

Supporting People Inspection Report

September 2006



# Supporting People Programme

**Birmingham City 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 and national services for the public.

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

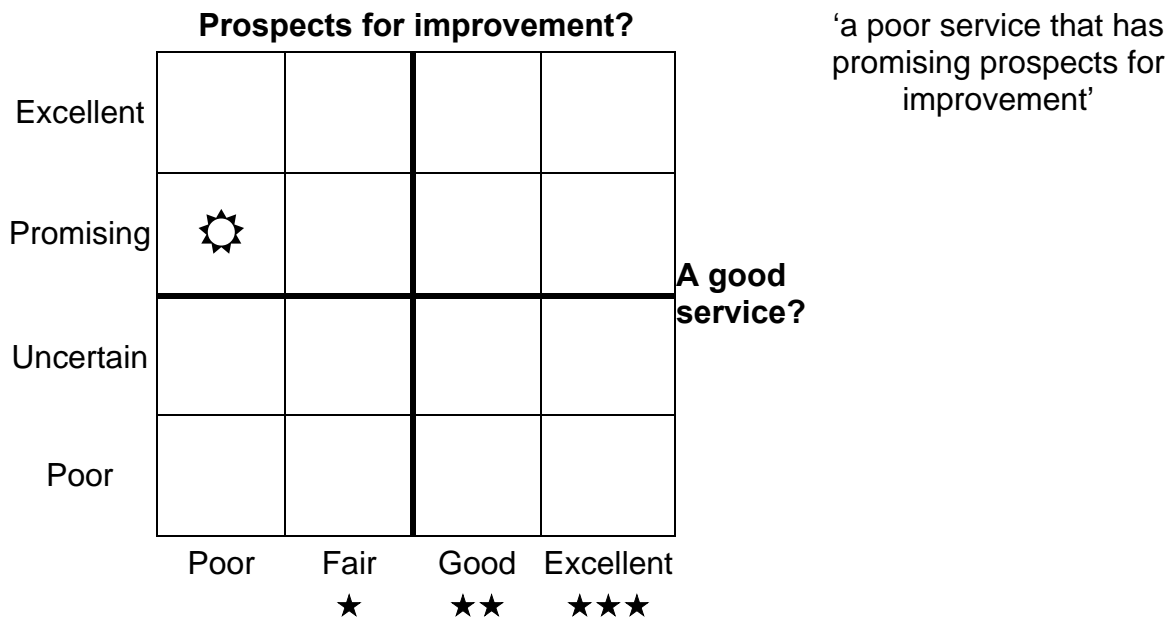
## Summary

- 1 Birmingham City Council is a metropolitan authority in the West Midlands of England. The population is 990,000, of which 34.36 per cent are from minority ethnic communities.
- 2 The Council is led by a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition who together hold 70 of the 120 seats and uses the leader and cabinet model of governance.
- 3 The Council has a revenue budget of £1.45 billion for 2005/06 and employs approximately 56,000 full-time equivalent staff across all services.
- 4 Birmingham City Council acts as the administering local authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The Council works in partnership with Eastern Birmingham Primary Care Trust (PCT) representing the four PCTs covering Birmingham and the West Midlands Probation Area in commissioning Supporting People services.
- 5 The total amount of Supporting People funding available in 2005/06 is £52,234,629. The Council also receives £759,092 in administration grant towards its role as the administering authority.
- 6 Birmingham City Council was inspected midway through the third year of the Supporting People programme. This report, therefore, reflects the current context for the Council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.
- 7 The highest cost Supporting People service supported by the grant is £549.60 per person per week for people with a learning difficulty. The lowest cost service is £0.31 per person per week for a community alarm service.

## Scoring the service

- 8 We have assessed Birmingham City Council as providing a 'poor', no-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

**Figure 1 Scoring chart<sup>1</sup>**



Source: Audit Commission

<sup>1</sup> 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.

- 9 We have assessed the council's administration of the Supporting People programme to be a poor based on following areas of weaknesses.
- Service users, their carers and advocates have not yet been engaged in the programme at a strategic level.
  - Access to appropriate move on accommodation with floating support if needed is a problem for service users who require a move from supported accommodation.
  - The grant is projected to be overspent by £2.39 million for the current financial year.
  - The five-year strategy does not adequately identify needs and there remains a number of client groups for whom the needs are not known.
  - The level of Supporting People grant currently being spent on ineligible activities has not been quantified and work re-aligning the grant to fund only eligible services has not been progressed with the urgency required.
  - A significant number of interim contracts remain unsigned by both parties.
  - Monitoring of payments to providers is inadequate.
  - Cross-authority work is under developed.
- 10 However, there are some strengths to the programme which include the following.
- Information to service users and potential users of services is good.
  - There is a basic directory of provider services available.
  - Our mystery shopping enquiries were appropriately signposted.
  - Additional resources have been attracted to the programme with the Council meeting the short fall in the level of grant to committed expenditure and additional funding secured from the ODPM specifically to assist with the completion of service reviews.

11 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has promising prospects for improvement because of the following.

