now underway).
- Value for money analysis does not adequately link quality, cost and outcomes.
- No information for service users is currently available, with the exception of one recent leaflet, and there is limited information on the Council's website.
- There is no diversity or BME strategy for Supporting People and a recognition that there is more to do in assessing and meeting needs in this area.
- There is no formal monitoring or reporting of outcomes for service users.

13 However, we found some positive aspects of the programme.

- There has been a good level of involvement from partner organisations in the commissioning body.
- There are robust systems for financial management and payments to providers are made on time.
- There are examples of strong partnership working, many of which have been further developed over the past six months.
- There have generally been comprehensive attempts to consult service users and stakeholders during service reviews.
- Referral arrangements are generally working well.
- The Mental Health Service Review Panel has provided a focus for strategic decisions and for remodelling service provision.
- There has been a focus on the high costs of some services and this has led to savings being achieved.
- Concerns over quality of services have been addressed and there are examples of grant recovery where the specified service has not been delivered.
- There are some examples of joint funding and other joint working leading to increased efficiencies and value for money.

14 We have judged the Supporting People programme to have uncertain prospects for improvement because of the following.

- The track record of delivering the programme since April 2003 is poor. The Council did not implement most of the early stages of the programme effectively or on schedule. There is evidence of improvement over the past six months, but the programme is still insufficiently advanced in a number of areas.
- Leadership of the programme over the first two years was weak and stable long-term leadership of the Supporting People team is not yet in place (although recent progress has been made with the appointment of a lead officer).
- The Supporting People team has not been adequately resourced to date (however, the Council has recently committed funding to support the programme in 2006/07).
- There is not a five-year strategy and action plan that sets out clear aims and priorities for the programme and no firm plans or timetable for gathering information on housing support needs or producing a robust strategy.
- The future plans that are being used are not SMART.
- There are no firm plans in place for meeting housing support needs or commissioning services over future years.
- There is not a strong partnership relationship with service providers.
- There has not been consistent performance management of the Supporting People team. Corporate performance management procedures for individual staff have not been followed.
- Performance management of the programme by the commissioning body and programme management group has not been strong.
- Until recently the programme management group did not have a clear role in managing the programme and developing a future strategy.
- There are no comprehensive arrangements for collecting and sharing positive practice from providers.
- Risk management is underdeveloped, with no specific risk management plan or reporting of risks and contingencies to the governing bodies. (Work is underway to address this).

- 15 However, there are some positive indicators for future improvement.
- There have been a number of areas of improvement over the past six months, although from a low base. Staff and some partners report an improvement in the management of the Supporting People team.
 - The roles of the governing bodies have been clarified and there has been an improvement in their operation over the past six months.
 - The programme is likely to have the financial resources to deliver improvement. The required savings have been delivered and exceeded, and future grant allocations are currently forecast to rise substantially.
 - Staff have benefited from a range of training. Training is also available for service providers through the learning collaborative.
 - Some recent decisions have been taken concerning future commissioning priorities.
 - There is evidence, particularly recently, of the Council being open to learning from other authorities and organisations.
 - The Council has recently taken steps to attempt to address the failure to recruit a lead officer (an appointment was made in March 2006). There has also been some succession planning.
 - There is now a wide range of partnership working and cross-departmental working which will contribute to the capacity of the programme to improve once a robust Supporting People strategy and action plan are in place.

Recommendations

- 16 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 costs⁸ 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 Improve access to services and standards of customer care by:

- *producing information for service users, including information which explain what services are available and how to access them;*
- *reviewing content of the website to ensure that it is comprehensive, and ensure that it is regularly updated; and*
- *ensuring that service users, providers and frontline Council staff are aware of access and referral arrangements.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- current and potential service users will understand what support services are available and how to access them; and
- all stakeholders will be able to access up-to-date and comprehensive information online, if they wish to do so.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. The first element of this recommendation should be implemented by August 2006 and the second and third by April 2006.

⁸ 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 Strengthen service user involvement across the Supporting People programme by:

- developing a structured approach to involving service users in the strategic development of the programme, including consultation on the development of the revised Supporting People strategy; and*
- providing feedback to ensure service users are told what changes result from their involvement.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the programme will be shaped by service users and services will be developed that service users need and want; and
- service users will feel valued and engaged.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. The first element of this recommendation should be implemented by July 2006 and the second by April 2006.

Recommendation

R3 Ensure that there are plans in place to maximise the provision of appropriate housing support in the borough by:

- *carrying out a thorough assessment of the need for housing-related support across all client groups;*
- *developing a robust five-year strategy to best meet the needs identified in the above assessment – in consultation with partners and service users;*
- *developing an action plan for future years which is SMART and contains priorities for commissioning and ensuring that services for all client groups eligible for Supporting People funding best meet needs (eg floating support, where appropriate); and*
- *working with partners to maximise the availability and effective use of move-on accommodation.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- to provide a comprehensive understanding of the housing support needs in the borough, including unmet need;
- to provide a strategy and action plan that will, as far as possible, address the unmet needs for housing support in the borough, including the needs of eligible groups that are not currently funded through Supporting People;
- ensure that future commissioning addresses the areas of most acute need; and
- ensure that people can move on to more appropriate accommodation if they are ready to do so, thereby freeing up units of support for new clients.

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

Recommendation

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

- establishing and monitoring indicators that will measure the outcomes and benefits of the programme for service users;*
- establishing and monitoring indicators that will measure progress against the objectives of the Supporting People strategy;*
- tracking indicators that the programme shares with its partners in health and probation;*
- ensuring that performance management systems are applied consistently to individual staff and that staff have clear workplans;*
- regularly reporting progress against targets to the commissioning body, programme management group and key Council members and committees; and*
- implementing joint contracting and joint monitoring arrangements for jointly funded services, where it is appropriate to do so.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the governance bodies and others will know how the programme is progressing;
- the programme will know the contribution it is making to wider objectives;
- it will be easier and quicker to identify and address poor performance; and
- there will be a lower administrative burden on service providers.

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

Recommendation

R5 Strengthen governance arrangements by:

- *clarifying the membership of the programme management group and ensuring effective representation from providers and the voluntary sector; and*
- *promoting the Supporting People programme to internal and external partners and to council members.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- broader and stronger oversight of the programme through the involvement of other stakeholders; and
- a higher level of awareness of, and commitment to, the principles of the Supporting People programme from partners and councillors.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by April 2006, apart from promotion of the programme to Council members, which should be by June 2006 (following the election of the new Council).

Recommendation

R6 Improve the focus on achieving value for money by:

- *ensuring that stronger analysis and links are made between the costs, quality and outcomes of services; and*
- *developing benchmarking of costs and quality with regional and other comparative authorities.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved value for money due to a clearer picture of the comparative costs, quality and outcomes offered by different services; and
- contracting and commissioning decisions that are better informed.

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

Recommendation

R7 Ensure that the appropriate level of resources is available to effectively deliver the Supporting People programme by:

- *reviewing the current staffing arrangements in the light of the work required to be carried out over the coming year;*
- *discussing with key internal and external partners the roles they may be able to play in supporting the delivery of the programme; and*
- *developing a clear plan to address this issue.*

The expected benefit of this recommendation is:

- to maximise the Council's ability to deliver the programme effectively.

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

Recommendation

R8 Improve the relationship with service providers by:

- *ensuring that providers are effectively represented on the programme management group;*
- *continuing to develop the provider forum in the light of providers' views on how the forum can best serve their needs;*
- *consulting providers in advance of decisions and new policies that will affect them, and take their views into account; and*
- *collecting examples of good practice from individual providers (for example, during service reviews) and disseminating these to all providers.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the development of the programme will benefit from the experiences and expertise of service providers;
- improved communication with providers and commitment from providers to the future of the programme in Redbridge; and
- raising service quality through learning from best practice elsewhere.

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

Recommendation

R9 Take action to address all other weaknesses identified in this report.

- 17 We would like to thank the staff of the London Borough of Redbridge, and in particular Vicky Pateman and Frank Curran, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 11 and 16 to 20 January 2006.

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Report

Context

The locality

- 18 Redbridge is an outer-London borough with a population of 247,300⁹. The borough includes part of the Thames Gateway project, and major regeneration of Ilford town centre is planned to provide 5,500 new homes by 2016. The other main population centres are Chadwell Heath, Goodmayes and Seven Kings.
- 19 The borough has a very diverse community, with 36.5 per cent of the population from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities¹⁰ – the ninth highest nationally¹¹. The largest non-white groups are Indian (14 per cent of the population) and Pakistani (6 per cent).
- 20 Redbridge has a relatively young age profile, with 15.6 per cent of the population aged over 65 (compared to 18.5 per cent nationally)¹².
- 21 Overall, Redbridge is a relatively affluent borough – but with large disparities between areas. The borough is ranked as the 163rd most deprived of the 354 English local authorities¹³, with no wards in the 10 per cent most deprived nationally. Unemployment, as measured by the claimant count, stood at 2.8 per cent in November 2005, below the London average of 3.3 per cent, but above the national average of 2.4 per cent¹⁴.
- 22 There is a high level of home ownership in the borough (75 per cent, compared to 68 per cent nationally) but the levels of council housing (7 per cent) and registered social landlord (RSL) housing (3 per cent) are around half the national averages. Over 12 per cent of homes are privately rented, compared to 9 per cent nationally¹⁵.

Redbridge Council

- 23 The Council comprises 63 councillors and is controlled by the Conservative Party, with 33 seats. Labour has 20 seats, the Liberal Democrats have nine seats and there is one Independent councillor.
- 24 A Leader and Cabinet model governs the business of the Council, with six scrutiny committees and seven area committees.
- 25 The Council has 3,700 employees, excluding school staff. There are five departments, including 'housing and community services' (which includes the Supporting People team) and 'children's services' (formed in the last year).

⁹ NOMIS, mid-2004 population estimates.

¹⁰ Census 2001, people defining themselves as other than 'white'.

¹¹ Census 2001.

¹² Census 2001.

¹³ ODPM Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2004: Average Ward Score.

¹⁴ Claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), NOMIS, September 2005.

¹⁵ Census 2001. Averages shown are for England.

- 26 The Council's net revenue budget for 2005/06 is £299.4 million, compared to £281.2 million in 2004/05. The community care budget is £38.1 million in 2005/06, compared to £36.2 million in 2004/05.
- 27 The Council was assessed as a 'two-star' authority by the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in December 2005 and judged to be 'improving well'. As part of this assessment, the Council's housing service received a score of two out of a possible four, and social care services received a score of four out of four.
- 28 The Council's social care services were rated as three-star (out of a possible three) by CSCI¹⁶ in December 2005 – an improvement from the two-star assessment received in 2004. CSCI found that the Council's adult social services were 'serving people well', with 'excellent' capacity to improve. Children's services were also serving people well, with 'promising' capacity to improve.
- 29 The borough's Housing Strategy and its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan have both been rated as 'fit for purpose' by the Government Office for London (GOL).
- 30 The Council's 'vision', adopted in November 2004, is to: *'Make Redbridge a better place to live'*. This is underpinned by seven main aims:
- a safer place to live;
 - a cleaner, greener place to live;
 - a better place to learn;
 - a better place to care;
 - a better place for business;
 - a better place to live together; and
 - a better place to work.

The service

- 31 The Council acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in its area.
- 32 The Supporting People programme is designed to meet the housing-related support needs of vulnerable people, including homeless people, older people with support needs, people with a learning disability, people with mental health problems, those with substance misuse problems, refugees, travellers and ex-offenders.

¹⁶ Commission for Social Care Improvement.

- 33 A Supporting People strategy statement for 2005/06 was produced in 2005. This includes the Council's vision for the Supporting People programme in the borough, which is to:
- enhance the quality of life of vulnerable people in Redbridge;
 - enable people to live independently;
 - allow people a choice of support, wherever they live;
 - offer services that recognise diversity and respond to a range of needs;
 - ensure services offer high-quality support and value for money;
 - listen to the needs of our residents and service users and develop services that will meet these; and
 - ensure services offer support that will prevent homelessness, offending and re-offending behaviour and early and unplanned hospital admissions, amongst other national prevention objectives.'
- 34 The total amount of Supporting People grant available to the Council in 2005/06 is £4,258,705 with a projected underspend of £120,000. In addition, the Council received an administration grant of £152,436 to fulfil its role as the administering authority. An additional £70,000 was allocated by the Council in 2005/06 to cover administrative costs.
- 35 There are 27 different providers with 43 contracts, providing 95 Supporting People services in Redbridge¹⁷ (although 35 of these services will have been decommissioned by 1 April 2006). These services provide 1,648 units of supported accommodation (excluding community alarms) and 19 units of floating support.
- 36 The breakdown of spending across client groups in November 2003¹⁸ was:
- 29.7 per cent for people with mental health problems;
 - 21.2 per cent for people with learning disabilities;
 - 13.9 per cent for older people with support needs;
 - 11.7 per cent for young people at risk;
 - 10.6 per cent for people with drug problems;
 - 3.0 per cent for women at risk of domestic violence;
 - 2.6 per cent for single homeless people;
 - 2.1 per cent for frail older people;
 - 2.1 per cent for people with physical or sensory disabilities;
 - 1.2 per cent for offenders, and
 - under 1 per cent for all other groups.

¹⁷ At 31 October 2005.

¹⁸ ODPM 'platinum cut' figures, November 2003.

- 37 The London Borough of Redbridge was inspected in the third year of the programme. This report therefore reflects the current context for the Council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money offered by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

How good is the service?

- 38 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:

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

Governance

- 39 Governance arrangements for the Supporting People programme in Redbridge lacked clarity over the first two years of the programme – these have been clarified and strengthened over the last six months. There has been strong involvement of partners in the commissioning body, but poor involvement of the health partner on the programme management group. The programme management group did not drive production of a five-year Supporting People strategy and there has been no involvement in the group from service providers, service users or the voluntary sector.
- 40 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme:
- Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team – drive the whole process;
 - inclusive forum – consults with service providers and service users;
 - core strategy group – proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme;
 - commissioning body – agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme;
 - councillors – approve key decisions of the commissioning body; and
 - Supporting People team – delivers the local programme.

- 41 Supporting People commissioning bodies are a requirement under grant conditions for non-excellent authorities and must have senior representation from the administering local authority, the local health services (usually one representative from each primary care trust) and the area probation service. In two tier areas each District Council is entitled to one representative. Each named representative has one vote, although the administering local authority has a veto where there is a demonstrable financial risk to the administering local authority.

