

Supporting People Re-inspection

Warwickshire County Council

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Supporting People Inspections

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

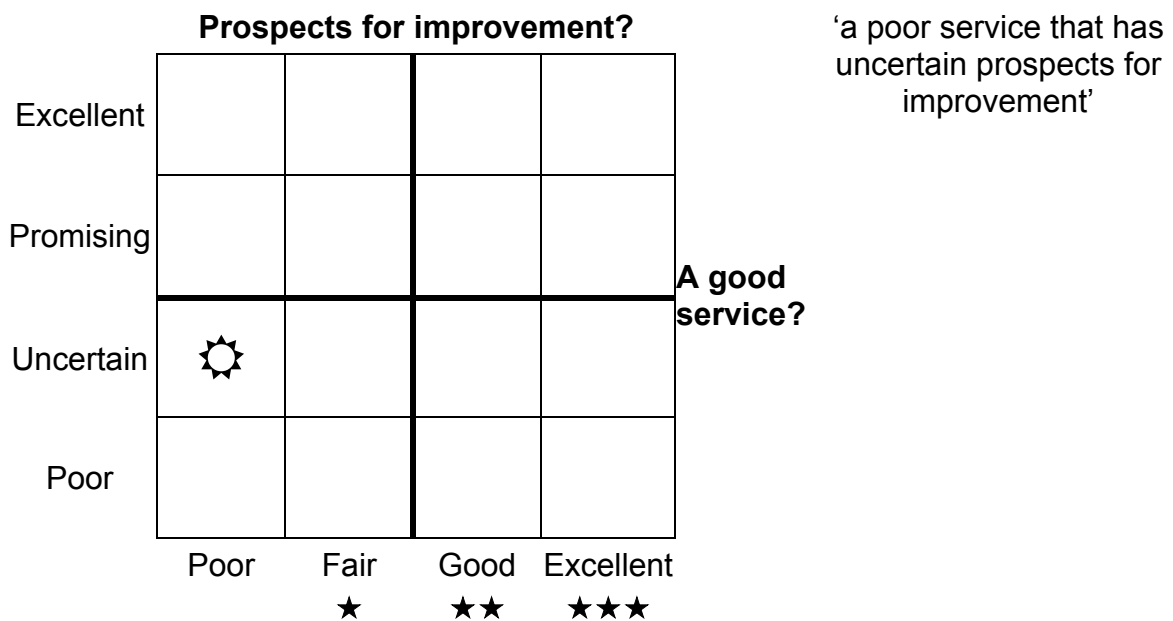
Summary

- 1 Warwickshire County Council is situated in the West Midlands region of England. The population is 512,700 (mid-2002 estimates), of which 4.4 per cent describe themselves as 'other than white British'; the largest minority group (2.4 per cent) is from the Indian community (2001 census).
- 2 The Council is Conservative-led and uses the leader and cabinet model of governance. There are 27 Conservative members, 23 Labour members, 11 Liberal Democrat members and one Independent member.
- 3 The Council has a revenue budget of £493,825 million for 2005/06. It employs approximately 5,628 staff across all services.
- 4 Warwickshire County Council acts as the administering authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The Council works in partnership with three primary care trusts (PCTs) - together with the Warwickshire Probation Area in commissioning Supporting People services.
- 5 The total amount of Supporting People funding available in 2005/06 is £10,241,821. The Council also receives £339,616 in administration grant towards its role as the administering authority. The highest cost service is £414.45 per person per week providing housing-related support to people with a learning disability. The lowest cost service is £0.93 per person per week providing a community alarm service to older people with support needs.
- 6 Warwickshire was re- inspected during the third year of the Supporting People programme, following an initial inspection in January 2005, which found that the administration of the Supporting People programme was poor. This report, therefore, reflects the current context for the Council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

Scoring the service

- 7 We have assessed Warwickshire County Council's administration of Supporting People as 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 chart¹



Source: Audit Commission

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

- 8 We have scored the Council's administration of Supporting People as a poor, no-star programme because:
- the Council has not effectively engaged with service users in the governance or development of the Supporting People programme;
 - very little work has been done to address the lack of information about the housing-related support needs of the diverse communities in Warwickshire;
 - there has been a lack of leadership and effective senior management given to the Supporting People programme;
 - the programme has been hampered by the lack of a robust five-year strategy with clear priorities to assist the governance structures to direct the focus of the programme;
 - there is a lack of clarity in the relationships between the governance bodies that is hampering the effective direction and development of the programme and the Commissioning Body has failed to provide a clear steer on a number of key issues and this has impacted on the effective delivery of the programme;
 - the process for commissioning new services is not robust and not based on jointly agreed priorities for the Supporting People programme;
 - the service review process remains incomplete for a large number of services, with key issues such as understanding and challenging high costs and value for money not addressed;
 - there has been very limited decommissioning of services and very limited commissioning of new services which means that the overall provision is largely unchanged from our last inspection; and
 - the value for money assessments in service reviews are not consistently robust and are not reported effectively in the service reviews reports to the Commissioning Body.
- 9 However, we saw evidence of some strengths:
- some high cost services have been challenged and savings have been made as a result of the review process;
 - there is now a well resourced and stable Supporting People team in place;
 - access to information has improved and we found evidence of more effective signposting to housing-related support; and
 - individual service reviews have tackled some poorer quality services effectively and there have been real improvements to the quality of life for a some services users.

- 10 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for improvement. This is because:
- until recently a lack of strategic leadership has impeded progress for the Supporting People programme;
 - work on the majority of the recommendations from the last inspection has begun but this has had limited impact to date;
 - there has been limited progress on a comprehensive needs assessment and significant gaps in service provision have yet to be addressed;
 - until recently there has not been effective management of the Supporting People programme; and
 - the Commissioning Body has not operated effectively and the lack of agreed priorities has hampered the effectiveness of governance structures.
- 11 However, we identified the following strengths in relation to the prospects for improvement:
- some aspects of the Council's delivery of the Supporting People programme has improved since the last inspection with some good examples of service improvements;
 - the Council has moved to address the gaps in capacity at a leadership level and the Strategic Director's management has strengthened its support for the Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team;
 - the Council's structures have been reviewed to develop a cross-cutting and partnership approach to service delivery;
 - Supporting People is now recognised as a key cross-cutting programme;
 - the capacity of the Supporting People team, Core Strategy Group and providers forum has also been strengthened; and
 - more resources have been identified to deliver the Supporting People programme.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation

R1 Improve the governance and management of the Supporting People programme by:

- *clarifying and agreeing the different roles of the governance bodies and ensure that these are complimentary;*
- *developing service user engagement in the delivery and governance of the programme;*
- *undertaking diversity impact assessments of all policies and functions of the programme;*
- *developing effective scrutiny and performance management for all aspects of the governance and management of the Supporting People programme; and*
- *developing clear plans to deliver the five-year strategy that are focused on jointly agreed priorities and are linked to the strategic objectives of partner agencies.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- governance arrangements that ensure each body operates effectively and appropriately;
- effective scrutiny by members;
- service user involvement in the governance of the programme and the development of services; and
- integrated action and service plans that deliver improvements.

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

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

Recommendation

R2 The Council must establish a comprehensive needs assessment framework to:

- *identify the full range of need in Warwickshire including those of diverse and socially excluded communities;*
- *identify gaps in service provision to vulnerable people;*
- *identify and agree the shared priorities of the Council and its partners;*
- *ensure these priorities reflect the needs of all Warwickshire's diverse communities;*
- *prioritise the delivery of new or re-configured services; and*
- *inform the revised five-year strategy.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- that the Council and its partners will have an informed and planned programme for the delivery of Supporting People services that meet all known needs.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by January 2007.

Recommendation

R3 The Council must fully implement its value for money methodology to:

- *assess all services to ensure that they are strategically relevant, delivering housing-related support and best value;*
- *establish a commissioning strategy and practice that represents best practice;*
- *ensure expenditure meets grant conditions; and*
- *negotiate new long-term contracts.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- services that demonstrate value for money and are appropriately funded;
- a transparent and fair commissioning process;
- the release of cost savings to resource services to meet needs;
- provider security and the ability to plan; and
- market stability.

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

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

Dates of inspection: 27 March to 31 March 2006.

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Report

Context

The locality

- 14 The county of Warwickshire lies to the South East of the West Midlands conurbation. Although it has no single centre of population, several towns including Nuneaton, Leamington Spa, Rugby and Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick serve the county's extensive rural areas. The population is 512,700 (mid-2002 estimates), of which 4.4 per cent describe themselves as 'other than white British'; the largest minority group (2.4 per cent) is from the Indian community (2001 census). The number of people aged 15 to 29 is falling as young people move to more urban areas. Although 5.7 per cent of the population is over the age of 75 years, compared to an England average of 7.3 per cent, the number of people over the age of 65 is slightly higher than the national average.
- 15 Overall deprivation is low at county level but this masks some very high levels of deprivation at ward level. There are low rates of unemployment (2.1 per cent compared to the England average of 4.0 per cent) and the average annual income is above the national average. The major employers are the County Council, car manufacturing, hospitals, tourism and related areas and financial services.

The Council

- 16 The Council comprises 62 councillors and there is no overall political control. A minority Conservative administration operates through a single-party cabinet system. The cabinet has ten members who are also portfolio holders and there are eight overview and scrutiny committees.
- 17 The Council acts as the administering authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. In commissioning Supporting People services, the Council works in partnership with three Warwickshire primary care trusts (PCTs), (North Warwickshire, South Warwickshire and Rugby), the national probation service and five district councils, Rugby, Stratford, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Warwick and North Warwickshire.
- 18 The Council's vision is that the County Council will be:
 - recognised as a community leader - by and for the people of Warwickshire;
 - a five-star excellent council; and
 - an organisation which focuses on the citizens of Warwickshire, achieving the highest standards of service delivery for them.

- 19 The vision is supported by five key objectives.
- Promote lifelong learning and personal development.
 - Develop and maintain a vibrant local economy which promotes employment and prosperity for all.
 - Promote the health and social care of our citizens.
 - Improve the environment.
 - Reduce crime and improve the safety of the community.
- 20 The Council has a number of short, medium and long-term priorities. The Supporting People programme can make a contribution to a number of these, including delivering stronger partnership working, improving management of performance, improving customer satisfaction and improving communication with the public.

The programme

- 21 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 abuse problems, refugees, travellers and offenders.
- 22 The total amount of Supporting People grant made available to the Council in 2004/05 was £10,737,015 which reduced to £10,241,821 for 2005/06. This was a reduction in grant of just under five per cent. The Council also received an administration grant of £424,520 during 2004/05 to fulfil its role as the administering authority. This grant was decreased to £339,616 in 2005/06.
- 23 The highest cost Supporting People service supported by the grant is £414.45 per person per week for people with a learning disability. The lowest cost service is £0.93 per person per week for older people with support needs.
- 24 Warwickshire County Council was inspected in the third year of the Supporting People programme, following an initial inspection in January 2005, which found that the administration of the Supporting People programme was poor. This report therefore reflects the current context for the Council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

How good is the programme?