- The increased pace of change prior to, and following, inspection has delivered real improvement.
- There have been improved outcomes for service users through assessments on the quality of existing services.
- Work on shared outcome measures for the programme has been agreed.
- A communication, consultation and engagement strategy is now in place to help facilitate improvements particularly to service users.
- The Council is beginning to look outside in order to learn from other organisations.
- There is increased ownership corporately and with PCT and probation partners.
- A comprehensive performance management framework is in place.

12 However, we identified the following weaknesses in relation to the prospects for improvement.

- There is no sustained track record of improvements to the programme.
- Areas where improvements have been made are at the early stages of development and implementation and their impact cannot be assessed.
- Service reviews have been slow to demonstrate improvements in value for money and ensure the eligibility of services.
- Vulnerable people across all housing tenures do not have equal access to housing-related support services.
- The lack of move on accommodation and robust proposals to address this are resulting in the inefficient use of accommodation-based housing-related support services and impeding greater independence for service users.
- A lack of progress in commissioning new services which has been the result of an historic over commitment of the Supporting People grant.

## Recommendations

- 13 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 costs<sup>2</sup> 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 Introduce service user involvement in the strategic development of the Supporting People programme by:*

- *ensuring that there are appropriate opportunities for involvement and engagement for all client groups at a strategic level including those for whom there are currently no services available;*
- *developing feedback mechanisms to ensure service users are made aware of changes that have or have not been made as a result of their suggestions; and*
- *evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of arrangements at least annually to the commissioning body.*

- 14 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:
- the strategic direction of the programme will be informed by the views and experiences of service users and potential service users; and
  - it is an opportunity for disempowered groups gain the ability to exert some control for their lives.
- 15 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within 6 months.

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<sup>2</sup> Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual administration grant, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high costs is over 5 per cent.

**Recommendation**

*R2 Re-configure the governance structures for the Supporting People programme by introducing effective strategy and provider groups by:*

- *moving the commissioning body away from operational matters;*
- *introducing a core strategy group to the structure; and*
- *introducing a constituted provider forum with elected membership to the core strategy group.*

16 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the commissioning body will be able to concentrate on the strategic considerations of the programme;
- the core strategy group will allow for greater operational involvement of partners; and
- a provider forum will allow for consistency of communication, consultation and engagement for all providers.

17 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within 6 months.

**Recommendation**

*R3 Ensure that the strategy through which priorities for Supporting People services are delivered is robust and aligned to those of complementary services by:*

- *completing a thorough needs analysis of all service user groups;*
- *undertaking research into those groups whose needs are currently not known; and*
- *analysing the supply and demand of appropriate housing to ensure that the move to mainstream housing with floating support can be supported through the availability of suitable accommodation which will facilitate successful housing-related support work.*

18 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the re-profiling of Supporting People services which are in line with proven needs;
- the ability to include those groups for whom demand is currently unknown within commissioning plans; and
- provide assurance that the strategy to move towards floating support is achievable without reducing positive outcomes for service users

19 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within 7 months

**Recommendation**

*R4 Ensure that probity and value for money are achieved for the programme by:*

- *agreeing and signing all interim contracts and service level agreements;*
- *take action to resolve the future of services where ineligible tasks have been identified;*
- *complete the reconciliation of all contracts;*
- *complete the joint impact assessment process and move towards value for money assessments through the review and subsequent contract negotiation process; and*
- *introduce robust monitoring of payments to all providers.*

**20** The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- *confirmation that Supporting People grant is being used appropriately and within grant conditions to pay for service users who are receiving housing-related support; and*
- *to ensure that all providers are having a value for money assessment of their services using the same criteria for assessment.*

**21** The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented within 2 months.

**22** We would like to thank the staff of Birmingham City Council who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 31 October to 4 November 2005

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# Report

## Context

### The locality

- 23 Birmingham City Council is a metropolitan authority in the West Midlands area of England. The population of the area is 990,000 with 34.36 per cent of the population being from minority ethnic communities (other than white British).
- 24 The population of Birmingham is younger than the average for England and Wales with 44 per cent of the population under the age of 30 compared with the national average of 38 per cent.
- 25 In terms of deprivation, Birmingham ranks 16<sup>th</sup> out of 354 areas of England, where 1 is the most deprived. Thirteen out of the 40 wards within the city fall within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the country. Nearly a third of the city's residents live within the 13 most deprived wards.
- 26 Unemployment, at 5.4 per cent, is higher than the national average of 2.6 per cent. By far the largest source of employment is the public sector with 26 per cent of jobs, followed by manufacturing.
- 27 Compared to national averages, social services in Birmingham support more elderly people and people with a learning difficulty through residential or nursing care and fewer through help in their home.
- 28 With the rate of teenage pregnancies currently nearly 25 per cent above the national average, a key target for the City is to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

### The Council

- 29 The Council comprises 120 councillors. There is no single party with overall control with a Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition currently forming the administration with 70 seats. The model of governance used is the leader and cabinet system.
- 30 The Council's overall revenue budget for the year 2005/06 is £1.45 billion. The budget for the delivery of social services is £345 million and the budget for housing (general fund) is £39 million.
- 31 The Council's vision is for Birmingham to be:
  - 'a city of national and international significance which has a successful and sustainable place in the world economy; and
  - a city whose local neighbourhoods and vibrant urban villages are flourishing and whose people benefit from its prosperity'.