Commissioning body

- 42 Redbridge's commissioning body first met in January 2003. It meets every two months (it is required to meet at least quarterly by the terms of reference) and has three voting representatives:
- Council – Director of Housing and Community Services (Chair);
 - Redbridge Primary Care Trust (PCT) – Acting Director for Mental Health Commissioning; and
 - Probation – Housing Development Manager.
- 43 Meetings are attended by the Supporting People lead officer, as an observer and to provide information, and other staff as required.
- 44 A number of non-voting co-optees also attend meetings, including the Chief Community Care Officer (Accountable Officer and Chair of the Programme Management Group); Chief Housing Officer; and the Head of Redbridge and Waltham Forest Learning Disability Partnership.
- 45 There has been a good level of attendance from all three voting partners and from the Learning Disability Partnership. However, the housing service has not been represented at the last three meetings.
- 46 The Probation service is represented by one of two housing development managers for London Probation. Although these arrangements work well because of the representative's knowledge and skills, the level of representative should be at Assistant Chief Officer level. The Assistant Chief Officer is planning to attend a meeting annually.
- 47 The Health representative on the commissioning body has recently changed – the new member has a clear understanding of her role.

- 48 In July 2005, following a period of six months without a Supporting People lead officer and the appointment of an interim lead officer (see 'Delivery' below), there was a recognition that 'the programme needed greater focus and leadership'¹⁹. The commissioning body was '...unclear about what it wished the local programme to achieve, partly because of uncertainty over future levels of funding'²⁰. In response, the August 2005 meeting of the commissioning body agreed a number of changes to the governance arrangements. These included the following.
- Agreement that the commissioning body was too operational, and that five members should move to the core strategy group, allowing the commissioning body to become more 'formal'.
 - Agreement that there needed to be clear priorities for the Supporting People programme, including where future money needs to be spent.
 - Changes to the name, membership and chairing of the core strategy group (see below).
 - Amendment of the terms of reference for both governance bodies.
 - A need for further service user involvement.
- 49 Amended terms of reference for the commissioning body were agreed in October 2005. These are comprehensive and include the body's role, membership, the conduct of meetings, voting and dispute procedures.
- 50 A memorandum of understanding between the commissioning body and the programme management group was agreed in October 2005. This clearly defines the roles of the two governance bodies and the administering local authority.
- 51 The governance framework has been strengthened through this clarification of roles – although it is too early to assess the extent to which this will improve the governance of the programme. The minutes of the most recent meetings show an appropriate level of discussion and decision-making.
- 52 One external partner considers that Redbridge's commissioning body is inclusive and compares well with others she attends in London. For example, she has been involved in the recruitment process for the new lead officer. Her view is that there has been significant improvement over the past six to nine months in the way the body works. Previously, there was overly detailed discussion of operational issues. This was partly a response to concerns over the delivery of the programme (see 'delivery' below), which led to the recognition that the previous governance arrangements needed to be refined and clarified.
- 53 However, the commissioning body has not had the capacity to identify its key priorities for the next five years. It has had to concentrate on dealing with decisions on the outcomes of service reviews to meet the ODPM deadline of 31 March 2006 (see 'service reviews' below). As a consequence, strategic priorities are still unclear. The body is however aware of the considerable unmet need that exists and took some initial decisions on future funding priorities at its most recent meeting (December 2005 – see 'delivery' below).

¹⁹ Notes of Supporting People Strategic Working Group, 21 July 2005.

²⁰ Supporting People self-assessment, London Borough of Redbridge, January 2006.

Programme management group (core strategy group)

- 54 Redbridge's core strategy group was formed as a 'strategic working group' in May 2002. In 2005, the Council acknowledged that the membership, role and focus of the group was unclear and it was reconstituted as a 'programme management group' in August 2005 - to focus more on the management of the programme and development of strategy, with involvement from officers of greater seniority.
- 55 Amended terms of reference for the group were agreed in October 2005. These clarify the group's role, but do not address the conduct of meetings or decision-making.
- 56 The programme management group has been chaired by the Chief Community Care Officer, who is also the Accountable Officer for Supporting People, since September 2005. The new chair's level of seniority has enhanced the status of the group over recent months.
- 57 The group should meet every six to eight weeks, but a review of the minutes shows that it has sometimes met less regularly than this. For example, there were gaps of over three months between meetings on two occasions in 2005.
- 58 The terms of reference list a core membership of ten: seven Council officers, one representative from the PCT, one from Probation and one from the Learning Disability Partnership. However, the membership of the group is unclear from various documents and minutes, and was not clear to the members that we spoke to.
- 59 Supporting People team members and other Council officers also attend meetings, but at the time of this inspection there was no representation from service providers (although this is planned), the voluntary sector, service users or carers. The overall impact of this is that attendance at meetings is dominated by Council officers and does not make full use of the expertise available from elsewhere. In particular, the absence of the voluntary sector, providers and service users in the governance arrangements means that they have no formal means of influencing the direction of the programme or service improvements.
- 60 The involvement of the health partner (the PCT) in the programme management group has been poor, with attendance at four of the ten meetings, and at only two of the last five.
- 61 The involvement of the Probation service was poor to begin with, but has been strengthened, with representation at six of the ten meetings, and at all of the last five. Probation had no strategic lead officer for Redbridge for most of 2004 and this led to weak involvement in the group. Although recent engagement has been stronger, the representative is due to leave and a replacement has yet to be identified.
- 62 The Learning Disability Partnership has been a member of the group since September 2005 and has attended both meetings since then.

- 63 We found the minuting of meetings to be generally poor. The minutes for some meetings are incomplete or missing²¹. Minutes are often unduly short and decisions taken are unclear and are not always followed through at the next meeting. For example, the September 2005 meeting discussed the future core membership of the group, but no decision is recorded and the matter is not mentioned in subsequent minutes.
- 64 The group should have played a key role in developing a five-year strategy for the programme based on a robust assessment of the supply and need for housing support in the borough. However, a lack of clear leadership and programme management meant that this did not happen (see 'delivery' below).
- 65 The group has been strengthened over the past six months. The group has new members with more appropriate seniority who have a detailed knowledge of client need in their areas, such as the borough crime reduction manager, housing strategy officer and the principal officer for mental health services. Members now have a clearer understanding of the role of the group in terms of managing the programme, planning and monitoring, developing needs information and a five-year strategy.
- 66 The interests of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) are represented on the group by senior managers who are involved with these teams. When specific issues are discussed, appropriate managers are also invited to attend. For example, the DAAT co-ordinator was very involved in attempts to resolve issues concerning one service provider.

Accountable Officer

- 67 Until summer 2005, the role of Accountable Officer was undertaken by the Director of Housing and Community Services. As this officer was also the chair of the commissioning body, it was decided that the two roles should be separated, to avoid any conflict of interests.
- 68 Since summer 2005, the Chief Community Care Officer has been the Supporting People Accountable Officer. This officer is involved in the governance and management of the programme in a number of ways. For example, he chairs the programme management group and attends meetings of the commissioning body. He also meets weekly with the Director of Housing and Community Services and the cabinet member, and monthly with the lead officer and Joint Commissioning Manager.
- 69 The Accountable Officer has senior (but not direct) line management responsibility for the interim lead officer. However, it has been agreed to upgrade the post of lead officer and, following recruitment, the postholder will report directly to the Accountable Officer. In our view this will provide a necessary strengthening of links, given the problems experienced by the programme in 2004 and 2005 (see 'delivery' below).

²¹ For example, no minutes could be provided for 23 September 2004 and the minutes for 19 March 2004 and 16 April 2004 contain duplication.

- 70 The Accountable Officer does not have line management responsibility for any services funded through Supporting People grant; averting any potential conflict of interests.
- 71 We found that the new Accountable Officer has become more actively involved in the Supporting People programme over the past 12 to 18 months, since deficiencies in the programme came to light (see 'delivery' and 'service reviews' below).

Corporate commitment

- 72 The cabinet member for adult social services and health holds the Supporting People portfolio. He holds weekly meetings with the Director of Housing and Community Services (also attended by the Ccabinet member for housing) at which the progress of the Supporting People programme may be raised. Reports on the programme are made to the Health and Social Advisory Committee, a joint committee of the Council and the PCT Board, which advises the Council's Cabinet (and the PCT Board). There is no regular and systematic reporting of the programme's performance in place as yet (see 'how is performance managed', below).
- 73 We found that the cabinet member has a good understanding of the objectives of the Supporting People programme and is committed to ensuring that the programme receives sufficient administrative resources from the Council.
- 74 There is not a strong level of awareness of the Supporting People programme across the wider Council. There is scope to strengthen awareness, for example through a seminar for members, a roadshow or publicity packs. This would be of benefit to councillors who may be involved in issues concerning service provision or unmet needs in their wards.
- 75 The Council acknowledges that there has been little understanding among the partner organisations and across the Council of the importance of Supporting People in delivering key objectives for the Council and its partner organisations. However, efforts have been made to address this in recent months, including briefings for staff members, articles in staff briefings, and a presentation to a care providers event, as well as a range of meetings with agencies such as the Children's Service, Community Safety, ASBO team, Refugee Forum and Connexions.

Delivery arrangements

- 76 Delivery of the programme was seriously behind schedule and off-track by early 2005 and the Council has struggled to make up this lost ground. Providers that were spoken to during the inspection considered that the programme is less well advanced in Redbridge than in the other boroughs in which they work.
- 77 The Council has not yet made a comprehensive assessment of housing support needs in the borough and has not developed a comprehensive five-year strategy. The strategy that has been produced is for one year and does not contain a set of clear priorities or plans for future commissioning.

- 78 The Supporting People team has not had consistent leadership and has suffered from limited capacity and high staff turnover.
- 79 Local eligibility criteria were not agreed until April 2005, and had to be amended six months later, without provider consultation. The Council has not yet agreed its future contracting arrangements.
- 80 However, there are robust systems for financial management and payments to providers are made on time. Preliminary funding decisions have been made for commissioning new services.
- 81 There are a range of examples of strong partnership working, many of which have been developed over the past six months. However, relationships with providers have suffered through poor communication concerning service review outcomes.

Supporting People team

- 82 The Supporting People team is located within the community care division of the housing and community care department.
- 83 The Council initially established a team of three, comprising a lead officer, a contracts and information officer and an administrative officer. In 2004, additional administrative support was added, but there was also considerable turnover of postholders during the year, culminating in the departure of the lead officer. The lead officer post was not covered between January and July 2005; from July a consultant was employed as an interim lead officer on a part-time basis. The present composition of the team is:
- Interim Lead Officer (temporary officer, four days a week);
 - Contracts Review Officer;
 - Contracts Support Officer (seconded, temporary post); and
 - 2.5 administrative officers (1.5 are temporary posts to cover 2005/06 workload).
- 84 There has been, and still is, a lack of capacity within the team to effectively deliver the programme. There are three permanent posts within the team (Lead Officer, Contracts Review Officer and Administrative Officer) but only two permanent postholders. The future composition of the team is still to be finalised.
- 85 The Council acknowledges that, by the time of the departure of the lead officer in January 2005, the programme was seriously off-track and behind schedule. For example, few service reviews had been completed and none had been signed off by the commissioning body; a number of interim contracts had not been signed and little work had been undertaken to produce a five-year strategy. These and other similar issues are discussed later in this report. The lack of a lead officer between January and July 2005 further limited the team's capacity and led to 'a loss of focus and direction'²². During this period it was difficult for the team to recover the lost ground, despite the best efforts of the remaining staff members.

²² Supporting People self-assessment, London Borough of Redbridge, January 2006.

- 86 The Council did make attempts to recruit a permanent lead officer during the first half of 2005, but was unsuccessful. It therefore employed a consultant as interim team leader on a part-time basis (four days a week) from July 2005 – and this person is still in post. A further attempt to recruit in December 2005 also failed.
- 87 The Council has now reviewed and upgraded the lead officer post and, following our inspection, an appointment was made in March 2006. Line management arrangements have also been reviewed. The interim lead officer currently reports to the Joint Commissioning Manager, who in turn reports to the Chief Community Care Officer (the Accountable Officer). The permanent postholder will report directly to the Chief Community Care Officer.
- 88 The Council received an administration grant of £152,436 from the ODPM in 2005/06 to fulfil its role as the administering authority (down from £190,545 in 2004/05). An additional £70,000 was allocated by the Council in 2005/06 to cover administrative costs, such as the additional temporary staff resources.
- 89 In November 2004, the ODPM invited bids for additional funding from authorities that were behind schedule with their service review timetable, with a maximum of £60,000 per authority. Redbridge did not apply for this funding, despite the delays in completing service reviews (see 'service reviews' below). This was a missed opportunity.
- 90 Leadership of the programme and the team prior to summer 2005 had been weak. The interim lead officer, appointed in July 2005, has considerable experience in the Supporting People field and has strengthened the leadership of the team and the focus of the programme. However, the high level of slippage that existed in the programme and the limited capacity within the Supporting People team have meant that it has not yet been possible to put the programme back on track. It has also meant that a number of changes have been introduced over a short period, without the level of consultation that would normally be desirable. These issues are discussed later in this report.
- 91 We received mixed feedback on the team's effectiveness in delivering the Supporting People programme from partners, providers and other stakeholders. There was general agreement that the delivery of the programme has improved since summer 2005, with the exception of serious concerns from providers over the service review procedures (see 'service reviews' below).
- 92 We carried out a survey of service providers. Survey forms were sent to 24 providers and we received 15 responses – a response rate of 63 per cent. The survey found that:
- 74 per cent of respondents were either satisfied, or very satisfied, with the provision of information about Supporting People for users and applicants;
 - 66 per cent were either satisfied, or very satisfied, with the arrangements for involving providers in the delivery and development of the programme; and
 - 73 per cent were either satisfied, or very satisfied, with the advice and support available to providers from the Council.

- 93 These results do not compare favourably with the results achieved by other London boroughs with much larger programmes. Providers that we spoke to that are working with more than one authority all considered Redbridge to be the least advanced in implementing the programme.
- 94 There are not effective performance management arrangements in place for the Supporting People team (see 'how is performance managed', below). Although the interim lead officer now meets regularly with the team and with individuals, none of the team has received an annual appraisal in the last year, nor do they have individual workplans, despite these being standard departmental requirements.

Eligibility criteria

- 95 Redbridge has only recently put appropriate local eligibility criteria in place. Eligibility criteria were first presented to the commissioning body and agreed in April 2005, without prior consultation with providers²³. However, following the appointment of the interim lead officer, a number of concerns were identified with these criteria²⁴, and revised criteria were agreed in October 2005²⁵, following limited consultation through the Provider Forum. However, 86 per cent of respondents to our provider survey were either satisfied, or very satisfied, with the eligibility criteria. Seven per cent were dissatisfied and seven per cent (one provider) very dissatisfied.
- 96 Eligibility is reviewed as part of the service review process and arrangements are made to ensure ineligible tasks are funded more appropriately. For example, the Learning Disability Partnership has agreed to fund 25 per cent of learning disability scheme costs as there was evidence of Supporting People grant being used to fund an element of social care.
- 97 The eligibility criteria were published on the Council's website in January 2006 but have not been circulated to all service providers and there is no evidence of them being explained to service users, advocates or carers.