Is the programme meeting the needs of the community and users?

25 The assessment was based on the following key issues:

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

Governance

26 The first inspection of the Supporting People programme in January 2005 found that the Council had not created the structures required under ODPM grant conditions and guidance to ensure the delivery and development of the programme and those that had been established had not been effective. We found, on this inspection, that the Council has moved to address the recommendations made to strengthen the governance of the Supporting People programme and that some areas of the governance structures have improved, but that overall, weaknesses still outweigh strengths in this area.

27 There has been a lack of leadership given to the Supporting People programme and team and this has only been addressed recently. Leadership and strategic direction have been further hampered by the lack of a robust five-year strategy with clear priorities to assist the governance structures in directing the focus of the programme. This has led to a lack of challenge to the existing makeup of the programme and the absence of clear shared objectives to assist the Commissioning Body in making decisions.

28 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme.

- Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
- Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
- Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.

- Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
 - Councillors: approve key decisions of the Commissioning Body.
 - Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.
- 29** The Commissioning Body and the Council have reviewed the terms of reference and memorandum of understanding for the governance structures. However, the relationship and roles of each part of the structure are still not clear and this lack of clarity does not assist its members to develop the Supporting People programme. The current agreed structures are:
- the Supporting People Partnership Board (SSPB), which is a forum for elected councillors, board members from the Probation service and representatives from the PCTs;
 - the Commissioning Body which is made up of district and county council officers, the PCT's and the Probation Service;
 - the Core Strategy Group, which in Warwickshire is the Warwickshire Accommodations Strategy Group (WASG) which is made up of district and county council officers and provider representatives; and
 - a provider's forum.
- 30** There is no inclusive forum established, or alternative structures, to involve service users in the governance structures and users and their carers have no voice in the processes that decide on services and priorities that affect them. This means that the Council has missed the opportunity to involve service users in shaping the direction and priorities of the Supporting People programme.
- 31** The relationship of the Supporting People Partnership Board (SPPB) to the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group is not clearly defined and there has been insufficient scrutiny of the Supporting People programme to date. Until shortly before the inspection, the SPPB were meeting after the Commissioning Body and so were being informed about decisions and discussions that had already taken place. There have been very limited reports to the County Council about Supporting People and Elected Members are clear that they have been unable to influence the strategic direction of the Supporting People programme or effectively scrutinise its work.
- 32** The SPPB has recently reviewed its role to try and bring an effective scrutiny to the programme from elected representatives and it now intends to meet prior to the Commissioning Body to view all the reports and agenda items that the Commissioning Body will consider. But new terms of reference have yet to be agreed and it is not clear how the views of the SPPB will influence the direction of the programme as they have no voting powers. How any disagreement between the two bodies will be resolved has also not yet been discussed or agreed.

- 33 The County Council, which is the administering authority for the Supporting People grant, receives very little information about the work of the Supporting People programme. This means that the Administering Authority is not able to effectively scrutinise the decisions of the Commissioning Body.
- 34 Following the last inspection the terms of reference for the Commissioning Body have been reviewed and the membership of the Commissioning Body has been amended to ensure that more relevant and senior officers attend who have delegated powers to make decisions. This has improved the Commissioning Body's ability to function more effectively than was the case at the last inspection.
- 35 The Commissioning Body meeting we observed was effectively chaired. There were some good discussions and appropriate challenges from the member representatives. However, the Commissioning Body has not prioritised achieving the recommendations made at the last inspection, such as ensuring that the programme has comprehensive information about housing-related support needs and an agreed hierarchy of priorities to meet these needs.
- 36 Since the last inspection a Core Strategy Group has been established as part of the WASG as this was felt to be an effective existing forum to take the work of the Supporting People programme forward. The WASG is made up of officers from the County's local authorities and Probation representatives and two elected provider representatives from the Providers' forum. The introduction of WASG as a Core Strategy Group has assisted the development of the programme but there is still a lack of clarity about how it relates to the work of the Commissioning Body which is hampering its effectiveness.
- 37 The ability of the Commissioning Body to give strategic direction to the Supporting People programme is significantly hampered by the lack of any clear strategic priorities. The Commissioning Body has agreed a five-year strategy, in line with the requirements of the ODPM, but as it has not commissioned or undertaken a robust needs analysis, it has been unable to decide on a hierarchy of priorities for the Supporting People programme. As a result, there have been no decisions to decommission services on this basis.
- 38 The Commissioning Body is unable to give direction as to what is a priority and so the recent commissioning process for £650,000 of new services was unable to focus clearly on which groups of vulnerable people are the top priority for new services. The Commissioning Body has missed the opportunity to consider how new services can be most effectively used to meet the gaps in service provision that remain for whole service areas such as BME groups, HIV/AIDS sufferers and gypsies and travellers.

- 39 The Accountable Officer role has not been carried out effectively at Warwickshire County Council and the Supporting People programme has not been given effective leadership, advice and support and the Supporting People team has continued to operate without the support and direction needed. The work of championing the Supporting People programme and objectives has fallen largely to the Supporting People Manager rather than the Accountable Officer. The profile of the Supporting People programme has been raised and there is a wider understanding of what the Programme can contribute but this has had limited outcomes to date. The County Council has recognised that the lack of leadership and advice at the Accountable Officer level has not assisted the development of the Supporting People programme and the role of Accountable Officer has very recently been reassigned and now lies with the Strategic Director of Health and Adult services.
- 40 Awareness amongst elected members of the benefits of the Supporting People programme is very low, with the exception of elected members who are on the SPPB. Provider performance information collected through performance indicators workbooks is reported for individual services within service review reports, as is performance against the Quality Assurance Framework standards. However, this information is not analysed or reported on at a wider level and does not therefore provide an overall picture of the performance of Supporting People services and is not being systematically used to set targets or drive up standards.
- 41 There is good engagement in the governance bodies by the Probation service, which has a clear understanding of the benefits of Supporting People for offenders and people at risk of offending. This has led to the development of an effective floating support service. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements are in place, alongside an effective Central Accommodation Referral Service for offenders and those at risk of offending.
- 42 There has not been a sustained input from Health partners in the governance structures for the Supporting People programme; there are no agreed shared priorities and few outcomes from joint work with the three local primary care trusts (PCTs). The Commissioning Body has made a number of representations to the PCTs about the importance of consistent input however, the recent focus on the substantial restructuring of the three PCTs in to one single PCT has not assisted the Council and the Commissioning Body in persuading Health partners that there is a value to engaging with the Supporting People programme and jointly developing services which assist the health agenda.

Delivery arrangements

- 43 At our last inspection we found that the Supporting People team had only recently been staffed by sufficient officers with the necessary skills and capacity to deliver their work programme. Tight financial controls had not been exercised over the budget. The Council failed to carry out a robust analysis of needs and the opportunity created by the ODPM in delaying the deadline for production of the new five-year strategy, was not adequately exploited.

- 44 The Council has not ensured that outcomes from the Supporting People programme are reported and understood effectively at a corporate level and the lack of shared outcomes, priorities and performance indicators across the Council's departments and partner agencies in the County, mean that the understanding of the benefits of the Supporting People programme are still underdeveloped. We found that the Council has moved to develop some aspects of the delivery arrangements for the Supporting People programme and there is now a fully staffed and expanded Supporting People team in place. A steady state contract has been agreed to be applied where service reviews are deemed complete. The Council has recognised that there was a lack of financial skills in place in the Supporting People team and has created the post of Business and Administration manager to address this weakness. However, the team lack some key skills and experience such as commissioning and procurement, which will be needed to develop the Supporting People programme further. Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area.
- 45 The Supporting People team has worked hard to meet the recommendations of the last inspection. There is a high level of commitment and a range of relevant skills in the team and the team are well supported by the manager. The Council has strengthened the financial expertise within the team by seconding in a Finance and Administration Manager who has effectively reviewed the financial monitoring arrangements. The financial monitoring of the Supporting People programme has improved and there is better performance information available for services through an increased return of performance information workbooks by providers than was the case at our last inspection.
- 46 Eligibility criteria were agreed in July 2005, but these are not being consistently applied. The eligibility criteria documentation is well written and easy to use, but the identification of non-eligible services has not been consistent in the service review process and we found evidence at a range of services that non-eligible services were being funded without challenge. (This is discussed further in the service review section of this report below.) This has led the Commissioning Body to agree to the continuation of funding to some providers who are not providing housing-related support or where only part of the service funded is eligible for Supporting People funding.
- 47 The Council is not ensuring that the priority for funding decisions is eligible housing-related support services for vulnerable people or that Supporting People grant is always being spent in accordance with the ODPM's grant conditions and directions. A one off saving of £711,000 has been identified; of this amount £330,000 has been detailed for commissioning additional services but a further £395,450 is being used to undertake administrative functions which are ineligible under the ODPM grant conditions.

- 48 The delivery arrangements of the Supporting People programme have been hindered by the lack of a thorough needs analysis to support the development of the five-year strategy. Any needs assessments undertaken by the districts have not been effectively factored into an overall needs assessment that should drive strategic priorities within the Supporting People programme. As a result, the Supporting People five-year strategy has not got clear priorities based on assessed need. The lack of a thorough needs analysis means that it is difficult for the Supporting People programme to identify and respond to unmet needs. It also means that it is difficult for the programme to decommission or commission services without information from which to set clear priorities.
- 49 The lack of clear needs understanding and lack of a hierarchy of priorities has led the Commissioning Body to agree the reconfiguration and commissioning of new services without any strategic focus on areas where there are no services such as BME communities, HIV/AIDS sufferers and gypsies and travellers. Conversely, areas where the majority of funding is already focused have seen growth in services, such as learning disabilities.
- 50 A work plan is in place for the Supporting People programme, but this lacks clear links to the related work plans of other Council departments and partner agencies. There is no Supporting People team service plan in place to link the work of the team into the overall Supporting People work plan, which makes it difficult for the team to see how their work is achieving the overall objectives of the five-year strategy.
- 51 Commissioning arrangements have fallen below the levels that would be expected and there is no joint commissioning. There is a lack of strategic thinking currently around the commissioning process and the Supporting People team is attempting to commission in a strategic vacuum. The new director who is also the Accountable Officer is aware of these problems and has reported to members on plans to address this with some key strategic changes. The Supporting People team lacks contracting and commissioning understanding and capacity and this was not addressed by the previous Accountable Officer. The team were not offered assistance to bridge this gap and have been unable to access existing expertise elsewhere in the Council or partner organisations.
- 52 The Commissioning Body decided in August 2005, to commission £250,000 of new services. The commissioning process for these new services, designed by WASG, lacked robustness and transparency and the process does not appear to meet the County Council's financial and procurement regulations. There is no audit trail to support the decisions made and the points awarded on the scoring matrix adopted have no clear basis or evidence for the scores given.