- 32 This vision is underpinned by 11 priority objectives which are set out in the draft community strategy for Birmingham - 'Taking Birmingham Forward':
- a national and international city;
  - a city with flourishing neighbourhoods;
  - a diverse and inclusive city;
  - a prosperous city;
  - a connected city;
  - a learning city;
  - a healthy city;
  - a well-housed city;
  - culture and leisure in the city;
  - a safe city; and
  - a sustainable city
- 33 Supporting People can make a clear contribution to the following priorities:
- a city with flourishing neighbourhoods;
  - a diverse and inclusive city;
  - a connected city;
  - a well-housed city; and
  - a safe city.

### **The programme**

- 34 The Supporting People programme subject to inspection is designed to meet the housing-related support needs of vulnerable people, including homeless people, older people with support needs, people with a learning difficulty, people with mental health problems, those with substance abuse problems, refugees, travellers and offenders.
- 35 The total amount of Supporting People grant made available to the Council in 2004/05 was £55,004,990, which reduced to £52,234,629 for 2005/06, representing a reduction in grant of 5.04 per cent. The Council also received £736,983 during 2004/05 to fulfil its role as the administering authority which has increased by 3 per cent to £759,092 for 2005/06.
- 36 The highest cost Supporting People service supported by the grant is £549.60 per person per week for people with a learning difficulty. The lowest cost service is £0.31 per person per week for a community alarm service.

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

## How good is the programme?

### What has the programme aimed to achieve?

- 38** The Council acts as the administering local authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in its area.
- 39** The vision of the Supporting People in Birmingham is that it:
- 'provides vulnerable people with quality opportunities to maintain, or regain, their maximum independence via the provision of high-quality, value for money housing-related support services'.*
- 40** The vision is expressed through four key objectives which are:
- to increase choice and opportunity for vulnerable people;
  - to promote independence and sustainable solutions;
  - to maximise the quality of housing-related support services for vulnerable people; and
  - maximise the value for money provided by housing-related support services.
- 41** The Supporting People partnership has set out its strategic priorities for Supporting People services in their five-year strategy. Areas where major changes to the numbers of service users supported are:
- generic services – reduce overall provision by 47 per cent;
  - single homeless with support needs – reduce overall provision by 50 per cent;
  - learning disability – increase provision by 63 per cent;
  - people with alcohol problems – reduce overall provision by 36 per cent; and
  - refugees – reduce overall provision by 31 per cent.
- 42** The change in supply will move the balance of provision from 12 per cent floating support to 16 per cent floating support. The area where the change from accommodation-based to floating support is most significant is in services to refugees where the profile is forecast to change from a total of 978 units of support delivered via 913 accommodation-based and 65 floating units of support to 678 units delivered via 313 accommodation-based and 365 floating units of support.

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

43 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:

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

### Governance

44 Governance is an area where weaknesses outweigh strengths. There have been a number of periods during the life of Supporting People in Birmingham when a reduced focus and lack of ownership of the Supporting People programme has hindered development and delivery. This is a position which the partnership is still working hard to recover from. The lack of a core strategy group or umbrella provider forum with a substitute Collaborative Board has not helped with clarity of roles in delivery of the programme for which there are no outcome measures in place. Birmingham has not maintained strong cross-authority links and engagement with the voluntary sector requires further development. However, more positively, there is now strong corporate ownership and championing of the programme and a good level of understanding of the issues from all partners.

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

- accountable officer and the Supporting People team – drive the whole process;
- inclusive forum – consults with service providers and service users;
- core strategy group – proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables, and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme;
- commissioning body – agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme;
- councillors – approve key decisions of the commissioning body; and
- Supporting People team – delivers the local programme.

- 46 Progress in developing the programme has been slow. A focus on the Supporting People programme was lost during 2003, the early months of 2004 and again in the initial months of 2005 when there were periods of absence of management support for the Supporting People programme in Birmingham. The lack of ownership during these periods left the Supporting People team without the structure of decision-making and level of drive appropriate for the delivery of the programme. This has slowed down improvements in delivery to the programme and is a position which the Council is still working hard to recover from.
- 47 Corporate ownership of the programme is now a strength of the programme with the Director of Housing chairing the commissioning body and taking an active role in ensuring that priority is given to the programme. This is mirrored with both the portfolio holder who receives monthly briefings from the Director of Housing on the programme and by the chair of the overview and scrutiny committee covering delivery of the Supporting People programme who attends the commissioning body. Both have a good understanding of the Supporting People programme. Cabinet commitment has manifested itself in the decision to commit additional funding to the programme. Most recently, the acting Chief Executive has arranged quarterly meetings with the Accountable Officer to ensure that they champion improvements in the programme. This all ensures that there is now full corporate understanding and ownership of the Supporting People programme.
- 48 The commissioning body was established in 2002 and has appropriate terms of reference and voting arrangements which comply with ODPM guidance. Membership from the Council is at an appropriate level and members of the group have reported to us that during this year meetings have become more focussed and efficient and governance arrangements and accountability have been strengthened. At a meeting of the group we observed this was confirmed with a good level of debate and understanding of the issues from all partners. This places the partnership in a good position to develop the programme further.
- 49 PCT engagement has not been a strength. At the time of our inspection, the four PCT's in Birmingham were represented on the commissioning body through the Eastern Birmingham PCT. This arrangement has been recognised as not being successful in ensuring that Supporting People is on the agenda across all four PCT's. To facilitate greater understanding the Chair of the commissioning body has begun meetings with their counterpart in each organisation to help facilitate a greater awareness of the role of Supporting People and to further strengthen engagement, arrangement are in place for all the PCT's to attend the commissioning body. This will ensure a consistency of engagement across the health partners.
- 50 The West Midlands Probation Service (WMPS) is engaged with the programme. In addition to representation on the commissioning body they also chair a mini forum and attend the Collaborative Board. A Supporting People co-ordinator post has also been established within the service. Again, the Chair of the commissioning body has held meetings with the Chief Officer of WMPS to further facilitate the integration of Supporting People at senior level within the probation service. These mechanisms ensure that the probation service is engaged at both strategic and operational levels.