Contracts

- 98 The ODPM deadline for signing interim contracts was July 2003. In Redbridge, 37 of the 43 contracts had been signed by October 2004 and 42 by April 2005. The remaining contract was not signed until November 2005 and not completed until January 2006 – this was because the provider was unhappy about various clauses.

²³ Minutes of Commissioning Body, 4 April 2005.

²⁴ Minutes of Commissioning Body, 1 August 2005, and London Borough of Redbridge Supporting People self-assessment, January 2006.

²⁵ Minutes of Commissioning Body, 5 October 2005.

- 99 The interim contract that is in use is the ODPM's standard version with some minor changes. The Supporting People team has been working with the Council's legal service to develop a steady state contract, but a draft had not yet been circulated to providers for consultation at the time of our inspection. The Council has yet to make a decision on the future type of contracts – gross, subsidy or fixed capacity.
- 100 Contract management arrangements are generally weak, with no regular meetings with individual providers and no analysis of provider returns or user survey information. We were, however, provided with evidence of meetings and negotiations with the 17 services that have been decommissioned (this excludes the ten registered care homes and eight services surrendered by providers).
- 101 Our provider survey found that no respondents were 'very satisfied' with the Council's contract negotiation arrangements; 59 per cent were 'satisfied', 20 per cent were 'dissatisfied' and 26 per cent were 'very dissatisfied'.

Development of the five-year Supporting People strategy

- 102 The ODPM required a five-year Supporting People strategy to be submitted by 31 March 2005. Redbridge struggled to produce this strategy and the Accountable Officer contacted the ODPM in March and was granted an extension of the deadline to the end of May.²⁶ A document titled 'Strategy Statement 2005/06' was completed by consultants and submitted to the ODPM on 31 May 2005 and approved by cabinet on 28 June.
- 103 The strategy contains some needs information, largely taken from existing documents, but does not contain a comprehensive analysis of the need for housing support or plans to meet that need:
- 'there is little specific housing-related support needs information currently available; the needs information relates primarily to evidence of health, social care and housing need. This needs to be addressed'²⁷.*
- 104 The strategy is more of a position statement, identifying the work that needs to be done during the first year. The strategy is to be reviewed in summer 2006 – following publication of the ODPM's national strategy.
- 105 There was not adequate consultation or involvement of partners in the development of the Supporting People strategy. A consultation event to set the priorities within the strategy was held on 6 April 2005, but this did not involve service providers and was after the original deadline for submission of the strategy. The event was primarily attended by the Supporting People team and members of the governance bodies. The strategy was also discussed at the 'Inclusive Forum' on 8 April, which involved around 16 providers, but no other partners or service users.

²⁶ Minutes of the Commissioning Body, 4 April 2005.

²⁷ Supporting People Strategy Statement, 2005/06, page 37.

- 106** There were no separate consultation events to look at the needs of specific client groups as part of the strategy consultation. Providers noted that such events had proved to be useful exercises during the development of Supporting People strategies by other local authorities.
- 107** The priorities for the Supporting People strategy were agreed following the April consultation event. These are:
- completing service reviews;
 - increased use of floating support;
 - funding commitments – priority will be given to schemes where capital bids have been made to the Housing Corporation; and
 - prevention – including prevention of homelessness, services to reduce re-offending and to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 108** These do not constitute a satisfactory list of strategic priorities. For example, the completion of service reviews is an essential requirement of the programme over the first three years, rather than a future priority for meeting housing support needs in the borough.
- 109** A draft of the strategy was emailed to providers on 11 May, allowing two weeks for comments to be returned. However, the final strategy has not been circulated to providers and those we spoke to and visited said that they were unaware of its content.
- 110** During our inspection, we found that the Supporting People page of the Council's website contained a link to a copy of the strategy, but this was an early draft from 2003. Having pointed this out to the Council, the site has since been updated to include the published version of the strategy.
- 111** It is clear from our interviews and document reviews that the Supporting People strategy, as it stands, is not being used as an active document. It contains limited information of housing support needs and does not contain an adequate action plan (see 'how is performance managed?' below). It does not constitute a five-year strategy, as recognised by the title (Strategy Statement 2005/06).
- 112** The reasons given for the lack of a formal analysis of the need for housing-related support in the borough include the small scale of the programme and limits on future funding²⁸ - these are not satisfactory reasons in our view.

²⁸ London Borough of Redbridge, Supporting People self-assessment, January 2006.

113 A further explanation of the Council's position was given during the inspection:

'The ALA (administering local authority) and CB (commissioning body) have not taken action required to develop the five-year strategy as the uncertainty about future resources for SP convinced the ALA and CB that the first priority was to complete the review programme and identify what surpluses for reinvestment this created. In October (2005), it was apparent that a sum of approximately £700,000 would be available and an options paper was prepared for discussion. Following these discussions, a broad strategy for reinvestment has been agreed by the CB and the ALA is now starting work on producing a much more comprehensive strategy'²⁹.

114 The delay in completing an adequate needs analysis and strategy by March 2005 has delayed the commissioning of new services. The strategy is to be reviewed in summer 2006³⁰ and the Council recognises that a substantially revised strategy will need to be produced, based on more robust information on housing support needs. The Council has stated that it 'intends to start work on the strategy and needs analysis by late winter'³¹. However, it was not clear at the time of this inspection how this work will be undertaken.

115 Some work on the need for housing support was undertaken as part of a recently completed housing requirements study carried out for the housing service. This will have some value in terms of commissioning older person and community alarm services. However, this piece of work was commissioned and carried out without Supporting People input, which again is a missed opportunity.

Delivery of the five-year strategy

116 There is a low level of housing support funded by the Supporting People programme in Redbridge. The most recently available comparative figures³² show that in 2003 the Council's average spend per head of population was £0.35, compared to a London average of £0.97 and a national average of £0.70. Redbridge's level of spending was the 5th lowest in London and the 17th lowest nationally.

117 A low level of spending may be appropriate if this is mirrored by a low level of local need. However, the Council acknowledges that there is a shortage of provision across most, and possibly all client groups. An accurate picture of need is yet to be produced (see 'development of the five-year strategy', above).

²⁹ Council's response to Audit Commission feedback, 18 January 2006.

³⁰ London Borough of Redbridge, Supporting People self-assessment, January 2006.

³¹ Council's response to Audit Commission feedback of 18 January 2006.

³² ODPM 2003.

- 118** The programme had 102 service contracts at 1 April 2003. There are now 95 services in Redbridge³³, although 35 of these will be decommissioned by 1 April 2006. These services provide 1,648 units of supported accommodation (excluding community alarms) and 19 units of floating support. Of the 35 services that have been decommissioned, ten were registered care homes and therefore not eligible for funding; and eight were surrendered by the provider. Most of the remaining 17 services will be replaced by remodelled services (such as floating support) or funded from other sources (such as the learning disability partnership).
- 119** There is no specific Supporting People funding for six client groups. These are: mentally disordered offenders; refugees; people with alcohol problems; people with drug problems; homeless families; and travellers.
- 120** There were two services for people with drug problems in 2003, but these have since closed. In contrast, there was no provision for teenage parents in 2003, but eight units of accommodation for this client group have since been developed as part of a foyer scheme. Overall, the number of services has declined since 2003.
- 121** There is also a low level of floating support. Redbridge funded two floating support services in 2003, providing 27 units of support – this has since decreased to one service with 19 units. The Supporting People strategy notes that this low level of provision 'is very different to the national position'³⁴.
- 122** The Council acknowledges that the Supporting People strategy does not contain a robust analysis of housing support needs across all client groups, and that this work will now need to take place in order to produce a viable five-year strategy. The existing strategy does however highlight some specific areas of low provision and unmet need.
- No funding is allocated to homeless families and only one single homelessness service is funded (a nightshelter) despite the upward trend of homelessness since 2001 and the high level of households in temporary accommodation³⁵.
 - There are waiting lists for accommodation for people with a physical and/or sensory disability, giving evidence of unmet need. Access to appropriately adapted properties is difficult.
 - There is a low level of provision for people with substance misuse problems (there are now no specific services).
 - The Council recognises that it has insufficient information of needs amongst refugees.
 - There is one travellers' site in the borough (accommodating 36 people) but the support needs of travellers are not known and there has been no specific research or links with this group.

³³ At 31 October 2005.

³⁴ Supporting People Strategy Statement 2005/06, page 22.

³⁵ 2,333 at 31 December 2004.

- There is a low level of provision for women fleeing domestic violence, with one provider (ten units). Support is much lower than the London and England averages. Existing support does not meet the level of need.
- There are gaps in the provision of both floating support and supported accommodation for offenders (only one service) and current provision for young people at risk of offending is inadequate, with out of borough services being used extensively.
- There is no overall 'Move-on strategy' for supported housing, although some individual pieces of work are taking place.

123 The discussion of the Supporting People strategy at the Inclusive Forum in April 2005 also noted a number of shortcomings in current provision. These included:

- not enough is known about local needs;
- inappropriate referrals due to inadequate assessments;
- difficulties in getting adaptations carried out to properties to promote independence;
- little floating support for older people;
- an excess of mental health group homes, which are carrying voids because they are difficult to fill; and
- a lack of provision for mentally disordered offenders.

124 With regard to this level of unmet need, the commissioning body took some initial decisions on future funding priorities at its most recent meeting, in December 2005.

125 A priority within the Supporting People strategy is prevention work. Progress on this is mixed. The Council has invested resources in the prevention of homelessness through its housing advice centre. This includes housing advice work, work with private landlords and the tenancy sustainment service. However, none of this work is funded by Supporting People grant.

126 Prevention work to reduce re-offending and to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour is also listed as a priority. There is currently a recognised under-provision of supported housing for offenders in the borough, with only one scheme. Some early steps have been taken to address this, with the allocation of £40,000 (above) and the plans for generic floating support.

Financial and performance monitoring

127 Financial reporting arrangements are generally comprehensive and spend against budget is generally on target. The programme had a £12,661 overspend in 2004/05 and there is a projected £120,000 underspend in 2005/06.

- 128 Grant expenditure is reported to Commissioning Body meetings and is also reported to senior managers through the line management structure and to the portfolio holder. Spending against the administration grant budget is reported through the departmental budget monitoring process, but not reported to the Supporting People governance bodies.
- 129 Financial management, including payments to service providers, is carried out through the Community Care finance team, rather than from within the Supporting People team. These arrangements are working satisfactorily.
- 130 Payments to providers are made on time, but there are no contingency arrangements if the current postholder who updates the schedule of payments is away, and this can cause problems.
- 131 We were told that around 25 per cent of providers have not been sending in their quarterly monitoring returns on time, although this has improved, with 90 per cent of returns made within five weeks in the first two quarters of 2005/06. There has been no formal training for providers on this, although there have been some individual visits by officers. The IT system does not yet have the capability of allowing providers to automatically upload their data.
- 132 There is little analysis and limited reporting of the performance information received from service providers (see 'how is performance managed?' below).
- 133 There have not been annual inflation uplifts in the Supporting People grant paid to administering authorities. It has been up to each authority to decide whether to pay inflation uplifts to all or some local providers from within existing funds. In Redbridge, no inflation uplifts have been given to service providers in 2004/05 or 2005/06, although providers were invited to apply for assistance if they faced particular hardship.
- 134 There is currently no joint contracting or performance monitoring regime where social care and Supporting People funding are delivered together. Service providers would welcome such arrangements in order to minimise their administrative workloads. The Council has acknowledged this and has plans to introduce joint monitoring for learning disability services.
- 135 A fairer charging policy has been in place since 2003 and workshops were held for providers early in the programme. However, no publicity materials were produced and only one assessment has been made to date.
- 136 In response to this lack of take-up, a fairer charging leaflet was produced in December 2005 and emailed to service providers. Hard copies were awaiting distribution at the time of this inspection. The leaflet is also available on the Council's website. We found the leaflet to be clear and comprehensive.

Relationships with providers

- 137 The Council acknowledges that, in the past, links with providers have not been good³⁶. It has taken some steps to develop this area since summer 2005 by, for example, consulting providers on changes to Forum meetings and on representation in the governance structures (details below). However, the high level of dissatisfaction that many providers have with how the Council has managed service reviews and the outcome of those reviews has led to a high level of distrust and antagonism which will take time and effort to repair (see 'service reviews' below).
- 138 Providers meet with the Supporting People team every two months at what has been known as an Inclusive Forum. However, this is actually a provider forum as no other stakeholders or service users attend.
- 139 Provider Forum meetings are fairly well attended and have agreed terms of reference. There are currently no formal links between the Forum and the decision-making structure, which is a weakness, but it has recently been agreed³⁷ that a small group of four or five provider representatives will meet regularly with the lead officer and act as a sounding board and consultative group. One member of this group will attend the programme management group.
- 140 Until recently, the Supporting People officers attended the entirety of forum meetings and set the agenda. Meetings were therefore primarily seen as a vehicle for the Council to disseminate information, rather than a meeting 'owned' by the providers. However, following discussion with providers (initiated by the Council), the two most recent meetings have included a one hour slot solely for providers. This is an improvement, but in our view providers still do not have sufficient input into the content of meetings.
- 141 We attended a meeting of the Forum during the inspection. The meeting was well attended by 22 people, representing 16 of the 27 service providers. The meeting was well run and informative. The provider-only section of the meeting looked at how best to improve provider involvement in the programme, with the aid of an adviser from the National Housing Federation.
- 142 Fifty-nine per cent of providers that responded to our survey were satisfied with the Council's arrangements for involving providers in the delivery and development of the programme, and 7 per cent (one provider) were very satisfied. However, 33 per cent were dissatisfied and one provider was very dissatisfied.

³⁶ Council's response to Audit Commission presentation, 11 January 2006.

³⁷ Provider Forum 12 January 2006.

- 143 We held a focus group of six providers. Commonly held views coming from the group were:
- Redbridge do not communicate well, when compared to other boroughs;
 - there is little feedback to providers; they do not receive minutes of programme management group or commissioning body meetings; and
 - little involvement in the development of the programme. For example, no consultation on the new eligibility criteria and limited involvement in the Supporting People strategy.
- 144 Our visits to 11 service providers elicited mixed views. Some providers we visited felt that they are not sufficiently consulted and their expertise is not used in developing the Supporting People programme. However, some providers found the Supporting People team to be accessible and helpful and the management of the programme to have improved over the last six months.
- 145 A mentoring arrangement has been set up between a struggling service provider for people with learning disabilities, and a more experienced provider from another authority. We see this as positive practice.