- 53 The Council has not ensured that an assessment of needs and a robust procurement process has been carried out before the re configuration of some high cost services. For example, in one case, the service review process has identified high costs that cannot be justified but instead of this being subject to reduction of funding, the providers have been allowed to reconfigure their services to provide additional floating support. This has not been done within a framework that identifies that there is priority need for this and that this need is the highest priority for new service commissioning. Nor has there been any procurement processes to ensure that these providers are the ones best placed to offer a floating support service. This means that the Commissioning Body has not been given an opportunity to consider how savings can be most effectively used to meet priorities and the gaps in service provision.
- 54 There is a lack of effective performance monitoring and management which means that the Governance bodies and partners are unable to evidence, understand or assess the outcomes from the Supporting People programme. The performance and management systems are not well developed and there is no thread linking the five-year strategy and the annual plan through to a clear service plan. There have been no performance indicators developed to identify outcomes for service users. There are no shared outcomes and performance indicators with partner agencies which means that there is a low level of understanding about the benefits and key outcomes that the Supporting People programme is delivering.
- 55 A fairer charging procedure has been written and approved by the Commissioning Body but this has not yet been published or applied to service users. Members of the Commissioning Body delayed publication and application of fairer charging as they wanted to consider further the cost implications. The procedure is now agreed and scheduled to be in place from April 2006. However, this delay has meant that there has been no promotion of take up of fairer charging or promoting income maximisation for service users to date.
- 56 The Supporting People team has worked hard to develop an effective relationship with providers and has given good support to the development of the providers' forum 'Warwickshire Providers Together'. The Supporting People team has been able to use this forum to deliver training and advice to providers and the feedback from providers to inspectors was unanimously positive about the work of the Supporting People team and the advice they received from them. The providers' forum elects representatives who sit on the Core Strategy Group (WASG).

- 57 Cross-local authority work has begun but there have been limited outcomes to date. The Supporting People Manager attends the West Midlands RIG which has recently produced a work-plan and aims to develop a strategic approach to the implementation of the programme in the West Midlands region. Some collaborative work has also been undertaken on long-term contracts with Telford and Sandwell. Cross-authority accreditation arrangements have led to some services being passported through the accreditation process. Cross authority links with one neighbouring Supporting People team has begun through a meeting of the Warwickshire Supporting People team and the Coventry Supporting People team but there have been no outcomes for service users from such cross-authority work to date.
- 58 The governance bodies are not appraised of risks to the delivery of the programme. The Supporting People programme has been risk assessed and this is updated, but there is no evidence to this being reported regularly. The actions column in the risk assessment is not sufficiently specific and measurable to allow the assessment to be fully monitored for outcomes.

Service reviews

- 59 At our last inspection we found that the review process was under resourced and limited progress had taken place to address the programme of service review. Only nine service reviews had been completed at the time of the inspection. As a result, reviews had not been available to raise the quality of services for the people who use them or to inform the commissioning process.
- 60 At this inspection we found that the review process was prioritised and the programme was reviewed following the last inspection. Further resources were made available to undertake the review process and the Supporting People team has worked hard to complete the reviews by the target date of 31 March 2006. The Commissioning Body followed the advice of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and reviewed high cost services first in the service review process. We found evidence that individual service reviews had identified poorer quality services for vulnerable people and good quality action plans have been developed to address these. However, the process applied to service reviews has not been consistent and a large number have been signed off as complete when substantial aspects of the review have yet to be tackled, such as strategic relevance, eligibility, value for money and addressing high costs service. Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area.

- 61 The capacity of the Supporting People team has been increased by an additional four officers to undertake reviews with a review manager in place. The Supporting People team have worked hard to complete the reviews of services within the timetable for completion by 31 March 2006. Although there are problems with the service review process, which are outlined below, we found evidence that review officers have identified poorer quality services during the reviews and have developed good quality action plans which have led to real improvement of the quality of life of service users. The service review process has focused on getting feedback from service users and a number of reviews were able to identify problems with the quality of services and staff through actively seeking service user comments. The negative comments made by service users have been effectively addressed in all cases seen.
- 62 Although all service reviews have now been signed off by the Commissioning Body, aspects of the service review process remains incomplete for a range of services, with key issues such as understanding and challenging high costs and value for money not consistently addressed. As a result, the savings that the review process has been able to identify from ineligible or non-value for money services are low and little work has been done to decommission services that are either ineligible, low priority or not delivering value for money. This means that the Council has limited its capacity to use savings to develop new services to which could be developed to address gaps in services.
- 63 The reviews of Supporting People services for older people were not conducted effectively. The County Council is conducting a strategic review of services for older people. The Commissioning Body has agreed that no decisions will be made about decommissioning services until after all the services have been reviewed and more information is available about the needs of the local population as part of this strategic review. This approach undermined these reviews and was an inefficient use of resources and may mean that the Supporting People programme is continuing to fund inappropriate services until the strategic review of services and needs has been undertaken. There is no clear date for the completion of the County Council's strategic review.
- 64 The process of defining strategic relevance as part of the service reviews was not robust and has resulted in a lack of defined priorities within the overall priorities. To determine the strategic relevance of services, the Supporting People team were supported by an external consultant who arranged a series of themed meetings of stakeholders and some providers. The process had limited success because the lack of information about need and gaps in provision meant they could only comment on performance and quality rather than the relevance of the service. The process was conducted without reference to strategic plans for Supporting People or partners strategies and no evidence-based process was used to determine whether services were relevant or a priority or delivering quality services. They were also unable to weigh one service against another. The outcome was that no services were considered ineligible.

- 65 There is a lack of consistency in determining what constitutes housing-related support which has meant that the identification of ineligible services has not been consistently addressed in the service review process. We saw a number of reviews where there was little or no housing-related support being delivered but this was not challenged, for instance; in homeless provision and sheltered housing. The absence or poor quality of support plans has not always triggered the review officers to question whether, in fact, housing-related support is being offered at all. The absence of support plans leads to a routine action plan recommendation that these be introduced without consideration of whether the service is actually providing housing-related support. The lack of accurate and consistent determination of ineligible services means that the Commissioning Body has signed off a range of service reviews as completed and in some cases offered a steady state contract, without addressing the decommissioning of ineligible services or reconfigured contracts to providers to reflect the actual levels of housing-related support being delivered. This has been a missed opportunity to realise savings to the overall programme which could be used to address gaps in services.
- 66 The service review reports to the Commissioning Body do not detail how services to vulnerable people will be protected in the event of decommissioning through ineligibility. This means that the governance process for Supporting People has no oversight of risks to service users which undermines the relevance of having key partner agencies on the Commissioning Body. The Supporting People team had worked hard to ensure service users were protected, however, in one case where the provider withdrew the service in response to the review process, this was done without clear protocols being in place to assist the team in this process and ensure service users were protected. The lack of agreed protocols have also meant that one poor value for money and high risk service has not been addressed for over two years as there are no mechanisms in place to re-house the vulnerable service users.
- 67 There is no effective quality assurance process to ensure the consistent application of the review process or accuracy in terms of eligibility. The moderation process is not well developed and there has been no external input to the moderation process outside of the Supporting People team. The Commissioning Body has not considered and addressed the need for a robust quality assurance process to ensure consistent and good quality reviews are reported.
- 68 There has not been a consistent risk analysis of whether service reviews would benefit from external advice and expertise to support and enhance the capacity of the Supporting People review team. This means that there are some service areas which have not benefited from this potential addition capacity. We did, however, see examples of joint reviews being carried out with social care and probation officers.

- 69 The service review appeals process does not allow for independent scrutiny of the review process. The Commissioning Body has agreed an appeals process for providers to challenge the outcomes of reviews, but the Commissioning Body did not seek legal advice as to whether the process was fair and independent. No provider had invoked this process at the time of our inspection. The process has two stages; the first, an appeal which will be considered by the Supporting People Manager. The second stage, if the first is appealed against, will be heard by a panel drawn from the Commissioning Body. As both the Supporting People Manager and the Commissioning Body will have made the original decision about the review, this process does not allow for independent review and would be open to challenge if an appeal arises in future.
- 70 The Council is developing the accreditation process for providers who are to be offered a steady state contract. Any provider who cannot meet the accreditation process will not be offered a steady state contract. The Commissioning Body has agreed to passport service providers who have been already accredited by other local authorities. The work being done to assess accreditation is thorough and has highlighted key areas of concern that need to be addressed before providers can be offered a steady state contract.
- 71 Providers are not all informed promptly of the outcome of the service reviews and in a number of reviews there has been considerable delay between the actual review process and the report to the Commissioning Body. Some providers were only informed of the recommendations of the review and not provided with a full copy of the report until some time later. This means that information has been limited for some providers and did not give them the information they may need to challenge the review process effectively. The Commissioning Body were not kept informed of these delays and there was not effective monitoring of this process to ensure prompt information was given to providers.

Value for money

- 72 This is an area where weaknesses outweigh strengths. The approach to addressing value for money is still being developed and currently is focused on costs rather than an overall value for money assessment of services that considers cost, quality and outcomes. Many services have not had any evaluation of value for money although the services reviews are signed off as completed.

How do costs compare?

- 73 Comparison of unit costs with the West Midlands and England as a whole are set out in the data appendix at the end of this report. These are largely based on the 'platinum cut' data submitted to ODPM in July 2003, which is the most up-to-date comparison available. These figures contain some inaccuracies and will not reflect changes that have been made which have changed costs since April 2003.

- 74 Overall, the Council has higher unit costs (excluding community alarms and sheltered housing) in comparison with other similar councils, with unit costs totalling £84.88 compared to the region at £63.88 and the rest of England at £76.37. For accommodation-based services the Council shows particularly higher costs for services for learning disabilities and young people leaving care. There are lower costs though for people with mental health problems and those with a physical or sensory disability.

How is value for money managed?