- 51 The commissioning body is too operational. Members of the commissioning body are very committed and are practically showing this by the amount of time dedicated to the programme with meetings held fortnightly to keep pace with the current pace of change to the programme delivery. However, although there is no doubting the commitment of the members the group is too operational. For example all the work to introduce local eligibility criteria is being led by the group. This operational focus which has resulted from the absence of a core strategy group has held back development of the programme and has not helped to facilitate a wider ownership from all partners. This also has the impact of the work flowing directly from the commissioning body being undertaken solely within the Council without contribution from other partners. The Council has responded to our discussions on this point during the inspection with the commissioning body agreeing in principle to the development of a core strategy group.
- 52 Currently there are no outcome measures in place for the programme. For example the link between Supporting People funding and health priorities, such as identifying, commissioning and promoting housing-related support services to prevent admissions to hospital amongst some vulnerable groups and timely sustainable discharge have currently not been assessed. The commissioning body at their meeting of 19 October 2005 agreed to develop jointly owned outcome focused measures but until these are in place the partnership is unable to evaluate the success of the programme in making a positive contribution to the quality of life for service users and potential service users in Birmingham.
- 53 The Collaborative Board arrangement in Birmingham does not represent an appropriate alternative to a core strategy group. The Board is not used to propose strategic direction and in operation is a hybrid between a core strategy group and a provider forum. This lack of support from an appropriately functioning core strategy group negatively impacts on the work of the commissioning body in that it has moved to cover the work which should be undertaken by the core strategy group.
- 54 The Collaborative Board is chaired by the Head of Housing Needs for the Council whose responsibilities include Supporting People. The potholder is also present at the commissioning body. There are 21 members of the Board with 13 directly representing the provider sector. Probation and health are represented on the Board and whereas the probation service is a consistent attendee, PCT representation is consistently lacking. This means that the health perspective is not represented in a forum whose remit includes delivering solutions and strategies for adult client groups.

- 55 There is a lack of clarity of the role of the mini forums and the chairs of the groups. There is currently a divergence in the understanding of the remit of provider forum representatives from the perspective of the Council and that of providers. For example the Council expects the representatives to represent and support commissioning body decisions on the future of the programme but providers view their membership as being on behalf of providers and that their position is not to represent the decisions made by the commissioning body. A number of additional issues are also impacting on this arrangement in delivering the programme including the following.
- The provider representatives are not formally mandated by providers to represent their views on the Collaborative Board.
  - Collaborative Board members are unclear about how they can access or influence the Commissioning Body. Currently this is done through minutes of the meeting which are taken by the Supporting People team and providers feel that these can be misrepresented.
  - There is no formal requirement on the chairs of the forums to consult and as a result there are no safeguards in place to ensure that consultation is inclusive and meaningful.
  - There are provider groups who are not represented on the Collaborative Board and as a result their voice is not heard.
- 56 Until there is a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of providers the current arrangement will not be totally effective in contributing to the governance arrangements of the programme and there will be providers who are disenfranchised.
- 57 The Accountable Officer holds an appropriately senior position within the Council and is able to champion Supporting People at a senior level. The Accountable Officer role is currently filled by the Acting Head of Strategy and Development who has been in the role since the 25 July 2005. This has followed a period of instability within this key position and it is positive that when the vacancy arose the Council acted without delay to make the temporary appointment with someone who has a background in both housing needs and corporate performance management. Further, there is a commitment to bring stability by keeping the current arrangements in place for at least a twelve-month period.
- 58 The role of championing Supporting People and raising its profile is being effectively addressed by both the Accountable Officer and the Director of Housing. The Accountable Officer is particularly well placed to increase the profile corporately and in the short time that they have been in place have further added to the momentum within the programme which was already in place. One example of this is the recent introduction of quarterly review meetings with the Acting Chief Executive. The Director of Housing ensures that they champion Supporting People both corporately and with strategic partners and has recently become a member of the health partnership on Birmingham's strategic partnership which will help to improve joint understanding and working with health partners.