Partnership and cross-authority working

- 146 The Council has been involved in a range of partnership working, which has widened over the last six months.
- 147 Redbridge is a member of the east London sub-regional Supporting People lead officers' group. Involvement in this group has strengthened over recent months. The group works, mainly informally, on sharing policies and good practice, but has not been as dynamic as it might have been in promoting the sub-regional agenda and is less advanced than some other London sub-regions.
- 148 Workshop events for providers were held early in the programme with three neighbouring boroughs, and a joint Home Improvement Agency has been developed with the London Borough of Havering.
- 149 More detailed joint-working has been started with two other boroughs, Barking and Dagenham, and Havering, and a draft work plan for 2006/07 is being developed. This is likely to include the joint commissioning of an intensive floating support service for persistent and prolific offenders across all three boroughs (plus Waltham Forest) and the possibility of jointly commissioning training for providers.
- 150 We found evidence of strong partnership working through the Learning Disability Partnership for Redbridge and Waltham Forest. This partnership involves the social care and health services in both boroughs. The partnership is now represented on both the Supporting People commissioning body and the programme management group, and has had a significant input into plans to remodel services. The partnership has also agreed to fund the social care element of costs (25 per cent) that have been identified through service reviews of some learning disability services.

- 151 Formal links with the probation service take place through the governance bodies. Links between the Supporting People programme and the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)³⁸ have been weak, but have been developed recently. A presentation to the MAPPA on Supporting People is due to be made in late January 2006.
- 152 There are links with the local strategic partnership (LSP) through the chairs of the commissioning body and the programme management group. Links to the LSP will be further developed through the local area agreement.
- 153 Links have recently been established with Redbridge Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and a seminar on Supporting People and the voluntary sector was held recently with CVS members. A proposal to strengthen these links by the CVS director joining the programme management group is being considered.
- 154 There is other evidence of partnership working through a range of fora. For example, members of the Supporting People team attend the joint commissioning group for Redbridge and Waltham Forest DAATs; the Domestic Violence Forum; the learning disability partnership; homelessness strategy meetings; and the teenage pregnancy partnership.
- 155 In recent months, the lead officer and others have also met with a range of commissioners and managers to discuss specific client group needs in relation to the programme. These have included the DAAT Manager, Drug Intervention Programme Manager, Commissioning Manager for the Learning Disability Partnership; the Director of the Refugee Forum; the YOT Manager; and the homelessness service. This work should lay the foundations for the needs assessment and strategy development work that will be necessary during 2006.

Risk management

- 156 A separate risk assessment for Supporting People has not yet taken place. There is a risk assessment process for Adult Social Services, but the Council recognises that the risks attached to Supporting People are sufficiently distinctive to merit separate consideration. Work to produce a risk register began in November 2005 and work is underway to identify emergency contingency contacts for each service area.
- 157 There has not yet been training for providers in carrying out risk assessments and needs assessments. The Council assessed the demand for this in December 2005 and January 2006 and has now commissioned training in this area.

Service reviews

- 158 The Council was slow to carry out service reviews and report them to the commissioning body over the first two years of the programme. The quality assessments made during the early reviews are also now considered to be unreliable. This has resulted in the need to re-assess services and complete the remaining reviews in a nine-month period, which has necessitated a change in methodology, including less validation visits.

³⁸ Arrangements for the management of the risk posed by sexual or violent offenders.

- 159** The ODPM expects all Administering Local Authorities to review all their Supporting People-funded services between 1 April 2003 and 31 March 2006. In Redbridge, complying with this timetable in a way that produces consistent reviews and outcomes has been a fraught process, despite the low number of funded services.
- 160** Schemes were initially prioritised for review where they were high cost or there were concerns over strategic relevance. Following ODPM guidance, and the appointment of the interim lead officer in summer 2005, schemes have been reviewed in client group blocks, but with provision to bring forward reviews of individual services where there are particular concerns. This is an appropriate method of prioritisation – although no agreed eligibility criteria were in place at the time.
- 161** Only four service reviews had been completed at the time the Supporting People strategy was drawn up in April 2005. These delays were due to a combination of staff turnover and poor management within the Supporting People team. The strategy also acknowledged that 'approvals of service review outcomes by the commissioning body have to date been hindered by a lack of agreed priorities for the programme'.
- 162** In November 2004, the ODPM emphasised that the service review deadline would not be extended, but invited applications for one-off additional funding of between £10,000 and £60,000 from authorities that were behind with their review processes. Redbridge did not apply for this funding.
- 163** By July 2005, the programme of reviews was seriously behind schedule. The interim lead officer also judged that the outcomes of the earlier reviews were unreliable, and that services would need to be re-visited and re-assessed, including new quality assessment framework (QAF) scores.
- 164** In effect, this has meant that the review of all services (including the re-assessments of the earlier reviews) needed to be compressed into a nine month period, to complete by the deadline of 31 March 2006. To achieve this, various steps were taken, including:
- an officer was seconded from April 2005 to assist the contracts and information officer with service reviews; and
 - in summer 2005, the review processes were redesigned and simplified. Where providers have more than one service for a particular client group, it was decided only to make a validation visit to one service – and to carry out desktop reviews of the other services.
- 165** The desktop review of some services is seen by the Council as a pragmatic approach to achieving the completion deadline. Of 26 services which the Council wishes to continue to fund, and whose reviews have been completed, 10 (38 per cent) were not visited. A further 25 services did not require validation visits as decisions had been taken to decommission them.

- 166 However, with the small number of services and providers in the borough, this approach would not have been necessary if the programme had been better managed between 2003 and 2005. This approach could also have been avoided by devoting further resources to reviews (in addition to the one permanent officer and one secondee).
- 167 This has led to an inconsistent approach to reviews over time. A number of providers told us that their services were reviewed thoroughly in 2004, including a validation visit by two officers for one or two days, but that the more recent approach to reviews has been less thorough and generally involves only one officer.
- 168 Of more concern to the providers we spoke to was the 'downgrading' of the scores achieved in their earlier service reviews and the consequent receipt of a 12-month contract termination notice. In many cases, providers were verbally given satisfactory QAF scores ('C' or above), and received written confirmation of these in a draft service review report. However, due to slippage in the programme, these outcomes were not reported to the commissioning body in 2004 and were not formally agreed prior to the departure of the lead officer.
- 169 The Council emphasises that, where 12-month notices have been served due to concerns over service quality, they will be rescinded if the quality concerns are addressed by the time of a revisit in 'spring/summer' 2006. Letters to providers do state the Council's intention to enter into steady state contracts once quality concerns have been addressed.
- 170 The re-assessment of services and service of 12-month notices has caused widespread dissatisfaction amongst service providers. Although we did not find evidence that the new scores are incorrect (a full evaluation of providers' services is outside the scope of this inspection), we did find examples of failings which could have been corrected quickly if the provider had been allowed to do so, rather than receiving a 12-month notice and awaiting a re-evaluation many months later. As a consequence of feedback from providers, the Council has amended its approach to reviews to allow for more discussion with providers since December 2005.

- 171** Feedback we received from service providers includes the following.
- Seventy-nine per cent of respondents to our provider survey were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the outcome of their service review.
 - Forty-six per cent of respondents to our survey were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Council's processes and arrangements for service reviews, and with the Council's approach to determining the strategic relevance of their service.
 - Providers attending our focus group considered the review process and arrangements to be poor compared to the other boroughs they work with; the grading system has not been consistent over time; and more than one review has been carried out for a number of providers who were required to duplicate information already supplied. There has been inadequate feedback on issues identified and no involvement in developing action plans.
 - Some providers attending our focus group said they had been given no opportunity to put right minor issues and inadequate time to provide comments on draft review reports.
- 172** Providers also reported a lack of consistency of review outcomes across authorities, with differing QAF scores for similar services in different authorities. The Council's feedback on this point is that it is trying to resolve these issues through the east London sub-regional group meetings, but there have yet to be any outcomes from these discussions.
- 173** The overall impact of these points is that the relationship with providers has deteriorated.
- 174** Members of the programme management group that we spoke to recognised that the changes in service review outcomes have been poorly explained to providers and that this has caused tensions. At the last meeting (16 December) the Council agreed that a letter would go out to all providers that have been downgraded to explain why the previous scores were not robust. The Council has also agreed to meet with all providers to discuss their concerns and agree the approach to be taken in the future.
- 175** There were discussions at the November 2005 and January 2006 Provider Forums at which the Council tried to explain the rationale of its approach. In the light of provider feedback at the November meeting, the Council agreed to amend its approach to agreeing a final QAF score and action plan, in order to give providers more input to agreeing the final score. The Council has also been in contact with the affected providers (either by meeting or email) to discuss and refine QAF scores - as a result, two QAF assessments were upgraded during the week of our inspection. This is a welcome improvement in communication and shows more of a partnership approach.

- 176 The changes that have been made to the review process mean that the ODPM deadline of 31 March 2006 is now likely to be met, although some revisits to services with QAF scores of 'D' will need to take place after that date. By November 2005, 35 reviews had been completed, 61 were in progress and 6 were yet to start. The latest information we received, in January 2006, lists 58 reviews which had been completed and reported to the commissioning body.
- 177 Of the 58 reviews completed by January 2006, 35 had resulted in decommissioning (including contracts being surrendered) and 21 had been served with 12-month termination notices, pending quality concerns being addressed or other changes to services.
- 178 The review process itself is set out in a comprehensive 'Supporting People Service Review Procedure' (undated), based on ODPM guidelines. One staff member has experience of conducting reviews in other boroughs and the other has contract monitoring experience in Social Services. Both have had training in how to conduct reviews, supplemented by training in working with vulnerable adults, diversity and health and safety.
- 179 Reviews which include a validation visit also include comprehensive attempts to consult service users, including interviews, house meetings and questionnaires. A specific consultation event was also held for all service users with learning disabilities, using external expertise. However, some service users whose services received desktop reviews have not been given the opportunity to provide feedback³⁹.
- 180 Service users do not receive feedback on the outcomes of service reviews or the planned changes and improvements to their services.
- 181 The service review of the one internal service provider (a mental health service) was recently completed. We found that this followed the same procedures as those applied to external providers.
- 182 Stakeholders have been involved in the review process. A questionnaire is sent to the relevant stakeholders as part of each review and some have been invited to attend validation visits, although this has not been systematic.
- 183 Our provider survey found that 63 per cent of respondents were either satisfied, or very satisfied, with the Council's involvement of users and stakeholders in their service review.
- 184 Further involvement of specialist stakeholders has been achieved through 'service review panels' which the Council has convened for the three largest client groups: mental health, learning disabilities and older people. For example, the mental health panel has met three times and discussed and progressed decisions about de and re-commissioning. There have been three meetings of the learning disability panel and one of the older people panel, with another planned for February.

³⁹ London Borough or Redbridge Supporting People self-assessment, paragraph 31.

- 185** The service review panels are comprised of relevant commissioners, practitioners, and representatives from carer and service user organisations (where possible). The panels comment on review reports and are useful fora for taking an overview of the needs of particular client groups. They also provide a clearer understanding of strategic relevance, which makes remodelling or decommissioning decisions easier to take. The relevant commissioner or principal officer is then invited to the programme management group meeting when the service reviews for that client group are discussed.
- 186** However, service review panels only exist for the three largest client groups, in terms of the number of services funded⁴⁰. In January 2006, there were nine other client groups funded through Supporting People; seven of these groups only had one service, one group had three services and one group had four services. There were also several client groups with no Supporting People funding. The Council's view is that the service review panel approach is too cumbersome for client groups with such a small number of services. In our view it is, therefore, not clear how the unmet needs and commissioning priorities for these groups are being adequately addressed.
- 187** In some authorities, summary reports have been produced for the commissioning body following the completion of all service reviews for a particular client group. This can be a useful method of providing an overview of issues concerning that group and can inform future service provision. This practice has not been adopted in Redbridge.
- 188** The lead officer checks and signs-off all service review reports. The programme management group then considers all reviews and agrees or amends draft recommendations, prior to submission to the commissioning body.
- 189** Providers should be sent draft reports to comment on at least two weeks prior to the commissioning body meeting (or four weeks if the report raises quality concerns). However, some providers told us that this had not happened – in one case the report was received three days in advance of the meeting. The Council acknowledges that providers were given only a brief opportunity to comment in autumn 2005, but has since restored the two/four week periods. Where the provider has received QAF scores of 'D' the Council will now also offer to meet with them.
- 190** A formal appeal procedure was agreed in August 2005, although no appeals have been received to date. Providers should receive the commissioning body's decision within five days and have a total of ten days from the decision in which to appeal. However, it is unclear whether providers are informed of the commissioning body's decision within five days as there was no evidence of this on a file we inspected.

⁴⁰ At 1 January 2006, Redbridge funded 39 services for older people with support needs, 23 services for people with mental health problems and 19 services for people with learning disabilities.

- 191** Although action plans are included in service review reports, these have been written by the authority, with no involvement from the service provider. The Council acknowledges that it would have been better to give providers much more involvement in this area and has undertaken to adopt this approach for the remainder of its reviews⁴¹.
- 192** There has not been the capacity within the Supporting People team to check progress against action plans between the review taking place and the formal re-visits in spring/summer 2006.
- 193** There is no mechanism for collecting and disseminating examples of good practice found during service reviews, although work to address this is now underway with plans for a presentation on 'lessons learnt from reviews' at the March 2006 Provider Forum.
- 194** No service providers had been accredited by the Supporting People programme at the time of this inspection. There was agreement to pursue a sub-regional approach to accreditation, but this only began to be implemented in summer 2005. Work is now underway and recommendations on the accreditation of all providers were due to be considered by the commissioning body in March 2006.

Value for money

- 195** Value for money analysis does not adequately link quality, cost and desired outcomes, and benchmarking of costs and quality is undeveloped at both a regional and local level. New value for money criteria were developed in summer 2005, but without the involvement of providers. There has been a focus on high cost services and savings have been achieved, but not a focus on low cost outliers. There are examples of joint funding and other joint working to achieve efficiencies, but more could be done in this area. Not all supported housing services have been identified for funding through Supporting People.

How do costs compare?

- 196** Comparisons of unit costs with London and England are set out in the data appendix. Overall, at the outset of the Supporting People programme in 2003, the Council had higher unit costs in comparison with other councils in Greater London and England, and significantly higher unit costs for services excluding community alarms and sheltered housing.

⁴¹ Council's response to inspection feedback, 20 January 2006.