- 75 The value for money assessments in service reviews are not consistently robust and are not reported effectively in the service reviews reports to the Commissioning Body. For example, the value for money assessment for one review seen was reported as good, but there is a recommendation that financial discussions take place with regard to the high hourly rate, and the Quality Assessment Framework has D scores (below minimum standard) for three core objectives. Reviews where services have failed to meet these minimum standards are signed off by the Commissioning Body as completed. This means that the Commissioning Body is not taking action to ensure services are value for money.
- 76 However, we saw evidence that some high cost services had been challenged and savings have been made as a result of the review process. Negotiations in respect of high unit costs are being undertaken with some providers which has realised some limited savings for the programme.
- 77 The Commissioning Body has yet to address fully ineligible funding of legacy services. For instance, there is no overall methodology or process for disaggregating care and support costs. Social Services have responded to individual service reviews on a case by case basis. Social Services are informed of Supporting People service reviews and are notified of any potential reallocation in funding, but there has been no overall joint approach to undertaking needs assessments and separating care and support costs.
- 78 There has been no assessment of value for money in the administration of the Supporting People programme. There has not been comparison of cost and quality outputs with other Supporting People teams and so the County Council does not have any information on which to judge whether the resources put into the team represent value for money.

Service user involvement

- 79 At the last inspection we found that the Council had not demonstrated an inclusive approach in obtaining views from a wide range of existing or potential users.
- 80 On this inspection we found that the need to engage with service users is recognised and some initial work has begun. However, this aspect of the Supporting People programme is very undeveloped and outside of engaging with service users as part of the review process, there has been no sustained focus on service user involvement. Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area.

- 81 The Council has not effectively engaged with service users in the governance or development of the Supporting People programme. The Council has not mapped the relevant established groups for involvement and consultation, for instance, the leaving care mechanisms. The recently formed service users' reference group was drawn from a small number of people who responded to a mail shot to providers.
- 82 The Council has lacked capacity and expertise in the area of Supporting People service users' involvement and it does not have an integrated approach to this across the Council. This has resulted in only limited service user involvement with the Supporting People programme and the involvement that has taken place has not been driven by any clear strategic approach. For instance, although a service users' day is planned for July 2006, this currently has no objectives and is not part of any wider strategy for service user involvement.
- 83 There has not been effective consideration of the different needs of service users in developing the service users' reference group. The advice of providers has not been sought and other forums for consultation have not been considered to ensure that the service user engagement process is as informed as possible.
- 84 Current mechanisms for service user involvement are not fully inclusive or appropriate. The Supporting People Users reference group meeting we observed was attended by six service users only. The meeting was held in the neighbouring authority of Coventry without any strategic reason for meeting service users out of the Supporting People delivery area. Service users present did not represent the range of Supporting People user groups and were not fully participative or engaged in the meeting. One service user could not read but only written information was available at the meeting. Some service users present had different levels of understanding and communication which were not effectively addressed. Service users we spoke to were unclear about what services are funded through Supporting People and did not know what Supporting People funding was available or how it is used. By not ensuring that the process for involving service users in the programme are appropriate, the Council has missed the opportunity to engage service users in shaping and improving the Supporting People programme.
- 85 There has been a strong emphasis on consulting with service users as part of the service review process. The Council is able to demonstrate that this has provided service users with an opportunity to comment on and complain about the services they receive. The Council has acted effectively and there have been some clear outcomes in terms of addressing complaints about service quality as a result of this engagement with users.
- 86 The process of engagement with service users needs to be developed for some service areas. The use of advocates was not routinely considered to enable effective engagement with service users with special needs such as people with learning disabilities. A number of review consultations with learning disabled service users were conducted with family members speaking for the service users. This can restrict the service users' ability to independently express their views.

Access to services and information

- 87 At the last inspection we found that the quality and distribution of written information was not sufficiently comprehensive and could limit access to services.
- 88 On this inspection we found that access to information has improved and that more places and staff were able to direct customers to information about housing-related support. However, we found that that this was not consistently the case across the different districts of the county and information is not available in a range of formats. Weaknesses still outweigh strengths in this area.
- 89 A clear and informative leaflet and poster have been produced which clearly explains to potential service users and carers what Supporting People is and how it supports independent living. This was available in a range of venues across the county in places including some libraries and council reception areas. However, this was not always the case and we visited a range of access points for information where there was no information on housing-related support.
- 90 Similarly, we found that at some access points, staff were able to direct enquiries about Supporting People and were clear about how service users and carers could access information about housing support. However, this was not consistently the case and in some districts there was no awareness of housing-related support or the Supporting People team and service providers and staff were unable to assist with enquires about how to access support.
- 91 There is no Warwickshire specific directory of services to assist advice and information agencies to direct potential service users and carers to find the services that they need. The Supporting People web site directs service users to the national SPK website which has a national directory, but this is not as user friendly as a locally produced compendium of the different services available and information about how to access them.
- 92 The needs of different service users and carers have not been fully considered in terms of the information about services available. None of the information available was produced or available in different formats such as large text for people with sight impairment, or different languages. This creates barriers to information for service users with sensory disabilities and those who are unable to read English.
- 93 The views of current service users and carers have not been sought to help design leaflets and information to be as accessible as possible to the wide and diverse range of potential service users that need to access housing-related support to help them to live independently in the community. This is a missed opportunity to develop information that is as user friendly as possible.
- 94 The Supporting People website is easy to access and use. It is informative and is kept up to date with information and news although the focus of the information is for providers and other staff, rather than service users and carers.

- 95 *'Better Care: Higher Standards'*, a user charter which outlines access to health, social care and housing services, has been updated and has several references to Supporting People with clear descriptions of what it provides. The document is well designed and accessible and is easy to understand.

Diversity

- 96 At our last inspection we found that Supporting People was not addressing the needs of all diverse communities in Warwickshire because the level of information known about their needs was insufficient.
- 97 On this inspection we found that very little work has been done to address the lack of information about diverse communities and their needs. The limited work that has been commissioned has not been sufficiently focused to deliver information about housing-related support needs of Warwickshire's diverse communities. Weaknesses greatly outweigh strengths in this area.
- 98 The County Council is not meeting its legislative requirements, set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, in terms of undertaking equality and diversity impact assessments to ensure that all barriers to accessing Supporting People services are identified and being addressed. This means that the Commissioning Body has not considered how its policies and services and those of providers are ensuring that the diverse needs of Warwickshire communities are being met.
- 99 The Supporting People team do not have accurate baseline demographic information for potential and current user groups. This means that the Supporting People partnership is unable to accurately identify needs and gaps in services. There has been little emphasis on prioritising services to groups and individuals that are not part of current service delivery. A BME housing needs study was commissioned by the district councils in Warwickshire with part of the given objective being to identify housing-related support needs, but the survey only asked about whether people were aware of assistance available to repair their own homes. This means that the Council is unaware of the housing-related support needs of BME communities to inform future commissioning priorities.
- 100 No action has been taken to address the limited information gained from the BME survey. For example, the survey revealed that there was low awareness of assistance available to adapt people's homes to allow them to continue to live independently if they became disabled. No action has been taken to address this lack of awareness and the Home Improvement Agencies we visited were unable to evidence that they were promoting their services to all communities.
- 101 The recent commissioning process failed to address diversity in its considerations and bidders were not asked to demonstrate how their service proposals would ensure that they were appropriate to meet the needs of diverse communities in the county. It is a key weakness that there was no scrutiny role in place for the commissioning process, to ensure that equalities considerations were properly carried out, which is a legislative requirement, as set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, for all local authorities.

- 102** Very limited focus has been given to meeting the needs of diverse and hard-to-reach groups and individuals when new services have been commissioned or current services reconfigured. No consideration has been given to addressing the known gaps in service provision for groups such as gypsies and travellers, although the Supporting People partnership is aware that there is a recognised population of the county with significant local issues for these communities.
- 103** The Commissioning Body has not ensured that diversity issues and the appropriateness of services for the diverse communities were considered in the service review process. This means that no consideration has been given to whether services are truly accessible and relevant to minority communities and individuals whose needs are not being addressed by current service providers. For instance, there is no culturally appropriate housing-related provision for older people from minority communities in Warwickshire, but this has not been considered or explored by the Commissioning Body or Supporting People team. This is a significant missed opportunity to map provision or the lack of it and as a result, no consideration has been given to reconfigure services to ensure that they are addressing these needs.
- 104** The Council has also missed the opportunity to collect information that service providers routinely gather on age, gender, ethnicity and disability. This is not requested by the Supporting People team or used to shape services, assess equitable access and to ensure that they are meeting identified needs.

Outcomes for service users

- 105** Our last inspection found that the Supporting People programme in Warwickshire was not delivering tangible, positive changes to many of the services it funds and through this, the lives of those people who use them. However, there were examples of improved services being provided by some district councils for service users.
- 106** On this inspection we found that there have been changes to some services as a result of service reviews, with an emphasis on reconfiguration to provide more floating support. However, there has been very limited decommissioning of services and very limited commissioning of new services which means that the overall provision is largely unchanged from our last inspection. Commissioning and decommissioning decisions, where they have taken place, have not been made strategically but on an ad hoc individual review basis. Weaknesses and strengths are more balanced in this area but the lack of consistency is of concern combined with the lack of actions to improve consistency and raise standards in services for all vulnerable service users.
- 107** We found evidence of some good examples of housing-related support services positively impacting on service users as a result of the Supporting People programme. We visited a range of providers during the inspection and we found that a number of the services visited were of a very high standard and are delivering high quality housing-related support services for vulnerable people which are enabling people to live independently.

- 108** However, this was not consistently the case. As discussed in the earlier service review section of the report, a number of reviews failed to identify and address the lack of housing-related support being delivered by some Supporting People grant funded providers. By not effectively identifying the lack of services, the Commissioning Body has missed the opportunity to redirect these resources to meet gaps in current service provision.
- 109** Some individual service reviews have led to improved services for users. We saw evidence that these individual reviews had recognised and addressed poorer quality services and barriers to accessing services. The process of consulting service users had led in a number of cases, to poor services being identified and addressed. Good quality action plans have been drawn up for these services and progress against these is reported on to the Commissioning Body. This has meant real quality of life improvements for vulnerable people.
- 110** The use of support plans to deliver independent living has been used well by a range of providers and we found evidence of good quality support plans leading to independent living but this is not consistently the case. Training has been provided by the Supporting People team to providers and support plans are largely in place, but a number of providers are unclear as to their purpose. The Supporting People team have not considered whether this lack of understanding is linked to the nature of the service provided that may not include housing-related support despite grant funding being paid.
- 111** Service reviews seen for accommodation-based services do not all address issues where the quality of accommodation is not of an acceptable standard and this is not addressed in the recommendations and action plans. This means that improved outcomes for vulnerable people are not being consistently addressed.
- 112** There is no established protocol for managing the risk to service users when services are decommissioned and there are no contingency plans in place to address potential service failure or the closure or withdrawal of service by a provider. We saw examples where the impact on service users of terminating contracts is not being fully considered. For instance, plans to decommission a service and transfer funding to Social Care in July 2005 as an outcome of a service review, have not been fully followed up and there is no confirmation that this has been agreed by the Social Services department on file. The provider ceased trading during the Supporting People contract notice period but there is no record of what action has been taken to ensure continuity of service for the user. The lack of established protocols could result in service users being put at risk.
- 113** The recent decision of the Commissioning Body to commission £250,000 of new floating support services was not made on the basis of understanding what the priorities are for new services. As a result, the commission process was not targeted at developing new services to address gaps in provision.