- 59 Birmingham has not maintained strong cross-authority links but in the recent past have started to attend the regional implementation group but as re-engagement has only recently occurred they have not been in a position to influence the regional agenda and there are currently few outcomes for the Supporting People programme in Birmingham.
- 60 The Council's level of engagement with and contribution to the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) has been variable. The West Midlands Probation Area is not able to secure suitable housing provision for all its high and very high risk cases and although the Council now has a MAPPA co-ordinator for nearly a year there was no co-ordinator in post despite requests from probation and the police. This position mitigates against the prospect of effective resettlement of ex offenders and potentially undermines public protection.
- 61 Engagement with the voluntary sector including advocacy groups in Birmingham requires further development. Groups have not been engaged in supporting service users to be involved at a strategic level and this has impacted to the current weakness in engaging with service users at a strategic level. Arrangements on how this is starting to be addressed are covered later in this report under prospects for improvement.

### **Delivery arrangements**

- 62 Weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area with significant poor performance in some key areas including interim contracts not signed; no local eligibility criteria agreed; reconciliation of the grant not being completed and the five-year strategy being based on information which is not robust.
- 63 Key and significant changes to personnel within the management structure for the Supporting People team have significantly affected delivery of the programme to ensure grant conditions are complied with. Key stakeholders had not been sufficiently engaged in preparing the five-year strategy which still requires further work to ensure that the needs analysis is robust. Providers in Birmingham have very mixed views about delivery of the programme. However, positively, the Supporting People team have a range of skills and expertise to carry the programme forward.

- 64 The Supporting People team has the skills and capacity needed to carry the programme forward. The team sits within the housing needs division of the housing department. During 2005, there have been a number of key and significant changes to personnel within the management structure for the Supporting People team which has negatively impacted on the team's delivery of the programme. Positively, a restructure brought an additional management tier into the department which has had the effect of bringing more management time to the programme. Unfortunately, the full benefits which should have been brought about by the restructure have been undermined during a significant period as a result of management issues which although unavoidable have not been effectively managed and have had a negative impact in the drive to improve the pace of improvement to delivery arrangements. From the end of July to the point of our inspection, a period of three months, measures have been taken to ensure that senior staff with the appropriate skills are now in place to help ensure that the programme moves forward.
- 65 At the time of our inspection an interim manager from an external consultancy leads a team of 25 staff. Members of the team have an appropriate range of skills and expertise, having come from a number of relevant service backgrounds. Where there are acknowledged gaps in expertise within the team this has been addressed through a number of measures. For example, a secondee from one provider organisation brings expertise in mental health sector whilst a second provider organisation has been assisting with single homelessness. This has helped to ensure that the team is able to draw on appropriate skills as necessary to deliver the programme in general and in particular the programme of reviews.
- 66 The commissioning body has been slow in securing agreement for its local eligibility criteria. A clear and transparent criteria is essential to ensure that there is equity in identifying ineligible funding. In order to deliver the review programme in a timely manner this work should have been completed by the end of 2003/04. At the time of our inspection, a local criteria was in draft form with formal consultation about to start with providers. The consultation was due for completion by the end of December 2005 and then was due to be used to assess all services. This delay has had the impact of delaying the conclusion of reviews and as a result slowing the pace of change in the reconfiguration of provision across the City.
- 67 The process of signing interim contracts in Birmingham is a major weakness. Supporting People grant conditions stipulate that all interim contracts should have been signed by both the council and the provider by the end of July 2003. At the time of our inspection only 56 per cent of contracts were in place and there were no service level agreements in place to cover delivery of internal services which at £7.89 million represent over 15 per cent of the total budget. As a result there is still a lack of clarity over the correct funding and service for support to some of the most vulnerable people in the City.

- 68 Risks to the programme have been appropriately mapped. A work plan which incorporates a risk log outlining all the key operational risks to the service together with contingency planning information has been introduced during October 2005. Strategic risks are outlined in the housing service plan. The two documents together provide a good understanding of both operational and strategic risks to enable the Council to understand the risks inherent in the programme.
- 69 The plan has clearly identified tasks with targets and outcomes identified and although the majority of tasks are appropriately time bound the task 'To collect/interpret needs information in appropriate formats to enable decision-making' is not time bound although the outcome is clearly identified as ensuring that *'strategic decisions are based on clearly defined needs data'*. Until this task is completed the scenario where services are either commissioned or decommissioned inappropriately exists. Resourcing of targets is not identified in the plan.
- 70 Involvement of partners and key stakeholders in development of the five-year strategy was weak. Development of the year strategy did not get underway until August 2004 and engagement with key stakeholders including service users in preparing the five-year strategy was weak. Health and probation and other stakeholders were not involved to any significant level with the lack of appropriate engagement resulting in a lost opportunity for service users to have their voice heard and to influence the future direction of the programme.
- 71 Priorities for the programme are not based on robust information. Priorities were reality checked with lead commissioners for the various client groups and through mini forums but there is still a feeling of disengagement from the process by partners and stakeholders and it is acknowledged that further work is required to ensure that the needs of all groups have been fully and accurately captured and that the proposed realignments to services are in line with identified need. For example there is still no understanding on the needs of travellers, older people with mental health needs/dementia or mentally disordered offenders. It has also been acknowledged that the needs analysis for the five-year strategy is not robust. Until this analysis is completed it is difficult to see how the future picture of provision to meet need can be assessed and the re-profiling of the programme undertaken.
- 72 Decisions based on strategic relevance are not robust. Currently strategic relevance is being assessed against the five-year strategy assumptions which could lead to decommissioning of services which on re-evaluation of assumptions are required. For example, a reduction in the overall level of provision for the single homeless by 50 per cent is a priority for action with the units per head viewed against regional and national averages. However, a comparison with other core cities where the level of provision is in line with the other cities has not been used. This could lead to the decommissioning of provision where on a more complete understanding of the needs of this group might not be appropriate.