Table 1 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit – excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
London Borough of Redbridge	£0.35	£43.67	£43.69	£88.41
London	£0.97	£42.37	£48.73	£68.40
England	£0.70	£28.30	£34.71	£76.37

Source: The data quoted is taken from ODPM sourced material 2003/04

- 197** These figures should be treated with some caution as there have been a number of changes since the platinum cut data was produced.
- 198** The ODPM platinum cut cost profiles for individual client groups revealed three particularly high cost areas. Unit costs for supported accommodation were in the highest 25 per cent nationally for people with drug problems and for refugees. However, there were only three services covering these two client groups and all have since been decommissioned.
- 199** Costs of floating support were in the highest 25 per cent nationally for the one service for older people with support needs.
- 200** The data also shows a much lower level of spending on Supporting People services per head of population than the London and national averages.

How is value for money managed?

- 201** During service reviews, officers follow a value for money methodology which includes four value for money criteria, this was introduced in summer 2005⁴². Prior to this, reviews had differential benchmark prices for different types of service. The new methodology was developed at a regional level and is now (since January 2006) published on the Council's website. However, there has been no consultation with local stakeholders about these criteria and they were used before the commissioning body had formally agreed them. The four criteria are:
- grant eligibility;
 - a maximum of £25 per hour for support;
 - a maximum of 25 per cent for overhead costs; and
 - the appropriateness of the level of support.
- 202** The methodology explains that the Council will consider exceptions to these criteria if warranted by individual cases. For example, where a small service provider has unavoidably high overhead costs. However, the Council has stated that it has received no requests for exceptions from providers.
- 203** Redbridge has used all of the criteria during the review process and has looked at outcomes from the QAF assessments, but there has not been a comprehensive comparison of costs linked to quality and outcomes across services.
- 204** High cost outlier services were targeted for early review. Where costs are significantly higher than the regional average, the Council has taken action to reduce them. For example, around 25 per cent of costs have been transferred to the social care budget for learning disability services because of the level of care provided.
- 205** Action has been taken where the quality of services is considered to be poor, but low cost outliers have not been specifically targeted.
- 206** The Supporting People team has recovered grant where services have not been delivered to the specification. For example, because of a recruitment problem the refuge service had a period without a number of staff members and £70,000 was clawed back.
- 207** Savings required by ODPM grant reductions have been achieved and exceeded. Savings of £750,000 have been made through service reviews, largely through the decommissioning or closure of services - £173,699 in 2004/05 and a further £570,000 (full year equivalent) through the 2005/06 review programme.
- 208** Because no new services have been commissioned, we could not assess whether the procurement arrangements will deliver improved value for money. There has been some reconfiguration of services to improve value for money but there has not, for example, yet been a move to providing more floating support.

⁴² Redbridge Supporting People value for money process and guidance (undated).

- 209** Redbridge did not ensure that all services that should have received transitional housing benefit (THB) did so or that they were transferred to Supporting People funding. For example, warden services for the Council's sheltered accommodation are funded from the general fund rather than from THB or (from April 2003) from Supporting People grant. By identifying this earlier the Council could have increased its bid for Supporting People grant to maximise income.
- 210** There has been limited consideration of joint funding of services to help deliver joint priorities. For example, Supporting People grant could be used to fund support time and recovery workers (STAR workers) in health, who help to reduce the number of patients admitted to hospital and to shorten lengths of stay, but this has not yet been considered. The impact of this is that resources are not necessarily being used as effectively as they could be.
- 211** More positively, there is some joint funding of services which has improved the value for money of service delivery. For example, in 2004/05 the Supporting People allocation for the Home Improvement Agency was £40,000. This was match-funded by the Council to the value of £80,000. The agency is responsible for carrying out works for home improvement grants, disabled facilities grants and the House Proud scheme for the repair, improvement, maintenance and adaptation of homes.
- 212** Work has started to explore the possibility of joint commissioning an intensive floating support service for persistent and prolific offenders across Redbridge and three neighbouring boroughs. There is also work underway with the London Borough of Waltham Forest to develop a joint procurement strategy for learning disability services.
- 213** Benchmarking of quality and costs is underdeveloped at both a regional and local level. The east London sub-region has agreed to benchmark costs and data across the sub-region and Redbridge intends to contribute to this work.

Service user involvement

- 214** Although there are a number of examples of service user involvement in service reviews and through adult social services mechanisms, there is not yet a systematic approach to involvement of all client groups in the Supporting People programme, and outcomes of service reviews are not fed back to the service users concerned. There are no arrangements in place for service users to feed into the governance arrangements and service users were not consulted during the development of the Supporting People strategy.

- 215 Examples of service user involvement in the Supporting People programme have included:
- a range of user consultation during service reviews, although this does not take place where services receive desktop reviews (see 'service reviews' above);
 - all sheltered housing residents received a questionnaire as part of the review of older people's services, with a response rate of 30 per cent (360 responses);
 - a consultation event for people with learning disabilities was hosted by a specialist facilitator, around 30 people attended the half-day event;
 - the new older people's strategy and action plan (September 2005) includes Supporting People needs and issues and was developed following consultation with service users and the Supporting People team; and
 - input from users of mental health services in the mental health 'service review panel' (see 'service reviews', above).
- 216 However, outcomes of service reviews are not fed back to service users.
- 217 Adult social services has a comprehensive consultation and involvement strategy for service users and carers, and there are a number of ways in which service users are consulted and involved in the development of services. These are not directly concerned with the Supporting People programme, but officers from the Supporting People team have become increasingly involved through attending meetings and making other links (see 'delivery' above). For example, the DAAT has held a number of consultation days and planning events which have included service users. It is currently looking to set up service user forums across the borough.
- 218 However, there was no consultation with service users as part of the development of the Supporting People strategy, although consultation is planned over the next year. Other authorities have found that useful feedback can be obtained through events, conferences and interviews. These can be particularly useful when themed to look at the particular needs of each client group.
- 219 There are currently no arrangements in place for service users to feed into the governance arrangements. The Council recognises that service users are not sufficiently involved and that this needs to be developed.
- 220 Our 11 visits showed that service providers are generally involving service users well in their schemes through, for example, house meetings and questionnaires.

Access to services and information

- 221 No information for service users is currently available, with the exception of a recent 'Fairer Charging leaflet, and the content of the Council's website is limited. The first issue of a newsletter for providers has recently been produced. Referral arrangements appear to work well, although there is a recognised need to clarify these arrangements for frontline staff.

Access

- 222** Referrals to services funded by the Supporting People programme are made through the various specialist officers and departments within the Council, rather than through a single referral team, as in some authorities. These mechanisms appear to work well in practice, although there is a recognised need to clarify these arrangements for frontline staff. The Council is developing a common assessment tool to be used by all service access points – assessment forms have been piloted.
- 223** Overall, however, there is a lack of housing support services to access for many client groups (see 'delivery' above).
- 224** Where a number of different parts of the statutory sector require access to services, the approach is to agree a central point through which all referrals should go. For example, all referrals to the young people's foyer go through the homelessness service, such as referrals by Connexions and the Children's Trust.
- 225** Our provider visits found some positive examples of access arrangements. For example, access to the women's refuge is through a national online service which is updated daily, and by direct referral from a number of agencies. Access to a mental health support service was also positive; all mental health allocations are co-ordinated by a housing panel chaired by the Principal Officer for Mental Health.
- 226** As part of our reality checking, we made a mystery shopping telephone call to the Supporting People team using the scenario of someone with a learning disability, asking what housing support would be available in the area. This call received a helpful response, although we were told that no printed information is currently available (see 'information' below).

Information

- 227** No printed information on the Supporting People programme is currently available, with the exception of a recent leaflet on 'fairer charging' (see below). A leaflet was produced earlier in the programme, but not widely circulated following consultation with providers. The Council informed us that it intends to produce some general information in autumn 2006 'once the future of the local programme is clearer'.
- 228** The first issue of a quarterly newsletter for service providers was produced in November 2005. The newsletter is clear and informative. There is not a newsletter for service users.
- 229** The Council's 'Better Care, Higher Standards' Charter is clear and refers to the services available for each client group and how to access housing advice, general advice and health advice. The Charter was updated in 2005 and does refer briefly to the Supporting People programme. The Council plans to include fuller information in the 2006 revision of the Charter.

- 230** Although a fairer charging policy has been in place since 2003, only one assessment has been made to date. The absence of any publicity materials was identified as a reason for this, and a fairer charging leaflet was produced in January 2006. The leaflet is available on the Council's website and copies were awaiting distribution at the time of this inspection. We found the leaflet to be clear and comprehensive, with an assessment request form and with straplines in community languages.
- 231** The ODPM has produced an online national directory of Supporting People services – this went live in October 2005. Each authority was asked to provide information on its local providers. Redbridge was unable to do this until December 2005 and is aware that some of this information may not be accurate – it will be checked for accuracy in February 2006.
- 232** There are no plans to produce a local directory of Supporting People service providers, although a link to the national directory has been placed on the Council's external website.

Website

- 233** We found the Supporting People page of the Council's website difficult to find as 'Supporting People' and 'adult social services' are not listed in the A to Z of services on the home page of the site.
- 234** We found the content of the site to be limited. We initially found that the site contained one page of general background information on Supporting People, with links to five documents. This included the Supporting People strategy, but we found this to be an early (2003) draft. There was also a link to 'frequently asked questions' but this contained no content.
- 235** Following our feedback on these findings, the Council updated the site during our inspection to ensure that content is up-to-date and to add some additional documents. There are now links to ten documents on the site.
- 236** The site contains a link to the ODPM's Supporting People website (spkweb) and to the national directory of service providers.
- 237** There is still, however, considerable scope for improvement. The site does not contain any agendas or minutes of meetings (such as the Provider Forum), or details of emergency services or other local services.
- 238** Redbridge's page on the ODPM's Supporting People website only contains two pieces of information; a contacts page and the Supporting People strategy.

Complaints

- 239** There is no separate complaints procedure for Supporting People. Complaints about the programme can be made through the departmental complaints procedure, but we were informed that none have been received to date.

Diversity

- 240** The Supporting People programme funds some culturally-specific services, although there is no provision for some groups and low provision for others. The Council recognises that there is more to do in assessing and meeting needs in this area. There is no diversity or BME strategy for Supporting People, but there are a number of positive initiatives across the wider department and Council, including the Redbridge Learning Collaborative.
- 241** Adult social services commissioned some research in 2002 on meeting the needs of people from BME communities. This was used to inform the housing strategy and led to the development of the Supporting People-funded Home Improvement Agency.
- 242** There are nine BME or culturally specific services in the Borough – eight for Jewish people (three for older people, three for learning disabilities and two for physical disabilities) and one scheme for Asian elders. A recent extra-care scheme, part-funded by Supporting People, also provides a range of culturally sensitive services.
- 243** However, the Council's own analysis of client record data indicates that there is disproportionately low take-up of Supporting People services by people from BME communities. More work needs to be done to find out the reasons for this and to promote services amongst those communities.
- 244** There has not been an analysis of the housing support needs of the large BME population in Redbridge, and services have not therefore been planned accordingly. For example, there has been no analysis of the needs of older people from diverse communities. However, some of this work will be addressed in the housing needs survey to be published in March 2006.
- 245** The Supporting People strategy includes an analysis of supply and needs, based on existing information. However, the Council acknowledges that the data in this area is incomplete. Action points are included in the strategy, but without timescales.
- 246** The Council has made a number of links with services representing vulnerable and excluded groups. For example, the Council held a seminar with CVS members to look at how they can contribute to the Supporting People programme - CVS membership includes most local BME community groups. Supporting People representatives also attend the multi-agency domestic violence forum, which has recently completed a 2005/08 domestic violence strategy.
- 247** Redbridge's adult social services have been praised by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) for a number of initiatives around diversity issues, including the range of resources and services for BME service users. The housing and community care department has a comprehensive equality and diversity training programme and has achieved level two of the Local Government Equality Standard, and is working towards level three.

- 248 The Diversity Programme Manager in Adult Social Services has recently been awarded the 'Equality champion award' for 2004/05 by the country's largest voluntary sector service provider in mental health services, for work on a mentoring scheme for BME managers and workforce development initiatives.
- 249 These initiatives within the wider department have provided some knock-on benefits for the Supporting People programme. For example, the Redbridge Learning Collaborative was set up to help independent sector providers with developing the skills of their staff. This should help providers to meet the priorities of adult social services. All Supporting People providers are encouraged to join the Collaborative and about 50 per cent are now members.
- 250 Supporting People staff have access to interpreting and translation services and have made use of these. An external consultant who speaks several Asian languages has been employed to undertake the service review visit to the Asian elder's scheme.
- 251 Although there is limited printed information available, it is provided in a range of formats. For example, the one Supporting People leaflet for service users (on fairer charging - see 'information', above) contains straplines in community languages. The 'Better Care, Higher Standards' charter has a summary leaflet translated into seven community languages and a version with pictures to improve understanding for people with learning disabilities.
- 252 There is no BME or diversity/equality strategy for Supporting People, although there is a recognised need to develop one next year. An example of an issue to address is the low percentage of BME residents in learning disability schemes, compared to the borough profile.
- 253 Diversity information is not reported to the governing bodies and monitoring of providers is only done through the review process. For example, the commissioning body does not have a clear idea of whether providers' staff reflect the local community or whether services are accessible for BME communities. The Council does have plans to address this.

Outcomes for service users

- 254 Redbridge's Supporting People programme is one of the smaller programmes in England. This is partly because the authority did not pursue the opportunity to develop new services through transitional housing benefit, although some services were developed at this time⁴³. There is little or no supported housing provision for many client groups (see 'delivery' above) and, in particular, a low level of floating support. There is a lack of move-on accommodation and no formal monitoring of outcomes for service users. However, service users are complimentary about the services they receive from their providers and there is evidence of good quality support leading to some improved outcomes for service users.

⁴³ London Borough of Redbridge Supporting People self-assessment, paragraph 69.

- 255** Four services have been developed or reconfigured through Supporting People since April 2003:
- an eight-unit teenage parent scheme attached to Redbridge foyer;
 - the redevelopment of an RSL sheltered housing unit into an extra-care scheme with works due to start in January 2006;
 - a pipeline sheltered housing scheme opened in September 2004; and
 - a pipeline scheme for people with mental health problems is due to come on-stream in January 2006.
- 256** However, in some areas provision has diminished since 2003. There are now no services for people with drug and alcohol problems, with the closure of one service and decommissioning of another. Although the Council can provide evidence to justify the decommissioning of this service, no replacement has been commissioned.
- 257** Another acknowledged example of under-provision is for offenders. There is one eight-bed service in the borough, although there is some access to placements in other boroughs. There is currently no provision for MAPPA clients within the borough. The Council plans to look at needs in this area with the probation service.
- 258** The commissioning body recognises that the current array of services does not meet local need effectively and states that it is committed to addressing this. For most service users there is limited choice of service provision, for example in mental health and older people's services. Most of the programme is funding supported housing and there is only one floating support service available.
- 259** The future commissioning plans flowing from the Supporting People strategy are discussed elsewhere in this report (see 'delivery' above, and 'how is performance managed?' below). In particular, a decision has been taken to look to commission a generic floating support service.
- 260** There is evidence that the needs of people with mental health problems will be better met by the proposed decommissioning of most low-support shared housing schemes, to be replaced by floating support services.
- 261** The Council has stated that the commissioning body has adopted a policy of 'not developing new services through SP on an ad hoc basis'.⁴⁴ The Council has been reluctant to make long-term funding commitments due to uncertainty over future funding. In our view the level of savings achieved through decommissioning should have enabled some of the programme's priorities to be addressed at an earlier stage.
- 262** Service users at the schemes visited were complimentary about the support provided and considered that it is helping them to lead more independent lives. There was evidence of a good quality housing support, although the physical condition of one older persons' scheme was in need of improvement.