- 114 The Council has not given consideration to monitoring the outcomes for service users from the Supporting People programme. There has been no exploration of developing a process of evaluation of what happens to service users after they have moved on from Supporting People accommodation or when they no longer need housing-related support.

Summary

- 115 The Supporting People programme delivery and development is poor. The Council has failed to provide leadership and senior management for the programme until very recently. The governance structures have improved since the last inspection but there is a lack of clarity in the relationship between the different bodies, a lack of strategic direction from the Commissioning Body and outcomes are limited. The delivery of the programme has been improved through increased resources but the lack of consistent performance, particularly in the service review process, has resulted in slow progress to reconfigure services, decommission ineligible services and develop new services to meet assessed needs within a clear strategic framework.
- 116 The Council has failed to consistently apply processes to evaluate the value for money of services and the absence of a robust five-year strategy has resulted in future contracting decisions being made without due regard to their strategic relevance. Service user involvement is weak and there is a lack of understanding about the appropriate approach to be taken in the context of the diverse range of service users captured by the programme. The absence of good needs information is hampering the reconfiguration of services to meet the needs of all groups. There have been some positive outcomes for some service users but the lack of consistently applied policies and practices has led to inequities in the delivery and development of the programme in Warwickshire. There is no established protocol for managing the risk to service users when services are decommissioned there are no contingency plans in place to address potential service failure or the closure or withdrawal of service by a provider.

What are the prospects for improvement?

What is the track record in delivering improvement?

- 117 The Council's delivery of the Supporting People programme has improved since the last inspection, and as a result there are some good examples of services positively impacting on service users. However, a lack of strategic leadership has impeded progress for the Supporting People programme; work on the majority of the recommendations has begun but this has had limited impact to date. There has been limited needs assessment and significant gaps in service provision have yet to be addressed. Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area.
- 118 A lack of strategic leadership has impeded progress for the Supporting People programme. There has been a limited needs assessment undertaken and the Commissioning Body has not been able to agree priorities for the future of the Supporting People programme. The Supporting People programme does not have the capacity to develop a forward commissioning plan and is in discussion with the Housing Corporation with regard to this. It is unclear how the Council intends to resource the future commissioning of Supporting People services and reconfiguration of present services.
- 119 There has not been a sustained improvement to housing-related support for vulnerable people since the last inspection. Although there are examples of where the review process has identified poor quality services and these have been effectively addressed through action plans, this has been on an ad hoc basis only. There has been limited development of the overall programme.
- 120 The Commissioning Body has failed to commission a needs analysis to determine the priorities for funding and identify areas of need where no housing-related support services are available. Despite the absence of agreed joint priorities, the Commissioning Body has, nevertheless, commissioned new services. No strategic steer has been given to this commissioning process and known gaps in service provision have not been addressed. Meanwhile, more services for user groups already commanding the majority of the programme have been commissioned. The lack of needs information has undermined the robustness of the five-year strategy and annual plan as effective drivers for the delivery of the Supporting People programme.

- 121** The Council has missed the opportunity to develop new and innovative services to support vulnerable people with housing-related support needs or to improve and shape existing services in a strategic way. The service review process has not addressed this effectively with few services being decommissioned and decisions to reconfigure existing services being made in isolation rather than looking as a whole at services for different user groups. The absence of clear priorities has hampered this process. Although there are good quality services being delivered through the Supporting People programme, these are largely those that existed before the Supporting People programme was introduced. Some new floating support services have been commissioned as a result of reconfiguration following individual service reviews, but consideration was not given to addressing gaps in services as part of this process.
- 122** Work on the majority of the recommendations has begun but this had limited impact to date. The Supporting People team has worked hard to improve the delivery of the Supporting People programme and the progress to date reflects that it was starting from a very low base at the time of the last inspection, with limited numbers of team members in place. Although a lack of direction and leadership for the team was identified at the last inspection, this has still not been addressed effectively at a senior level. The Accountable Officer role has not given the guidance and direction needed by the Supporting People team. The lack of progress against the range of recommendations identified below does not reflect on the enthusiasm and commitment of the Supporting People team to improve the delivery of the programme.
- 123** Of the 21 recommendations made during the last inspection only 5 have been completed, 10 have been partially completed and a further 6 have not been acted on at all. The table overleaf sets out the recommendations and progress against them.

Table 1

Recommendations	Progress
Improve access to information about supporting people for potential service users and carers and organisations that represent them.	Completed - further work being undertaken on website information.
Include information about Supporting People services in the latest update of <i>'Better Care-Higher Standards.'</i>	Completed.
Provide regular training updates on Supporting People services for frontline staff in Social Services so that they can signpost potential service users and carers to the best sources of information.	Completed and ongoing.
Complete the work begun on involving service users and deliver it within six months of the publication of this report.	Not implemented - service user involvement In the development of services remains weak.
Integrate the Council's policies on diversity into the Supporting People programme to ensure equal access to services for people with diverse needs and complete the Council's equality impact statement of Supporting People services within three months.	Not completed - there has been limited progress on conducting equalities impact assessments and diversity remains a serious issue.
Identify the housing support needs of people for whom service provision is low or non-existent and include their views on the services proposed, so that these can be considered amongst other client groups in determining priorities and informing new strategies.	Not completed - little progress on including service user views or determining priorities.
The member's group must be reviewed to ensure that elected and appointed members take a more active role in monitoring the delivery and development of the Supporting People programme and oversee the implementation of this report.	Not completed - some progress on the involvement of members but further work required to ensure the effective scrutiny and input of members and appointed members.

Recommendations	Progress
The membership of the Commissioning Body must be reviewed to ensure its members are of sufficient seniority and can establish robust governance of the programme. The Council must consider whether the Commissioning Body would be more effective if located elsewhere in the structure.	Completed.
The terms of reference and the memorandum of understanding of the Commissioning Body must be reviewed to ensure the Commissioning Body has access to legal, financial and contracting advice.	Partially completed - terms of reference and memorandum reviewed access to legal and financial advice evident but access to contracting advice weak and further work is needed to ensure the work of the Commissioning Body and core strategy group are synchronised.
A core strategy group needs to be established to inform the development of the five-year strategy to direct the Supporting People programme and ensure effective delivery through the Supporting People team. To do this the group needs appropriate membership and a commitment from members to attend and actively participate at meetings.	Partially completed - core strategy group established, five-year strategy completed on time but group not rigorously overseeing delivery of the programme through performance management processes.
Review the terms of reference of the core strategy group to include arrangements to cover any conflict of interest issues that may arise and the treatment of confidential or commercially sensitive information.	Partially completed - terms of reference address conflict of interest but in commissioning new services and assessing the strategic relevance of existing services best practice was not delivered-internal providers were inappropriately involved.
Review the role of the accountable officer and ensure it is fit for purpose.	Completed - accountable officer no longer chairs the Commissioning Body.

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Recommendations	Progress
A more robust approach is required to ensure that the housing-related support services are providing good value for money. The Commissioning Body needs to take a more proactive role by ensuring that clear and credible explanations can be given for some of the high hourly rates charges by some providers	Not completed - there is still a lack of understanding about value for money and high costs have not been consistently reduced.
Ensure the best value review of services for older people is supported by all stakeholders and encompasses Supporting People.	Partially completed and ongoing. First stage of strategic review of older people’s services completed and includes references to Supporting People, further service user involvement for next stages planned.
Accelerate and monitor the programme of reviews.	Partially completed - all service reviews completed by 1st April although further work required to determine value for money and revise contracts.
Adopt a more challenging approach to assessing value for money by undertaking more detailed investigations of the some of the hourly rates charged by providers and presenting these to the Commissioning Body.	Partially completed - robust new system being developed with assistance of external consultants and providers.
Continue to undertake, where appropriate, joint service reviews with Social Services and/or health and probation staff, this approach to be discussed and agreed with the Commissioning Body.	Partially completed - some input into reviews by partners but it remains a weak area.
Ensure that there is a clear understanding at corporate and at partnership board level of how Supporting people can help to achieve targets and priorities in other strategies.	Partially completed - increased corporate understanding of the role of Supporting People but no evidence of joint targets to deliver corporate and partnership priorities.

Recommendations	Progress
Ensure that related strategies and their action plans (with SMART targets) are explicitly linked to Supporting People where appropriate.	Partially completed - Supporting People evident in related strategic strategies but no targets set to deliver joint priorities.
Agree which services to resource and develop health, social care and probation to achieve housing priorities and targets over the next five years.	Not completed-some work on strategic relevance undertaken and a growing understanding of priorities but this is not informed by needs assessment.
Identify and construct a short-list of schemes that match the agreed priorities if further funding becomes available.	Partially completed – some new services commissioned but not against agreed priorities and a high percentage of newly identified resources being directed to administrative tasks rather than frontline service delivery.

- 124 There has been work to address value for money from Supporting People services but detailed value for money consideration has been limited to just some service reviews. In a number of cases value for money has yet to be addressed although the service reviews have all been signed off. The Commissioning Body has agreed a value for money process, which triggers further investigations into the quality and value for money of service with costs above a high cost parameter. In some cases this has led to a detailed consideration of high costs and funding levels have been reduced. However, the process means that a large number of services that fall below these parameters have not had any detailed value for money consideration. In some instances reviews that should have triggered further and detailed value for money work has not yet been carried out although the service review was signed off as completed.

How is performance managed?

- 125 The Commissioning Body and the County Council have recognised that there has been a lack of effective leadership at governance level which has not supported service improvement. As a result, there is no evidence to date of a developing culture of service improvement. Scrutiny of the Supporting People programme by elected members and the Commissioning Body is weak, there is little performance information reported and no locally defined performance indicators to monitor or drive improvements in performance. There are no clear priorities set to drive aims and objectives and service users and their carers have not been involved in the Supporting People programme and therefore have not been able to contribute to developing the aims and objectives of the programme. Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area.
- 126 Until recently there has not been effective leadership given to the Supporting People programme. The Commissioning Body has not been well supported or advised and the lack of agreed priorities has hampered the effectiveness of the governance structures.
- 127 There is a high level recognition of the need to make future plans more strategic and effective. The Council has embarked on a strategic review of all service areas to improve performance and has identified the need to improve leadership and accountability in adult services, where the Supporting People team is based. The Council has appointed a new Strategic Director, who is now the Accountable Officer, to give direction and support to the Supporting People programme. The new Accountable Officer is familiar with the Supporting People programme and has developed early plans to develop joint aims and objectives with partners and address the lack of joint working with the health service.