- 73 The five-year strategy outlines a move from supported housing to floating support but it is not clear at this point how this will be achieved as there is already an acknowledged difficulty with people moving on from supported housing to appropriate general needs tenancies. This is a concern as decisions are about to be made on reviews regarding strategic relevance where the five-year strategy is being used as a tool to de-commission services. As a result, service users offered floating support may not be able to secure accommodation which provides an appropriate environment through which they can benefit from floating support arrangements.
- 74 Financial reports on the Supporting People grant are taken to the commissioning body and are broken down by client groups which enables the commissioning body to take a view on expenditure on service areas or any variations against budget. Reporting is also undertaken corporately with monthly reporting through to the Director of Corporate Finance, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny committee. The reporting is an accurate reflection of the financial position and has been effective in helping the commissioning body to focus on reducing the level of grant commitments.
- 75 Spend of the administration grant is reported as a headline figure to the commissioning body with more robust monitoring undertaken within the housing department. There is a direct contribution of £5,000 from the housing department and further indirect subsidy due to no internal recharges for the assistance from central functions such as human resources.
- 76 The initial reconciliation of grant to payments been made has still not been completed. Between March and May 2004, the Council's Internal Audit undertook a probity review of the arrangements for Supporting People grant payments to providers to ensure that payments were being made based upon accurate information of services provided and that there was adequate documentation held supporting the payments. The review concluded that payments to providers were not been made on the basis of services being provided. However, work to reconcile grant payments to providers has still not been completed with no historical reconciliation of the £7,889,848.73 paid to internal providers. One example of this is regarding an internal service being paid £3,360,434 during 2005/06 where there is no information available regarding the basis for this payment. Without this reconciliation, there is no certainty that the correct amount of grant is being claimed or paid for or that the service is eligible for grant funding.
- 77 Providers have confirmed that where they have agreed payments, these are made accurately and in a timely manner. Payments to the majority of external providers are made through the Supporting People IT system with a timetable in place to migrate all providers to the system.

- 78 Fairer charging has not been well administered. Historically there has been a very low take up of fairer charging arrangements in Birmingham. The reason for this was two fold. Firstly, there was little publicity or training for providers and owner occupiers were not eligible within the scheme in operation. This has had a negative impact on service users and potential service users in two ways. Firstly, the lack of publicity means that people would have been unaware of their right to an assessment and secondly, owner occupiers have been discriminated against in their ability to access support. These two barriers have now been addressed as part of a recent review of the fairer charging system although as changes have only just been introduced it is too early to assess the outcome for service users.
- 79 Provider satisfaction with the Council's management of the Supporting People programme is variable. In order to gauge the views of providers we undertook a postal survey of and received responses from 45 providers and, in addition, held a focus group with attendance from 38 providers of Supporting People services in Birmingham.
- 80 The full results of this survey are attached at appendix five to this report. The areas scoring the highest ratings for providers being very satisfied or satisfied were:
- the involvement of users and stakeholders in service reviews (81 per cent);
  - the outcome of your service review (79 per cent); and
  - the Council's approach to determining strategic relevance of your service (69 per cent).
- 81 Areas with the lowest rate of satisfaction were for:
- the Council's contract negotiation arrangements (52 per cent); and
  - arrangements for accessing move on accommodation (45 per cent).
- 82 Areas of satisfaction from the focus group included:
- information for providers has been inconsistent but has recently improved with a regular newsletter now being sent out that is informative; and
  - with service reviews the views of providers about how users want to be contacted is taken on board.
- 83 Areas where satisfaction was low included:
- the review process which is seen as fraught with duplication as the first round of reviews did not address value for money or strategic relevance and are being revisited and eligibility criteria has not yet been agreed; and
  - issues in relation to contractual arrangements, for example some interim contracts which providers are being asked to sign do not include agreed financial information and a number of providers do not have a signed legal contract to deliver services.

## Service reviews

- 84 Although there are a number of strengths in the administration of the review programme, the late adoption of key methodologies, primarily on value for money; strategic relevance and most importantly local eligibility criteria has undermined delivery. The service review timetable was developed using high cost and high risk as factors to trigger early reviews. The majority of services have now been subject to a review of the quality of their service delivery and service users have been involved in reviews of their services but work on completing reviews has been delayed by the absence of key policies. As a result although some improvements in the quality of services have been secured and some services have been de-commissioned where poor practice has been uncovered there have been no fully completed reviews. Positively, the review process is being performance managed towards completing all reviews before the end of March 2006.
- 85 The provider market in Birmingham was not well-managed in the run up to April 2003 and the cut off point for new and expanded services being included in the Supporting People grant. This period saw a massive growth in housing-related support services in Birmingham which was not strategically influenced by the Council. As a result, there were a lot of services and providers of which little was known and this along with high cost were major factors in setting the review timetable.
- 86 Work on assessing the quality of services began in early 2004 and, since that time, the majority of providers have completed this part of the review process which is known as the 'quality assessment framework' and a number of services who failed this assessment by not reaching level C of the assessment framework have now been subject to a second review. Other providers, where there was no attempt to engage in support planning and/or where it was assessed that no housing-related support was been delivered, have seen their services de-commissioned. Examples of changes have occurred as a result of the review process.
- A large sheltered service with an annual contract value of £3.4 million has been recommended for re-commissioning following two reviews where quality was assessed at 'D' and the service in its current form is not strategically relevant. This will result in an improved service which is more strategically relevant.
  - One provider of refugee services who did not provide the support themselves was de-commissioned but a number of the support providers were awarded interim contracts in their own right. The Supporting People team delivered training sessions to these providers who are now timetabled for review.
  - A small BME provider who failed their quality review and following the successful implementation of an improvement action plan were re-reviewed in March 2005 when they passed.