⁴⁴ London Borough of Redbridge Supporting People self-assessment, paragraph 69.

- 263** For example, we found a good range of support and quality of services offered by a direct access hostel for former rough sleepers; a women's refuge and a mental health residential scheme. The environments were pleasant and supportive, information on services provided was available, accessible and provided to potential clients.
- 264** One scheme we visited had hospital admissions records which show that mental breakdown frequency rates are reducing for tenants, and that hospital stays can be shorter as safe support is provided at home.
- 265** Service users benefit from having support plans, and we found that these were in place at the services visited. The support plans seen were of reasonable quality and were reviewed regularly with service users. Where support planning arrangements are unsatisfactory, there is evidence that this has been addressed through the service review process.
- 266** However, the lack of move-on accommodation is a significant problem for a number of providers; this reduces their ability to take new referrals. There is no overall move-on strategy to address this, although some discussions have taken place with the housing service to look at what can be achieved.
- 267** At present there is no formal monitoring or reporting of outcomes for service users, beyond the feedback obtained during individual service reviews. There are no outcome-based performance indicators for Supporting People to assess whether services are meeting the needs of service users or impacting on corporate and Supporting People objectives. Measurement of outcomes is monitored by a range of different services, such as the housing advice and homelessness service, but not co-ordinated or reported to the commissioning body or programme management group. It is therefore not clear that the commissioning body can assess the success of the programme.
- 268** In the future, the Council intends to use the LAA targets as a means of focusing the programme on key objectives and measuring the programme's contribution towards specific LAA targets.
- 269** Case studies illustrating the benefits of the Supporting People programme in Redbridge are set out below.

Case study 1

Mr and Mrs H moved into a housing association sheltered scheme for older people to escape the problems of an unsafe inner London housing estate, and to be closer to family members. They were delighted with the peace of their new accommodation along with the chance to cultivate a small garden attached to their bungalow.

Mr H later died, and more recently Mrs H had difficulty using her bath, due to hip problems and arthritis. Following discussion with the scheme's support worker, she was referred for an assessment by an occupational therapist which led to a recommendation for her bath to be replaced by a walk-in, thermostatically controlled, shower with a seat. An application was then made to the local authority for a disabled facilities grant, which was agreed. Works were carried out by a reputable contractor and Mrs H is now able to wash herself more safely.

This was one of four similar successful bathroom adaptations carried out in recent years at this sheltered scheme.

Case study 2

In the past, Mr B lived in a hostel for homeless people, having slept rough for a number of years with a severe alcohol addiction, and having spent time in prison. He fully abstained from drinking for seven years prior to being referred to a housing association scheme for older people, where he still lives.

Initially Mr B needed a great deal of support from the support worker, such as applying for benefits. He had a keen interest in gardening, and the support worker made a referral for him to rent an allotment, where he now grows vegetables which he sometimes offers to others living in the scheme. He also agreed to look after the garden of a woman now in her mid-nineties. He has managed his tenancy well and is respected by other residents.

Summary

- 270** We have assessed the Supporting People service provided by the London Borough of Redbridge to be a 'poor', no-star service. Delivery of the programme was seriously behind schedule by early 2005 and the Council has struggled to make up this lost ground. The Council has not made a comprehensive assessment of housing support needs in the borough and has not developed a comprehensive five-year strategy. The Supporting People team has not had consistent leadership and has suffered from limited capacity. There is a low provision of services in the borough for many client groups and the programme has been slow to address this.

- 271** The service review programme has not been carried out effectively, with early reviews now having to be re-assessed. This has adversely affected the relationship with many service providers. Savings have been achieved through reducing the high costs of some services, but there has not been sufficient linkage of costs to quality and outcomes to demonstrate value for money, and benchmarking is underdeveloped. There is also a low level of information available for service users.
- 272** However, there are robust systems for financial management and payments to providers are made on time. Governance arrangements have been improved and some additional resources have been allocated to the administration of the programme. Referral arrangements generally work well and there are some examples of strong partnership working. Some preliminary funding decisions have been made for commissioning new services.

What are the prospects for improvement?

What is the track record in delivering improvement?

- 273** The Council did not implement most of the early stages of the Supporting People programme effectively and on schedule. There is evidence of improvement over the past six months, but the programme is still insufficiently advanced in a number of areas, in particular, in the development and delivery of a five-year strategy to meet the needs for supported housing in the borough. The process of addressing earlier problems and meeting the service review deadline has, in itself, led to a breakdown of trust and confidence from many service providers.
- 274** The Supporting People team has not been well resourced and there has not been consistent performance management (see 'delivery' above). This has contributed to key elements of the programme not being delivered. For example, a five-year strategy has not been completed, and the one year strategy that has been published is not based on a comprehensive assessment of housing support needs in the borough. A view from commissioning body members is that it is only in the last six to nine months that the programme has begun to carry out work that should have been started two or three years ago.
- 275** Despite the small number of services in the borough, few reviews were completed and reported in the first two years of the programme. The reviews that were carried out in this period have since been deemed to be unreliable and the services have had to be re-assessed. The review procedure was redesigned in summer 2005 in order to achieve the ODPM deadline. The Council has also taken steps to address the weaknesses in the assessment of quality made during the earlier service reviews.
- 276** Governance arrangements were put in place at an early stage and there is evidence of effective partnership working on the commissioning body. However, until recently the programme management group did not have a clear role in managing the programme and developing a future strategy.

- 277 Financial systems have operated well and service providers are receiving timely payments.
- 278 Our survey of service providers found mixed views of the Council's administration of the Supporting People programme from the 15 respondents, including:
- 74 per cent satisfaction with the arrangements for involving providers in the delivery and development of the programme and 73 per cent satisfaction with the advice and support available to providers from the Council; but also
 - 73 per cent dissatisfaction with the completed Supporting People strategy and 79 per cent dissatisfaction with the outcomes of service reviews.
- 279 There have been a number of areas of improvement over the past six months, although from a low base. Staff and partners report an improvement in the management of the Supporting People team, since it has had an interim team leader. There are now improved governance arrangements and there has been stronger engagement of key stakeholders. For example, social care managers are more involved in the programme management group and Supporting People has recently assisted social care with developing the learning disabilities housing strategy 'A Place to Live'.
- 280 The service users we spoke to during our visits to 11 schemes were generally positive about their service providers and the support they received.
- 281 However, the Supporting People programme cannot show that it has delivered significant improvements in outcomes and key performance indicators across the programme.

How is performance managed?

- 282 Performance of the programme has not been well managed, although there has been improvement in some areas over the last six months. There is not a Supporting People five-year strategy and action plan that sets out clear aims and priorities for the programme. The future plans that are being used are not SMART. Performance management of the programme by the commissioning body and programme management group has not been strong and the corporate performance management procedures for individual staff have not been followed. However, there is some evidence, particularly recently, of the Council being open to learning from other authorities and organisations.
- 283 The Supporting People strategy and action plan should set out the Council's priorities for the five years from 2005 to 2010. This should be based on robust supply and needs data and, where possible, specific commissioning plans. Redbridge's strategy does not meet these requirements. There has not been a robust assessment of housing support needs; the strategy is for one year only; and it does not contain a comprehensive set of priorities (see 'delivery' above for fuller details).
- 284 Under the ODPM redistribution proposals the Council is identified as a beneficiary although the level of any possible increase in grant is uncertain. The Council does not currently have costed proposals in place to enable a rapid response to be made to create services to meet needs if additional funding is awarded.

- 285** The Supporting People strategy is to be reviewed in summer 2006 and the Council recognises that a substantially revised strategy will need to be produced, based on more robust information on housing support needs. It is not yet clear how this work will be undertaken. The current strategy does not contain a SMART action plan. The strategy contains 'actions' listed throughout the document and an overall 'annual plan' as an appendix, but neither of these contains timescales, measurable targets, milestones, or responsible officers. In recognition of this, the strategy states that a key task for 2005/06 is to set targets for delivery of the strategy. Since our inspection, the Council has made plans for this work to be undertaken.
- 286** The annual plan is a list of 12 bullet points; these are reproduced below.
- 'Raise awareness and increase involvement in the Supporting People programme of members, frontline staff and the partner agencies.
 - Ensure that the Supporting People process links in more effectively with other corporate partnership arrangements.
 - Improve access to information about the Supporting People programme for providers, service users and carers and other key stakeholders.
 - Improve working relationships with the East London Sub-Regional Working Group.
 - Complete all reviews and accreditation by March 2006.
 - Develop an approach to commissioning/decommissioning/remodelling Supporting People services including systems to identify and manage risk.
 - Support capital funding opportunities and consider how resources will be accessed to deliver on the annual plan and existing commitments.
 - Identify priorities for further research to improve evidence on the scale of need.
 - Improve access to services through the development of protocols across agencies for dealing with referrals, assessments, voids and move-on opportunities.
 - Explore opportunities to develop services in line with the priority areas.
 - Prepare for the Audit Commission Inspection in January 2006.
 - Develop regular performance management processes.
- 287** There is no evidence that progress has been systematically reviewed and reported against these priorities and no targets or timescales are attached to them. This means that, although work has taken place in a number of these areas (as outlined earlier in this report), in most cases it is unclear whether satisfactory progress has been made. For example, the Council assured us that the priority to improve evidence on the scale of need will be addressed – but has not specified the parameters of this work or identified who will carry out it out or when.

- 288** The strategy does state that 'a detailed plan of action has been prepared to take forward the priorities for the Supporting People programme'. However, we were told that this is not an active plan; it was prepared in May 2005, prior to the interim lead officer coming into post, and is not the improvement plan that he is working to. We did however look at the plan and found that it did contain target dates, outcomes and responsible officers. However, it has not been updated to show progress since May 2005.
- 289** Since taking up post in July 2005, the interim lead officer has used the Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry (KLOE) for Supporting People inspections as a tool for delivering improvement and reporting progress. This has enabled him to focus on the key elements of delivering the programme, and to that extent has been a useful tool. However, the KLOE is not designed to be a SMART action plan (for example it does not contain target dates) and does not contain local priorities.
- 290** The wider departmental action plan (the Community Care Service Action Plan 2005 to 2008) includes four objectives and tasks for the Supporting People programme. These are: to ensure effective systems are in place for paying providers; ensure an effective database of providers is developed by January 2006; prepare for this Audit Commission inspection; and ensure that the commissioning body is provided with timely information to enable it to make commissioning decisions. In our view these do not cover all the areas of weakness in the programme and the rationale for selecting them is not clear.
- 291** The Supporting People team does not have an annual work programme, nor are there annual workplans for the programme management group or commissioning body.
- 292** There are examples of some effective links between the Supporting People programme and other Council priorities and strategies. For example:
- there are a number of links to Supporting People in the Council's housing Strategy 2003 to 2006, including prioritising capital funding for Supporting People schemes and revenue funding for Home Improvement Agency work; and
 - the action plan for the older people's strategy, currently out for consultation, has a number of actions linked to the Supporting People programme.
- 293** However, there are also weaknesses in this area. A number of related strategies do not make links to Supporting People. For example:
- no mention of Supporting People is made in the Redbridge Compact 2003 to 2006 (Council and voluntary sector); the Redbridge Strategy for Carers 2005 to 2007; the Children and Young People's Plan 2005/06; or Concordat 2 - the Council and PCT's plan for the continuing integration of health and social care services in Redbridge, published in June 2005; and
 - the Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2005 to 2008 includes a number of sections on Supporting People, but largely states the current position. Future plans are unclear from the strategy.

- 294** Supporting People is discussed at regular meetings between the lead officer and senior managers (including the chairs of the commissioning body and programme management group) and is one of the items that may be discussed at weekly meetings between senior officers and the cabinet member – which are sometimes attended by the lead officer. The Cabinet member receives information on Supporting People when requested, although there is no systematic reporting of performance.
- 295** Despite these reporting arrangements, there has not been strong leadership of the programme. Poor leadership of the Supporting People team led to the programme being seriously off track after 20 months. This was followed by a period of seven months without a lead officer followed by difficulties in recruiting a permanent replacement. The fact that the failings in the programme were not identified and addressed at an earlier stage points to inconsistent leadership and performance management by senior officers and by the governing bodies.
- 296** The reporting of performance and progress to the commissioning body and programme management group has been patchy. This is partly due to the slippage in service reviews and to providers not always completing quarterly monitoring reports.
- 297** There have been some improvements to the governance and management of the programme over the last six months. The members of the programme management group that we spoke to are now clear that their role over the next year is to provide good project management and address the weaknesses in the Supporting People strategy. They also acknowledge that the timetable for future plans, including commissioning, need to be more specific.
- 298** There is no formal monitoring or reporting of outcomes for service users. There are no outcome-based performance indicators for Supporting People to assess whether services are meeting the needs of service users or impacting on corporate and Supporting People objectives. Measurement of outcomes is monitored by a range of different services, but is not co-ordinated or reported to the commissioning body or programme management group. It is therefore not clear that the commissioning body can assess the success of the programme.
- 299** The Council intends, in future, to use LAA targets as a means of measuring the programme's outcomes. This information would be reported to the programme management group and other interested parties.
- 300** The housing and community care department has Investors in People (IIP) accreditation, although the Council does not have corporate accreditation. However, information on Supporting People has not been part of the Community Care department's staff induction programme.
- 301** There are not effective performance management arrangements in place for the Supporting People team. Although the interim lead officer now meets regularly with the team and with individuals, none of the team has received an annual appraisal in the last year nor do they have individual workplans, despite these being standard departmental practice.