- 128** Scrutiny of the Supporting People programme by members and the Commissioning Body is weak, there is little performance information reported and no locally defined performance indicators to monitor or drive improvements in performance. Performance indicator information collected from providers is only reported as part of individual service reviews and is not analysed or reported at a wider level. As a result, the impact and outcomes of the programme cannot be accurately demonstrated, which has meant that benefits of developing housing-related support are not fully recognised within the Council or partner agencies. Equally, the effectiveness of the Supporting People team in delivering the programme cannot be fully evaluated.
- 129** A high level action plan was produced by a consultant to draw together a number of plans to ensure they are co-ordinated and deliverable. This plan is monitored by the Commissioning Body but there is no plan beneath this to drive the work of the Supporting People team with clear priorities amongst the many tasks that face the team. This means that the team has no clear objectives to govern the work that they undertake and there is not a service plan in place to link its work to the overall Supporting People action plan.
- 130** There is no agreed work plan in place for the WASG and the draft WASG work plan will not deliver significant improvement in the near future. The completion dates for some of the tasks are illogical, for instance; the completion date for the gap analysis precedes the completion date for the needs analysis. This means it will not be possible to commission appropriate services or to assess strategic relevance effectively.
- 131** There are no clear priorities set to drive aims and objectives. The Council has recognised this, to some extent, and has commissioned a review of services for older people in the county. However, the older persons strategy needs considerable development before it can effectively shape services for older people. There have been several reports leading up to the older persons strategy. They are quite long and detailed and there are no outcomes for users to date. There is considerable work to do before any tangible outcomes emerge.
- 132** Service users and their carers have had very limited involvement in the Supporting People programme and therefore have not been able to contribute to developing the aims and objectives of the Programme. There is no user voice in any aspect of the Supporting People governance structures and the Council has not yet established an effective inclusive forum.
- 133** There are performance appraisal and supervision mechanisms in place for the Supporting People team. The Supporting People team is regularly supervised and the Supporting People management team provides advice and support for review officers on specific days to ensure availability.

- 134 The Commissioning Body has recognised that its approach to assessing value for money is not robust and has commissioned an external consultant to work with the providers' forum to develop a long-term value for money assessment. The quality of the work produced so far is very good and the future plans for this work are well focused and should result in a good quality value for money assessment process that is robust and thorough. The service price modelling tool, developed as part of the draft value for money framework, will provide a sound basis against which to benchmark existing and future local Supporting People service costs.

Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

- 135 The County Council has moved to address the gaps in capacity at a leadership level. The new Chief Executive has been appointed with a clear mandate for reform and the Council's structures have been reviewed to develop a cross-cutting and partnership approach to service delivery. Supporting People is now recognised as a key cross-cutting programme and the Strategic Director for Adult Health and Community Services has been appointed as the new Accountable Officer to give senior and strategic leadership to the Programme. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 136 The changes that have occurred at senior level have introduced new managers that have a clear recognition of the challenges facing the Council in delivering the Supporting People programme. The new Director of Adult, Health and Community Services as the new Accountable Officer is clear on the action that is needed in order to ensure that the Supporting People programme is delivered more effectively. The priority is to ensure that the Partnership Board and Commissioning Body have clearly established the strategic direction and that there is clarity in the role of the governance structures. Following this the intention is to develop a range of preventative strategies and enhance the skills and competencies of the Supporting People team itself.
- 137 In this way, it is expected that some of the problems within the service review process will be overcome. Service plans will be introduced in April and the commissioning difficulties will be addressed as a priority. The Council has traditionally not been effective at engagement with BME communities and this is another area which will be strengthened. The new director is seeking to establish a broad vision for the department which will be incorporated within a more detailed vision for the Supporting People programme therefore linking Supporting People with other areas.
- 138 The Council is investing in developing the contract and commissioning process through working with an external consultant and providers to develop more robust value for money assessments. Providers are positively engaged and involved in developing value for money processes and methodology. This will ensure the providers understand and accept the new approach to value for money.

- 139 Since the last inspection the Council has moved to strengthen the capacity and resources of the Supporting People team, which is now a well resourced team of 14 staff. The lack of financial expertise within the team has also been addressed and a business and administration manager has been seconded into the management structure. This has strengthened the team's ability to manage the grant more effectively.
- 140 Since the last inspection the Supporting People team has worked hard to develop a stronger partnership approach with the providers forum and WASG, the Core Strategy Group. This has been effective and has strengthened the capacity of these structures.
- 141 The capacity of the Commissioning Body has also been strengthened, with all partners reviewing their representatives and ensuring that senior officers attend with delegated authority to make decisions. This enhanced capacity has, however, been hampered by the lack of strategic direction and the work of the Commissioning Body has been dominated by the service review process.
- 142 Capacity to effectively commission services has been weak and the governance bodies have not benefited from good quality advice about procurement and contracting services. The Supporting People team does not have the range of skills to develop this area of the Supporting People programme. The team has recognised this as an area of weakness, however, the Council and other partner agencies have not yet moved to meet this gap.

Summary

- 143 Prospects for improvement are uncertain. The Council's delivery of the Supporting People programme has improved since the last inspection, and there are some good examples of services positively impacting on service users as a result of the Supporting People programme. However, a lack of strategic leadership has impeded progress for the Supporting People programme and progress against previous recommendations has been slow. Although work on the majority of the recommendations has begun this has had limited impact to date.
- 144 A needs assessment has still not been conducted and significant gaps in service provision have yet to be addressed. The Commissioning Body has not been well supported or advised and the lack of agreed priorities has prevented governance structures from being effective.
- 145 The County Council has now moved to address the gaps in capacity at a leadership level. Supporting People is now recognised as a key cross-cutting programme and the Strategic Director for Adult Health and Community services has been appointed as the new Accountable Officer to give senior and strategic leadership to the programme. The capacity of the Supporting People team and Core Strategy Group and providers forum has also been strengthened and more resources identified to deliver the Supporting People programme. The Council is investing in developing the contract and commissioning process through working with an external consultant and providers to develop more robust value for money assessments.

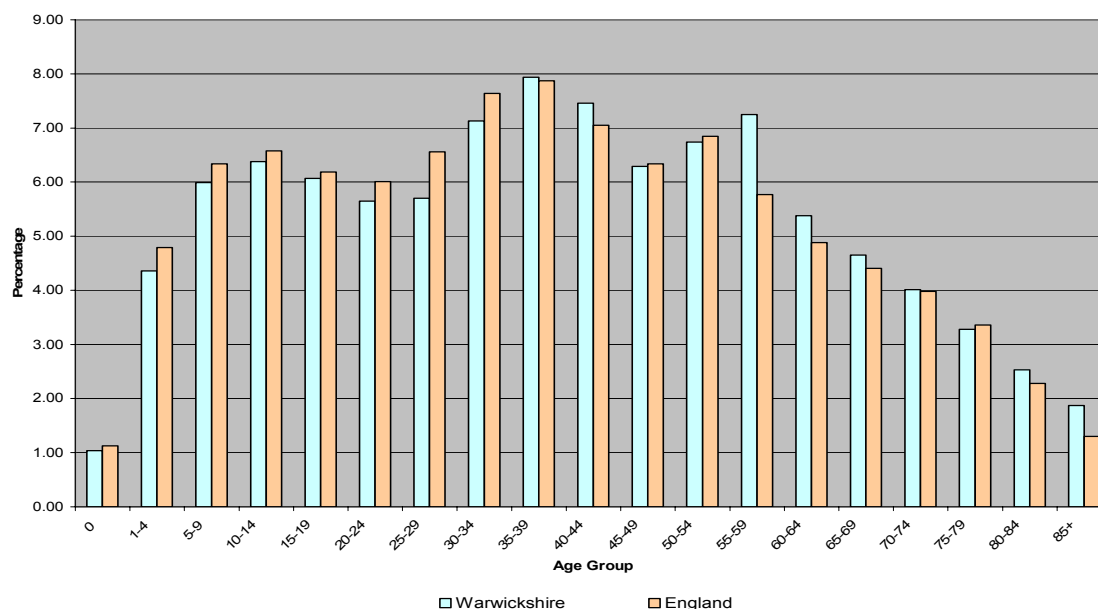
Appendix 1 – Demographic information

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

Table 2

Measure	Warwickshire	England
Population (mid-2004) ³	525,500	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2004)	19.0	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than white – British 2004)	4.4	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁴	1.6	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁵	186 (North Warwickshire)	-

Figure 2 Percentage of the population⁶ in each age group compared with England



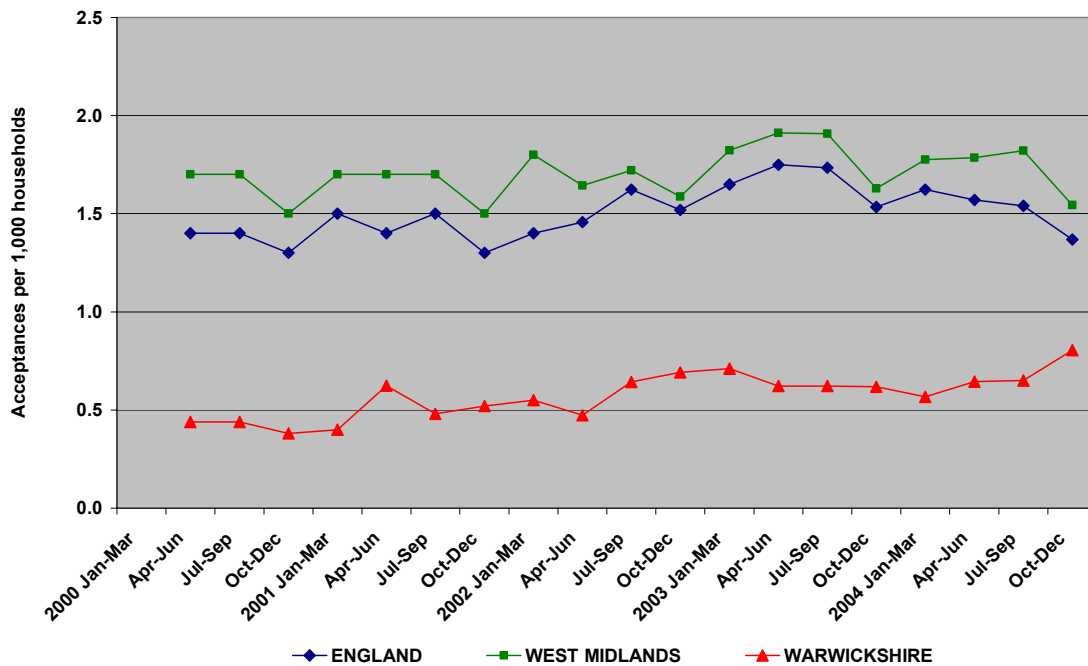
³ Source: mid-year population estimates (2004)