- 87 The original service review process required strengthening in a number of ways:
- a local eligibility criteria was not introduced to guide providers and service review staff;
  - an approach to value for money and strategic relevance had not been agreed; and
  - there was no flexibility to undertake desktop reviews and all providers had to be individually accredited.
- 88 At the time of our inspection an approach to strategic relevance had been agreed and introduced and social landlords registered and monitored by the Housing Corporation who had been approved for financial viability were being passported for accreditation. This arrangement provides assurances for the Council whilst reducing the bureaucratic burden on the landlord.
- 89 An approach to assessing value for money through the review process has been introduced with a more sophisticated approach planned for April 2006. The approach taken is covered further at paragraph 106 of this report.
- 90 Additionally there are gaps in the needs analysis and as a consequence staff are making decisions on strategic relevance from corporate strategy priorities that are not based on comprehensive data. Decisions to terminate contracts on the basis of strategic relevance are not robust.
- 91 There is a clear programme covering all the review work to be completed together with a timetable to complete these before the ODPM deadline of March 2006. There are effective performance management arrangements within the review team to manage delivery of the review programme including weekly monitoring of every provider and targets are being met.
- 92 Monitoring the progress of the service review programme is undertaken at every commissioning body meeting, currently the commissioning body meets every fortnight. However, there continues to be uncertainty regarding the ability to complete service reviews where there is a question over the eligibility of the service provided.
- 93 Positively, the Supporting People team are working with other specialists on reviews with social care and health, Salvation Army and probation all involved to ensure relevant common standards are being used to assess specialist services. Training is also provided to team members to fill skills gaps. The Council is also starting to look outwards and work with neighbouring authorities. For example, a review of a provider who also has services in Solihull is being jointly undertaken with the Solihull Supporting People team. This will allow each team to consider alternative approaches and will also ensure a consistency of approach for the provider.

- 94 Service reviews are helping to focus efforts in remodelling support for older people. The service review of sheltered accommodation managed by the Council has been co-ordinated with the Council's strategic review of older people's housing. The Supporting People review has highlighted a number of areas of concern with the overall service assessed at level D after two reviews. As a result stakeholders are currently being surveyed regarding re-commissioning of the service. As the strategic review and Supporting People review work has been co-ordinated there is an understanding by both parties regarding the future of the service around the need to rationalise the stock and alter the duties of the staff involved in the service. This will result in a more appropriate service for older people in Birmingham
- 95 Although there is no external moderation of standards the Review Manager agrees all review findings and checks them for consistency and completeness. The commissioning body reviews all report findings with any partners with a declared interest and taking no part in the process. This system ensures that there is a check on all decisions which is particularly important to ensure transparency between internal and external providers. Agreement has also been reached with a neighbouring authority for them to act as a critical friend on two reviews per year in order to test the system and learn from another organisation. External validation will be a useful tool to assist with continuous learning.
- 96 Information is not systematically used to help inform changes to programme delivery. For example when reviews were underway in 2004, a questionnaire was developed with providers which allowed providers to comment on their experience of the service review process and to suggest potential improvements to the system. Unfortunately, the results from questionnaires were not been collated and analysed which would have informed the changes to the review process. As the information was readily available this has been a missed opportunity. Positively, a new questionnaire has recently been devised but as reviews are nearing completion there is little scope from these to make changes to the review process as a result of providers experiences. However, the Council should use this feedback to inform future monitoring arrangements.
- 97 An accessible appeals process which is publicised is in place and helpfully includes both an informal and formal phase. The first informal phase is a review conducted by the Supporting People lead officer. Although classed as informal, this process does have a level of formality to the process which would assist if the provider remains unhappy and wishes to progress their appeal to the formal process where the appeal evidence is considered by a senior council officer, not previously involved in the review process or decision. In order to bring transparency to this process, provision to include an independent reviewer needs to be included in the appeals process.

- 98 A multi-agency decommissioning process is in place and has been successfully tested. As a result of the over committed grant and the strategic move away from accommodation-based support, de-commissioning has, and will, continue to feature more highly at Birmingham than at many other administering authorities. Importantly, partners are signed up to a de-commissioning process and the probation service has been involved in the de-commissioning process for a service involving an offender accommodation-based service. This joined-up approach delivered via an agreed process which involves the assessment of existing service users ensures that there is a structure to decommissioning which safeguards vulnerable users.