- 302** There has been a focus on achieving the required savings to the programme, partly through an improvement in value for money. The required level of savings has been exceeded and this has allowed some recent decisions to be taken concerning future commissioning priorities.
- 303** There is evidence that the Council is open to learning from other authorities and organisations, although more of this will be necessary to ensure improvement. For example, there are plans to improve the service review process by involving other authorities; the re-assessments of services with 'D' scores in spring/summer 2006 will be undertaken by a Redbridge officer and an officer from another authority, and moderated by lead officers from Redbridge and another borough.
- 304** The Council has looked to other authorities when developing some of its policies and processes, including its eligibility criteria, value for money methodology and fairer charging leaflet.
- 305** There are positive arrangements to involve service providers in the Learning Collaborative and this is highly praised by providers (see 'diversity' above). This gives organisations access to free local training. For example, staff from one provider are studying for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) through this scheme.
- 306** There are no comprehensive arrangements for collecting and sharing positive practice from providers although there are examples of where positive practice has been used. The Council has agreed to address this in partnership with the Providers Forum.
- 307** Risk management is underdeveloped, with no specific risk management plan or reporting of risks and contingencies to the governing bodies. Work is however underway to address this.

Is there capacity to improve?

- 308** Staffing issues and a lack of leadership have impacted on the management of the programme. Leadership of the programme over the first two years was weak and by summer 2005 the programme was behind schedule in a number of areas and is now attempting to catch up, but with limited resources. There has been improvement over the last six months, but stable long-term leadership of the service is not yet in place.
- 309** The programme has suffered from limited staffing capacity within the Supporting People team. The team has experienced high staff turnover and lengthy periods with either no lead officer or an interim arrangement. There are currently two permanent postholders within the team, the other posts are covered by temporary staff and a secondee. These factors have not led to stability and have limited the team's capacity to deliver the programme. However, following our inspection, the Council committed funding of £100,000 to support the programme in 2006/07.

- 310** Human resource planning has been poor. Some additional temporary resources have been added to the team, but this was a long time after the programme began to go off track and has resulted in the service still struggling to make up lost ground. This is particularly demonstrated by the problems in delivering the service review programme (see 'service reviews' above).
- 311** Leadership of the programme over the first two years was weak. A number of improvements have been delivered since the appointment of the interim team leader in July 2005. However, the Council was unsuccessful in two attempts to recruit a permanent lead officer and a new lead officer was not yet in post at the time of this inspection.
- 312** The Council has, however, taken steps to address the failure to recruit a lead officer. The post was recently upgraded, to encourage a stronger range of applications, and the postholder will in future report directly to the Community Care Chief Officer. There has also been some succession planning - with plans for the interim lead officer to support the new postholder during a handover period.
- 313** The roles of the commissioning body and programme management group have been clarified and strengthened in recent months and there is an acknowledgement by these groups and from senior officers of the weaknesses in the delivery of the programme and the need to continue to address these. However, leadership of the programme by these groups was not strong over the first twenty months of the programme. For example, the failures to comply with the service review timetable and to develop a robust five-year strategy were not addressed for many months. The strengthening of the governance arrangements should lead to improvement in monitoring the programme, but these are at an early stage and are yet to be tested.
- 314** There is evidence of the availability of staff training. For example, staff within the Supporting People team have attended specialist courses and received equality and diversity training. One team member is undertaking a course leading to a certificate in commissioning. However, staff in the team have not received annual appraisals or a formal analysis of their training and development needs.
- 315** There is positive capacity building and training for service providers through the Learning Collaborative (see 'diversity' above).
- 316** The programme does have the financial resources to deliver improvement, Savings of £750,000 have been made from the Supporting People grant, and this is available for reinvestment. The Council also supplemented the administration grant with £70,000 in 2005/06, although it is not yet clear whether similar support will be available in 2006/07. Under the draft formula for the future allocation of Supporting People grant, Redbridge is identified as a beneficiary, although the level of any possible increase in grant is uncertain.
- 317** In the absence of a five-year Supporting People strategy and action plan that is fit for purpose (see 'delivery' above) the key future priorities for the programme are unclear. The Council intends to develop a comprehensive strategy, based on an assessment of housing support needs, in 2006, but there are not yet clear plans for how this work will be delivered.

- 318** Plans for the commissioning of new services over future years are at a very early stage, with some initial decisions being taken by the commissioning body in December 2005. These decisions are based on evidence of need in certain areas; however, in the absence of a comprehensive strategy and action plan, these decisions cannot be made in the light of a comprehensive needs analysis across all client groups.
- 319** The Council acknowledges that there has been little understanding among the partner organisations and across the Council of the importance of Supporting People in delivering key objectives for the Council and its partners. However, efforts have been made to address and, at an operational level, there is now a wide range of examples of partnership working and cross-departmental working (see 'delivery' above). This will contribute to the capacity of the Supporting People programme to improve, particularly once a robust Supporting People strategy and action plan are in place.

Summary

- 320** We have assessed the Supporting People service provided by the London Borough of Redbridge to have 'uncertain' prospects for improvement. The track record of implementing the programme since April 2003 is poor, although there has been improvement in a number of areas over the last six months, but the programme is still insufficiently advanced in a number of areas, in particular, in the development and delivery of a robust five-year strategy.
- 321** Performance of the programme has not been well managed and the future plans that are being used are not SMART. Performance management of the programme by the commissioning body and programme management group has not been strong and the corporate performance management procedures for individual staff have not been followed.
- 322** Leadership over the first two years was weak and, although there has been improvement over the last six months, stable long-term leadership of the service is not yet in place.
- 323** There are some positive factors. The roles of the governing bodies have been clarified and there has been an improvement in their operation over the past six months. The programme is likely to have the financial resources to deliver improvement and some recent decisions have been taken concerning future commissioning priorities.
- 324** There is evidence of the Council being open to learning from other authorities and organisations, although more of this will be necessary, and there is a range of partnership working and cross-departmental working which will contribute to the capacity of the programme to improve once a robust Supporting People strategy and action plan are in place.
- 325** Overall, however, the absence of robust forward plans and stable leadership leave uncertainty over whether improvement will be delivered.

Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

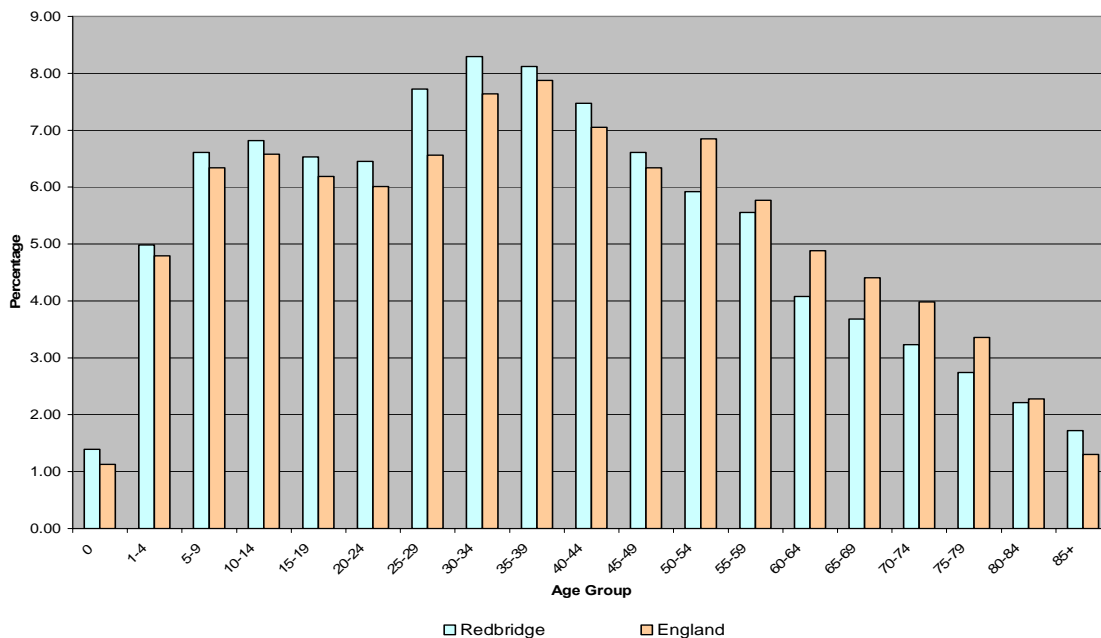
Demographic information

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

Table 2

Measure	Redbridge	England
Population (mid-2004) ⁴⁵	247,300	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2004)	15.6	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than white-British 2004)	36.5	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁴⁶	2.7	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁴⁷	174	-

Figure 2 Percentage of the population⁴⁸ in each age group compared with England



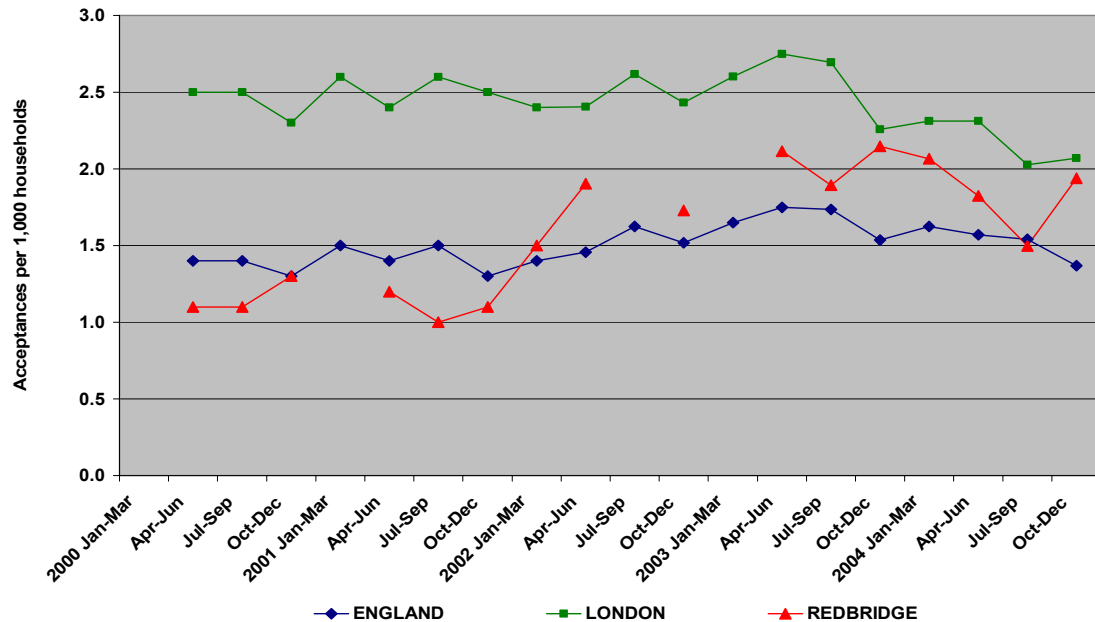
⁴⁵ Source: mid-year population estimates (2004).

⁴⁶ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (October 2005).

⁴⁷ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

⁴⁸ Source: mid-year population estimates (2004).

Figure 3 Households accepted as homeless between 2000 and 2004 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)



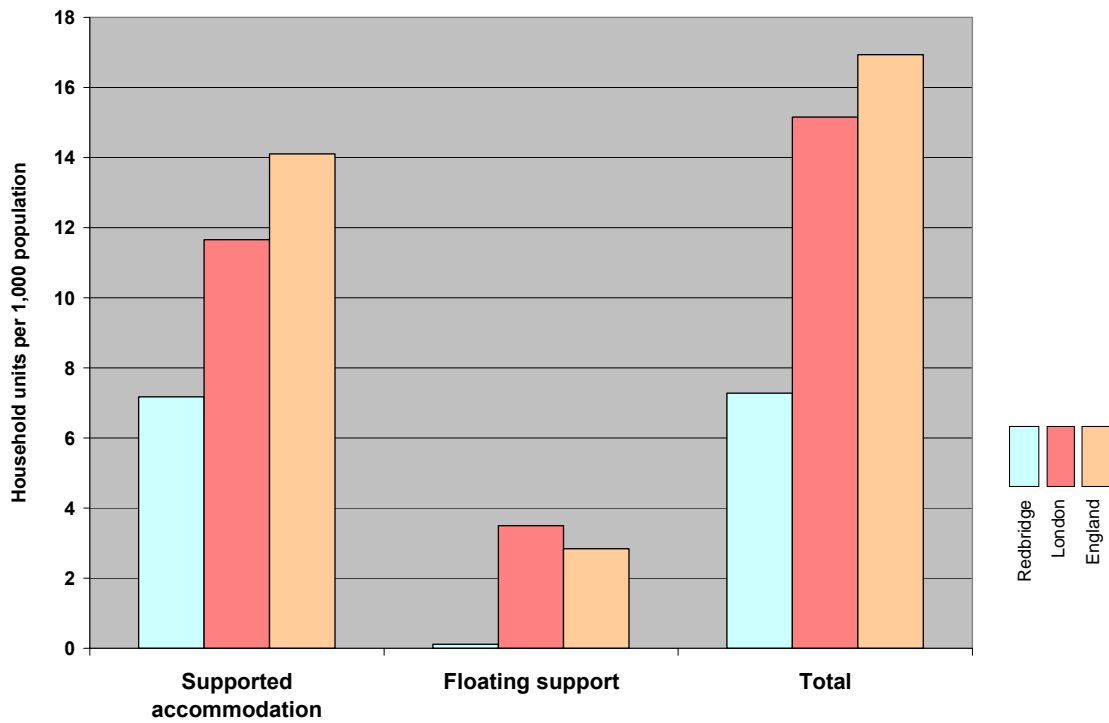
Performance information

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.