⁴ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (October 2005)

⁵ Source: deprivation index 2004, average ward score for the authority

⁶ 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)

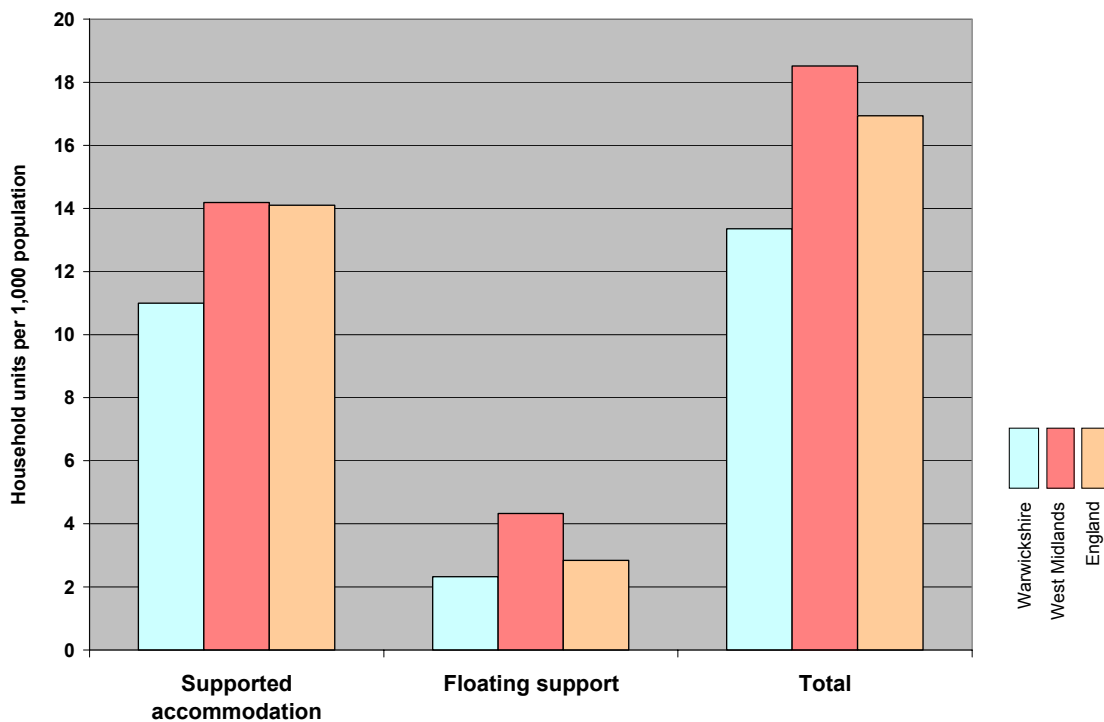


Performance information

- 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 People⁷



⁷ 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 England⁸

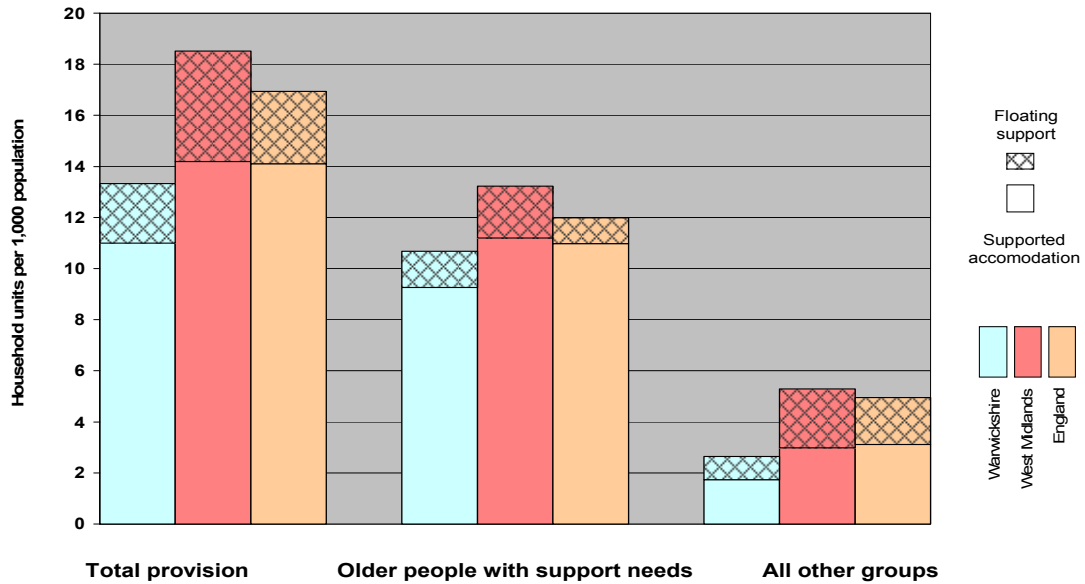
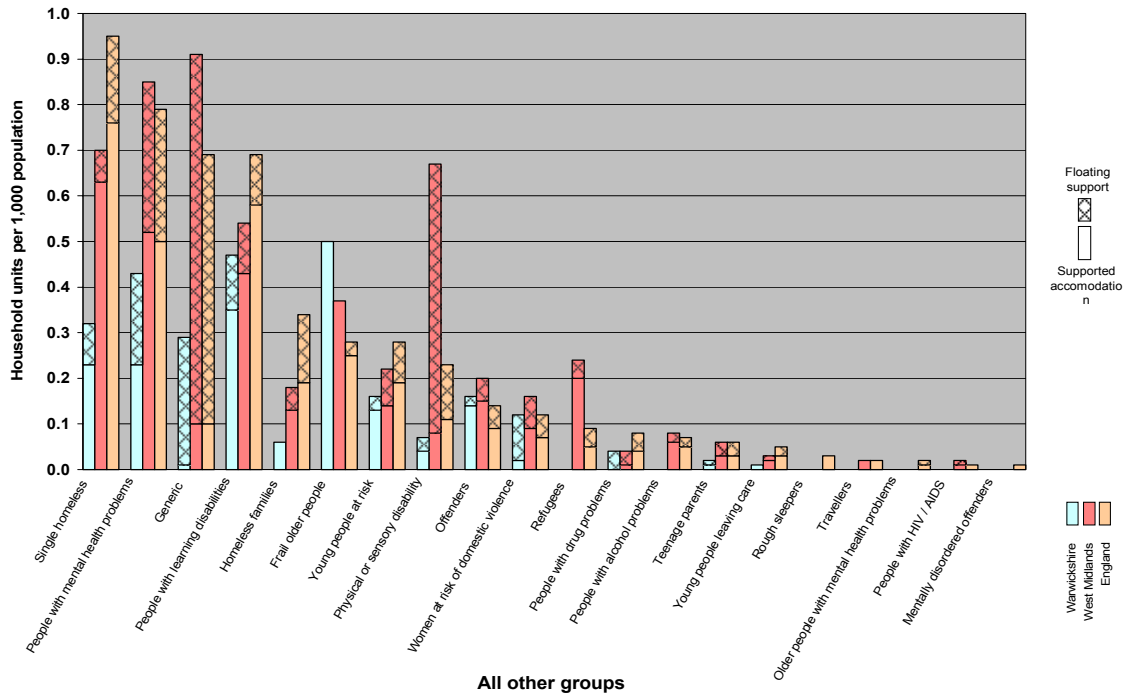


Figure 6 Services for other groups compared with the region and England⁹



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

⁹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Table 3 Funding for Supporting People¹⁰

Warwickshire	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Final Supporting People grant	£10,596,762	£10,737,015	£10,241,821
Pipeline allocation	£60,745	£307,020	£ -
Administration grant	£461,066	£424,520	£339,616

Table 4 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)¹¹

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Warwickshire	£0.40	£22.65	£26.30	£84.88
West Midlands	£0.62	£23.18	£28.17	£63.88
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.'

¹⁰ Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

¹¹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

Figure 7 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹²

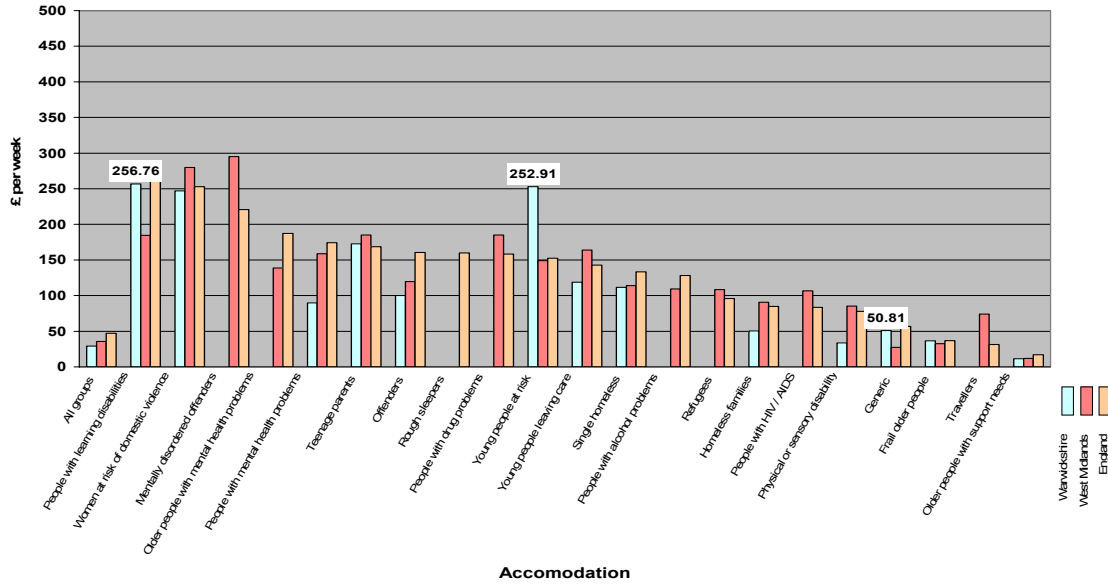
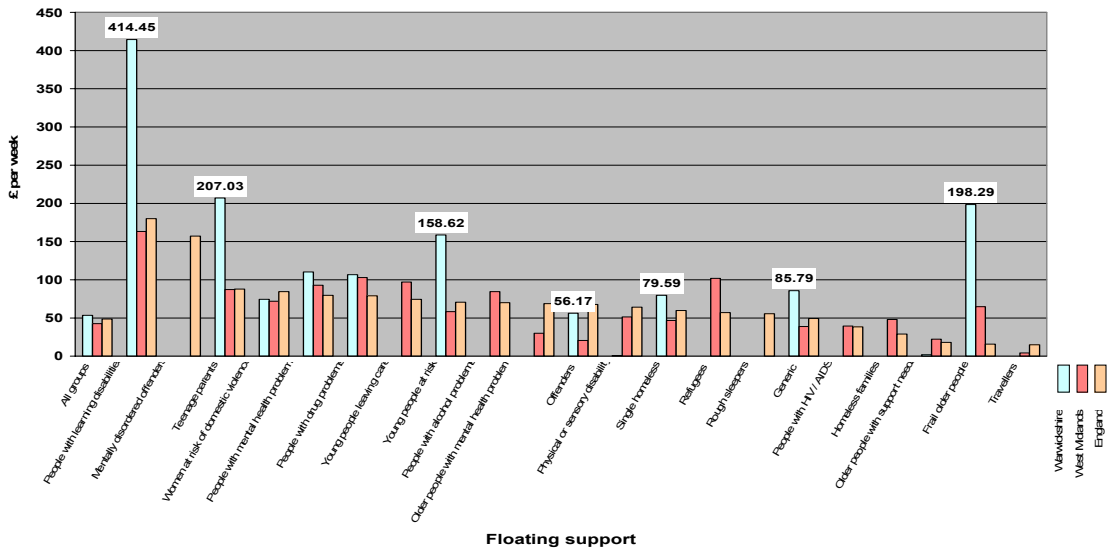


Figure 8 Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹³



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

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

Figure 9 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours,¹⁴ all county councils and all English councils (2004/05)

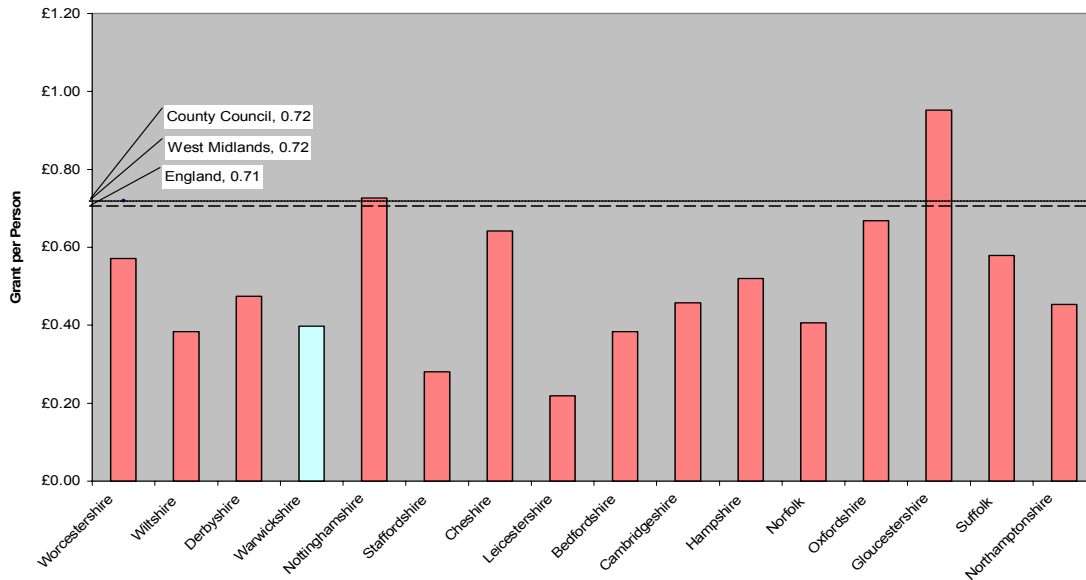
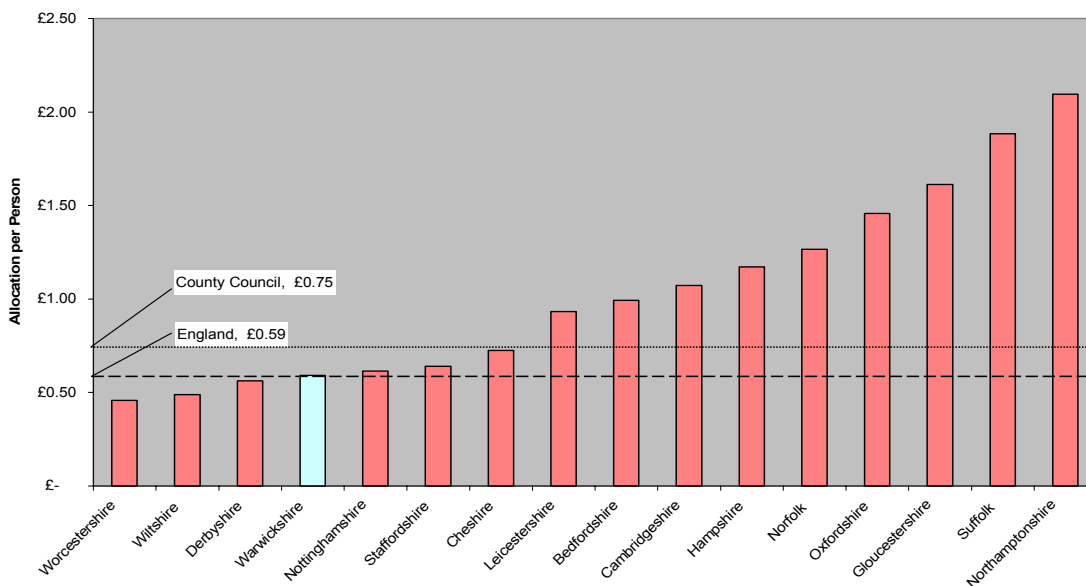


Figure 10 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours,¹⁵ all county councils and all English councils



¹⁴ A comparator group of similar councils.

¹⁵ A comparator group of similar councils.

Figure 11 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)¹⁶

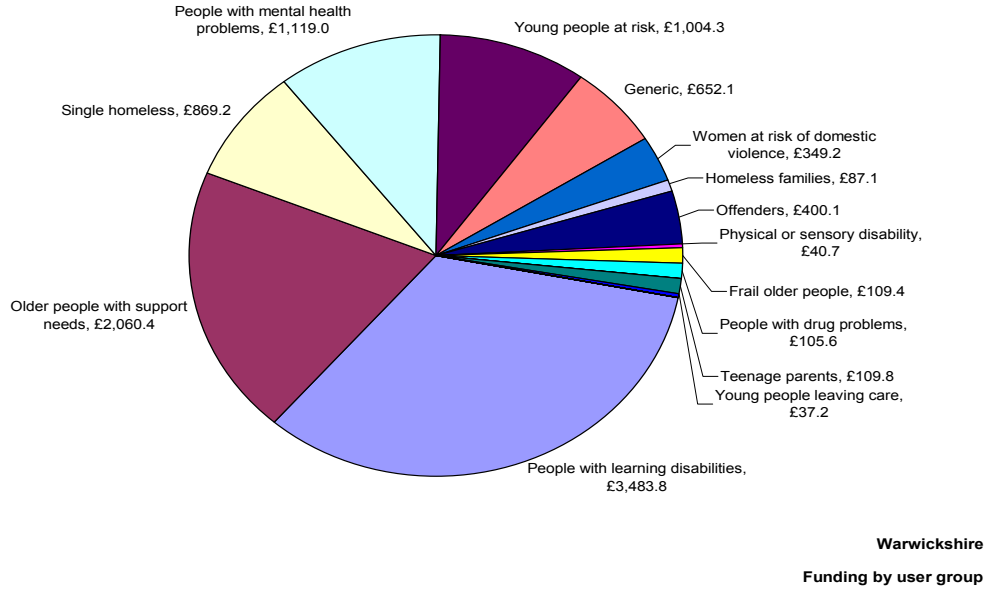
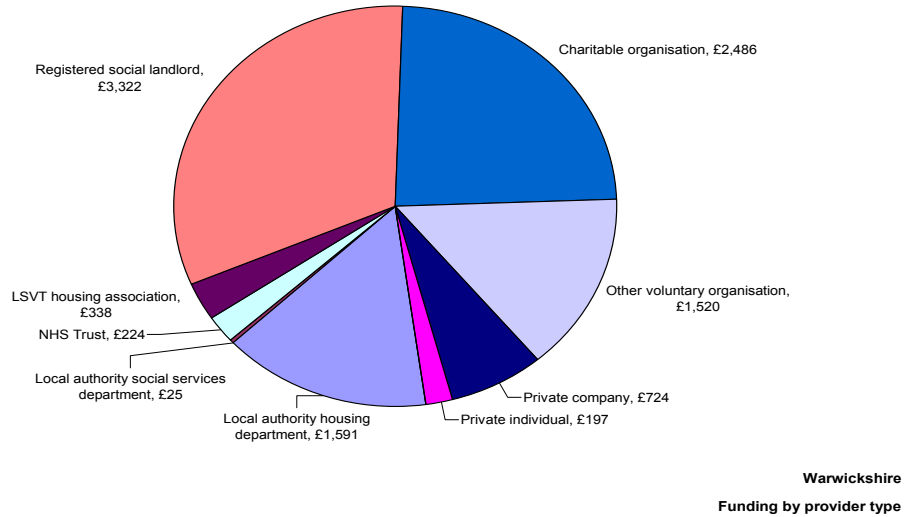


Figure 12 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)¹⁷



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

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

Social Services star ratings November 2004

Table 5

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

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

Social Services performance indicators

Table 6 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

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

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

Best value performance indicators

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

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

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

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

Stratford on Avon	
Within the best 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
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) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Warwick	
Within the best 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
Within the worst 25 per cent	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 Council's self-assessment;
 - Supporting People five-year strategy and current revisions;
 - the Council's corporate strategies with impact upon Supporting People;
 - plans and strategies from partner agencies that may impact on Supporting People;
 - service documents including policies and procedures, information leaflets for users and providers, newsletters;
 - service review timetable;
 - *'Better Care, Higher Standards'* document;
 - departmental and service improvement plans;
 - performance reports;
 - terms of reference for key governing groups; and
 - minutes of the Commissioning Body, core strategy group and other key meetings.

Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken

- 1 When we went on-site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
 - a questionnaire-based survey sent to all providers of housing-related support services;
 - a focus groups with service providers;
 - meetings with carers, advocates and voluntary organisations;
 - visits to supported housing services, to talk to service users and frontline staff;
 - telephone calls to a number of service user access points to test the level and extent of information available for service users;
 - interviews with key staff and stakeholders within the County Council, the borough and district councils, the primary care trusts and the probation service;
 - interviews with councillors and with the relevant portfolio holder;
 - review of the website;
 - mystery shopping visits to council offices;
 - desktop checks of procedure guides and service review files; and
 - observation of a meeting of the Commissioning Body, Core Strategy Group and partners' forum.