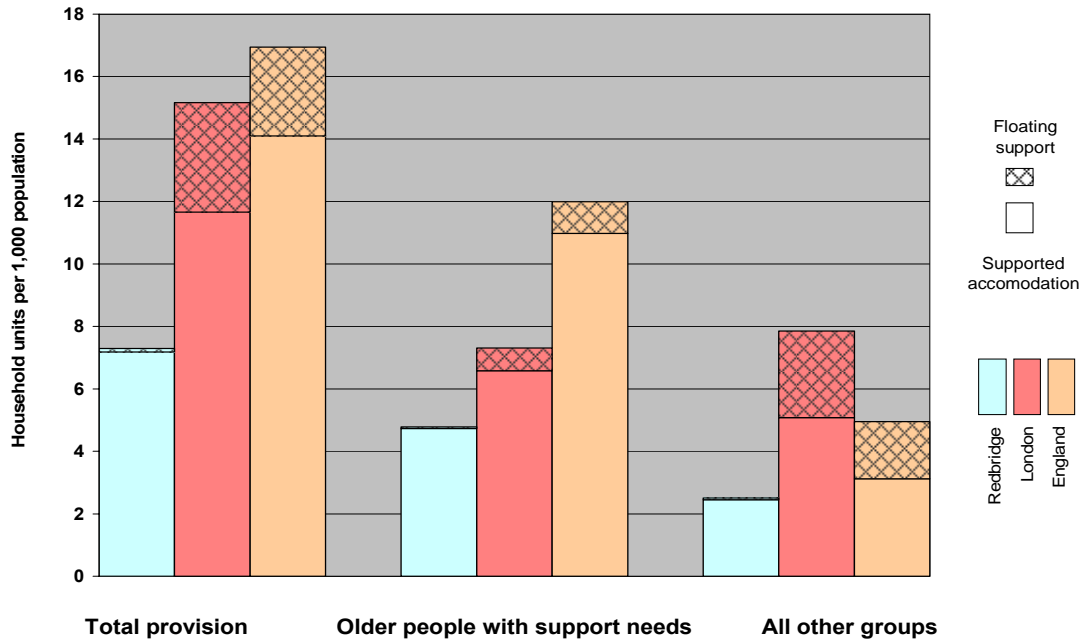
Supporting People data

Figure 4 Total service provision funded through Supporting People⁴⁹



⁴⁹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 5 Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England⁵⁰



⁵⁰ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 6 Services for other groups compared with the region and England⁵¹

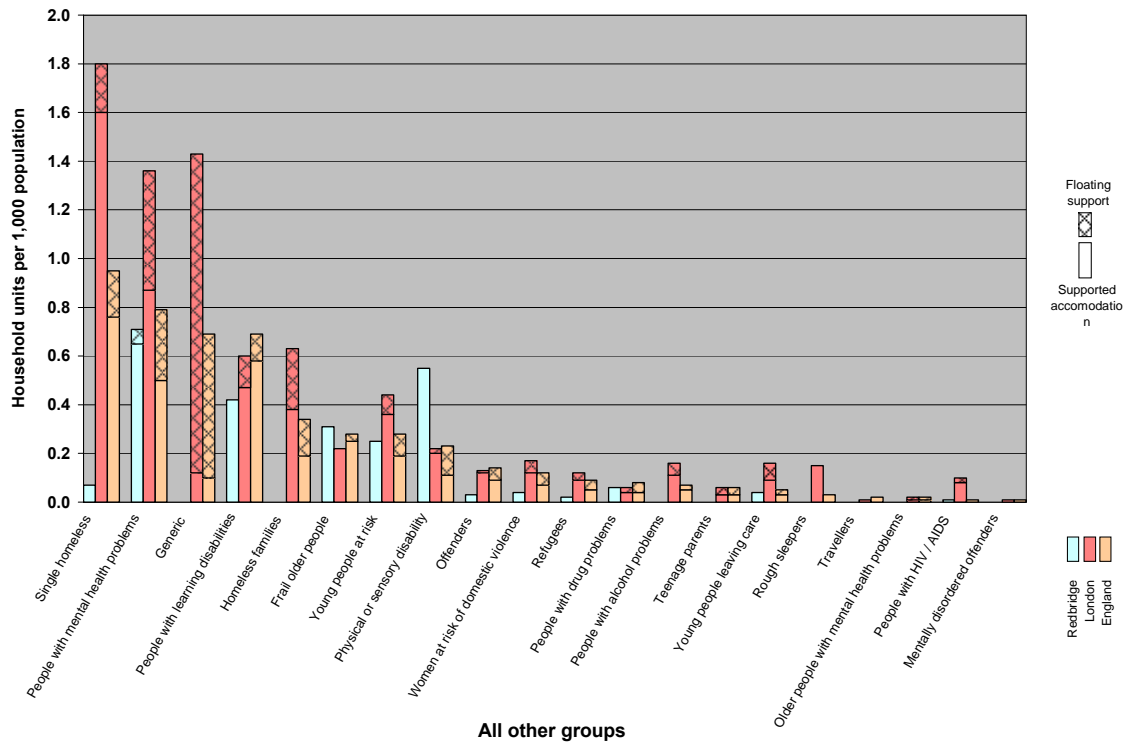


Table 3 Funding for Supporting People⁵²

Redbridge	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Final Supporting People grant	£4,466,479	£4394844	£4,258,705
Pipeline allocation	£12,152	£50,695	£-
Administration grant	£218,399	£190,545	£152,436

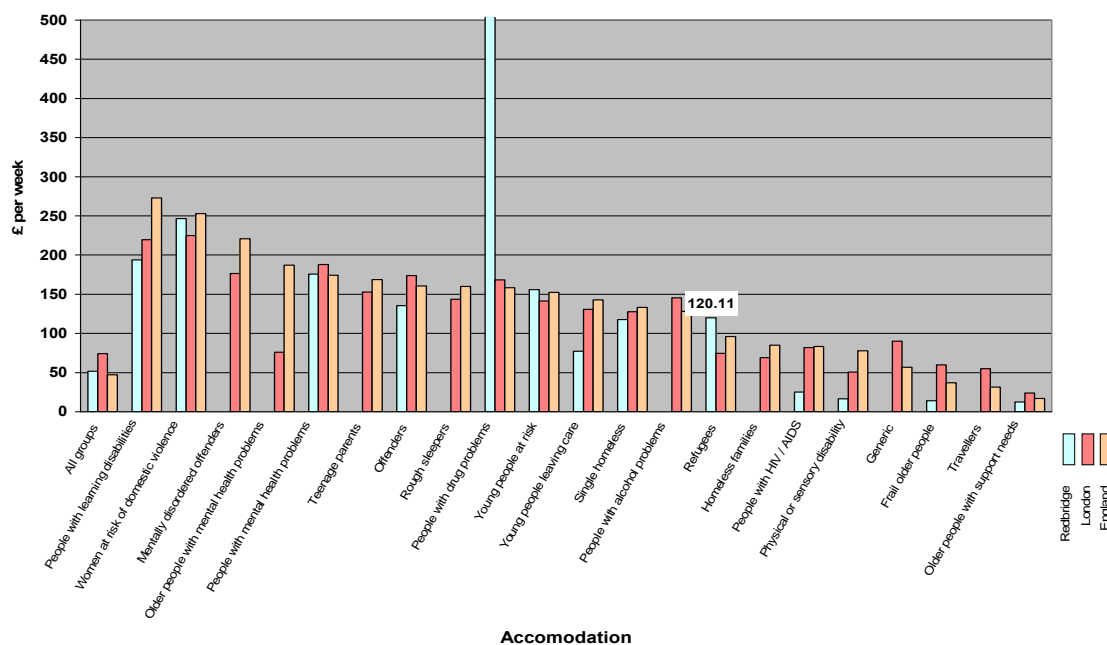
⁵¹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

⁵² Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

Table 4 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)⁵³

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Redbridge	£0.35	£43.67	£43.69	£88.41
London	£0.97	£42.37	£48.73	£68.40
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 when it becomes available and this will then be used.

Figure 7 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)⁵⁴

⁵³ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

⁵⁴ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 10 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours⁵⁷, all county councils and all English councils

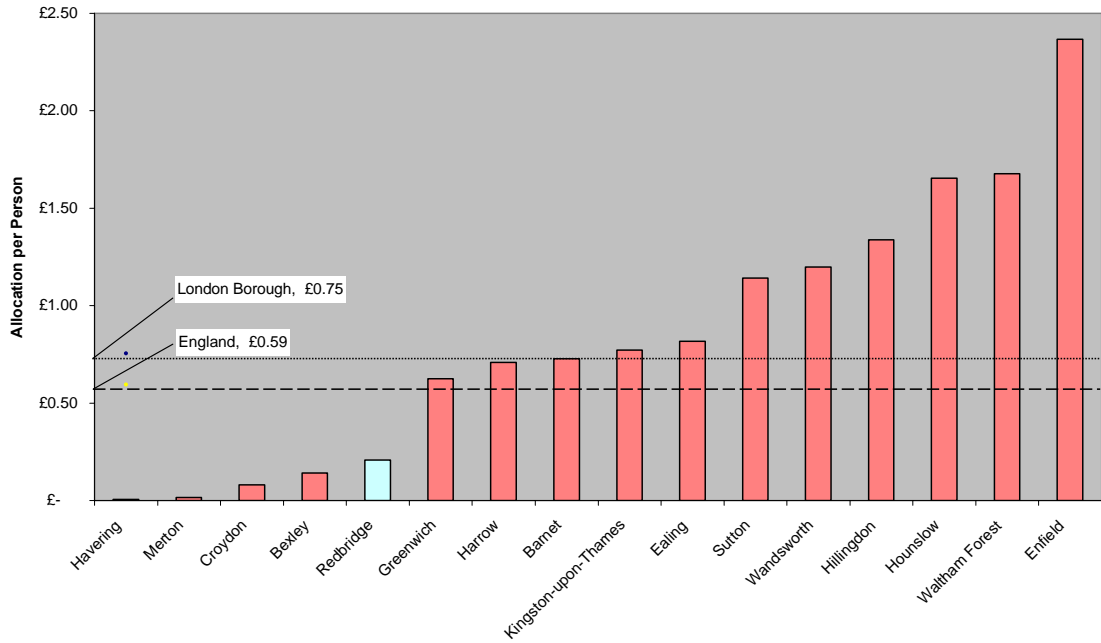
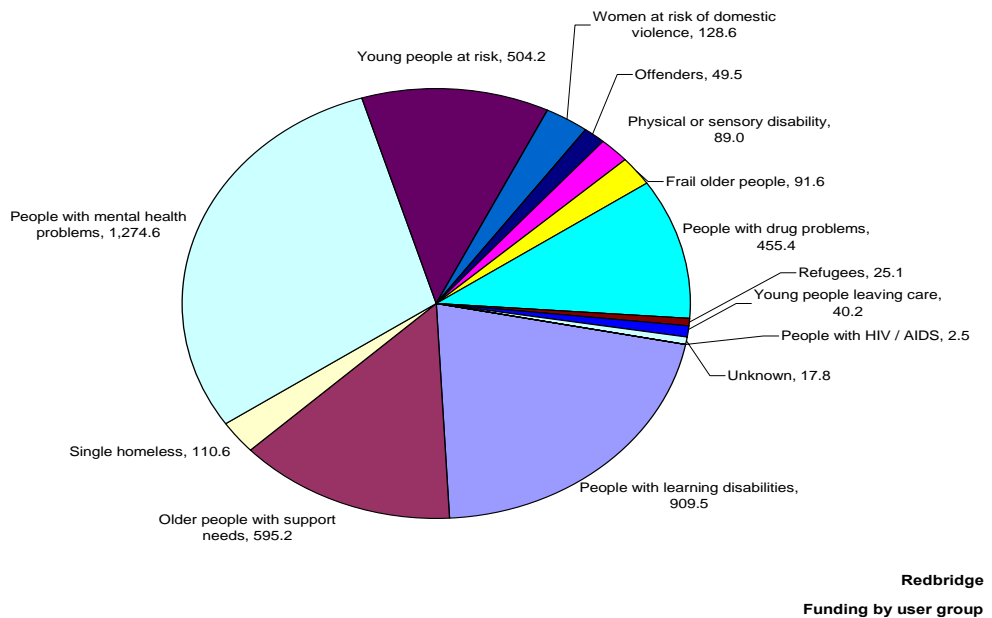


Figure 11 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)⁵⁸



⁵⁷ A comparator group of similar councils.

⁵⁸ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Figure 12 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)⁵⁹

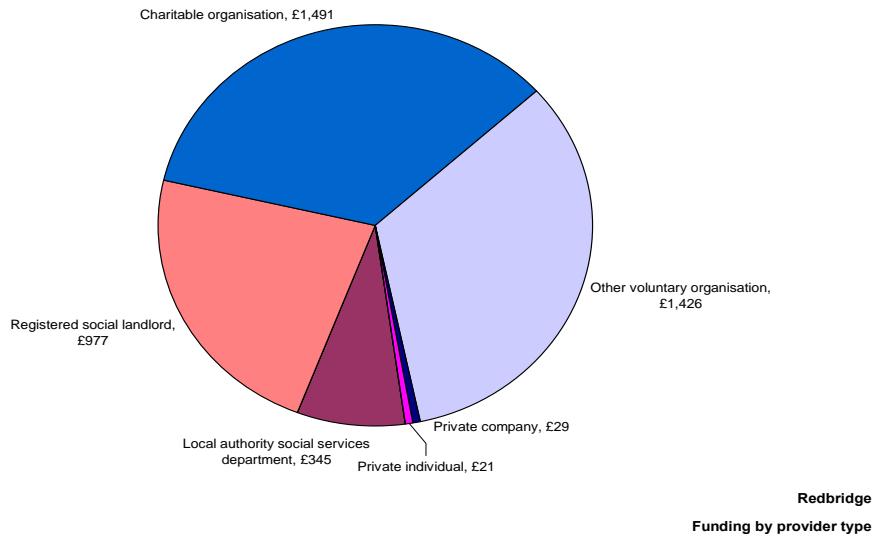


Figure 13 Social Services star ratings November 2004

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	☆☆
Children's services	Most	Promising	(2)

⁵⁹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Social services performance indicators

Table 5 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

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

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

Best value performance indicators

Table 6 Performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04 compared with unitary councils

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

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

Appendix 2 – Documents reviewed

- 1 Before going on-site, and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that were provided for us. These included the following
 - Corporate documents:
 - area and council profile;
 - community strategy;
 - corporate strategy;
 - annual audit and inspection letters; and
 - Better Care - Higher Standards charter.
 - Service documents:
 - self-assessment by the authority;
 - Supporting People Strategy Statement 2005/06;
 - service review timetable and reports from completed reviews;
 - minutes of the commissioning body, programme management group and provider forum;
 - terms of reference and memorandum of understanding for the commissioning body and programme management group;
 - financial reports and ODPM data;
 - service user leaflet and provider newsletter;
 - value for money methodology;
 - eligibility criteria; and
 - Supporting People reports to the commissioning body.

Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken

- 2 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:
- interviews with key personnel, including commissioning body and programme management group representatives, members of the Supporting People team, senior managers, partner organisations and the lead councillor for the programme;
 - visits to 11 services funded by the Supporting People grant, including interviews with service users;
 - questionnaire to service providers funded by the Supporting People grant in Redbridge;
 - mystery shopping telephone calls;
 - focus group with providers from a range of services;
 - meeting with representatives from the programme management group;
 - observation of a provider forum meeting; and
 - review of files.

Appendix 4 – Positive practice

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

Learning Collaborative

- 1 The Redbridge Learning Collaborative was set up by the Council to help independent sector providers to develop the skills of their staff. The Collaborative is for providers working with the Council's adult care services. All Supporting People providers are encouraged to join the Collaborative and about 50 per cent are now members. The Collaborative gives organisations access to free local training and is highly praised by providers. For example, staff from one provider are studying for National Vocational Qualifications through the scheme.

Mentoring arrangement for service provider

- 2 A mentoring arrangement has been set up between a struggling service provider for people with learning disabilities, and a more experienced provider from another authority.