### Value for money

- 99 There are more weaknesses than strengths in the way Birmingham has approached its responsibility to achieve value for money from the Supporting People grant. As previously mentioned progress has been slow to ensure the grant only funds eligible services. Value for money assessments are underway but have not been concluded to the point of outcomes as yet and although the Supporting People programme is funding ineligible services, the Council is slow to estimate the amount involved and put in place a planned shift of funding over time to the proper funding source. A joint impact assessment introduced to bring about savings ahead of the review process has not been concluded and payments for service users are not systematically monitored. As a result, there can be no guarantee that service users exist for the payments being made. More positively there have been challenges made to some high cost service and ineligible services with savings and efficiency gains made as result.

### How do costs compare?

- 100 Figures produced by the ODPM in 2003/04 (see Appendix 1) indicate that at £1.07 per head of population as opposed to a West Midlands regional average of £0.62 and a national average of £0.70, Birmingham had above average costs of Supporting People grant per head of population.
- 101 Areas where costs were higher than average include the following.

**Table 1 Areas where costs were higher than average**

Client group	Type of provision	Birmingham	West Midlands	National
Teenage parents	Accommodation -based	£278.73	£184.94	£168.62
Refugees	Floating support	£184.89	£101.86	£57.18

102 Areas where costs were lower than the average include the following.

**Table 2 Areas where costs were lower than the average**

Client group	Type of provision	Birmingham	West Midlands	National
Older people	Accommodation-based	£8.50	£11.71	£16.85
Learning disability	Floating support	£52.28	£163.24	£180.03

- 103 The lower than average cost for floating support for people with learning difficulties reflects the low level of provision of independent living with support in Birmingham particularly for those with higher levels of need who are more likely to be housed in a residential care setting. The provision of high levels of independent living with support and care in other Supporting People administrative areas does raise average costs.
- 104 The data appendix at the end of this report provides further information and illustrates the cost and levels of provision for all client groups against regional and national averages.
- 105 When compared to other core cities, at £99.17 Birmingham has the lowest average weekly unit costs by authority (excluding services for older people)<sup>3</sup>.

### How is value for money managed?

- 106 This is an area where there are more weaknesses than strengths. There has been poor progress in ensuring that housing-related support services represent good value for money. A Joint Impact Assessment aimed at making early savings outside the review programme has yet to deliver savings and the value for money assessment for the review programme has only been agreed. Importantly local eligibility criteria have still not been agreed.
- 107 Savings were not achieved for the supporting people budget through some routes that were used in other administering authorities this included the commissioning body taking the decision to pay Supporting People grant to providers from 1 April 2003 despite the overlap of six days with transitional housing benefit.
- 108 The process of ensuring that all transitional housing benefit claims were captured in the Supporting People grant was not well-managed and, as a result, the grant was and continues to be over committed. For 2004/05 the Council have agreed to underwrite the overspend to a maximum of £4.3 million. At the commissioning body held on 2 November it was reported that the forecast is currently a £2.39 million overspend.

<sup>3</sup> Core Cities Comparisons November 2003

- 109 In addition to the commissioning body receiving regular reports on both the Supporting People grant and the administration grant, expenditure is appropriately monitored by senior managers both within the housing department and corporately and there is a timetable for bringing the grant within budget which is being met.
- 110 During our inspection we have been able to highlight services where value for money is not being achieved and where significant savings to the Supporting People grant could be achieved.
- An internally provided service with an annual contract value of over £940,000 was reviewed in August 2004, is clearly not eligible but there has been no progress made in de-commissioning the service.
  - When interim contracts were forwarded to providers in July 2005, two were returned 'not know at address'. Further enquiries have established that in one case the service user left in April 2005 and in the second case the two clients left in June 2003 and payments had been suspended in April 2004.
  - One internally provided service was originally contracted for 1,200 units of floating support and were paid £2.89 million for the service in 2003/04. At their service review in April 2004 where they achieved a 'D' on the quality aspect of the service and were providing 783 units of support. Negotiations were held to reduce the capacity of the service to 783 and £2.259 million was paid in 2004/05. On re-review in April 2005 the last monitoring for the period 27 September 2004 to 26 December 2004 showed 486 service users. The service is currently being paid for 736 service users with an annual contract value of £1.72 million. At the time of our inspection £920,000 of the grant had been reclaimed.
- 111 There have been delays in concluding joint impact assessments with the result that providers have become disillusioned with the process and savings still have to be implemented although positively there is a projected saving of £851,597 for 2005/06. In an attempt to reduce the level of overspend on the Supporting People grant, in November 2004 providers agreed potential savings within their own services. Any savings identified would then be agreed or a variance on the suggested reduction negotiated. This process is known as a Joint impact assessment. With this process, providers complete a self-assessment with a view to increasing efficiency by looking at their scheme, unit cost and resources attached to it to see if the efficiency of the service can be improved. The self-assessment was then forwarded for assessment. Whilst this was initially well received by providers they have become disillusioned with the process reporting that they spent a lot of time and resources on completing their side of the assessment and so far the majority have had no feedback.
- 112 In looking at the results from the assessment we have identified a number of weaknesses in the implementation of the system:
- the assessments have taken too long to implement and are now being overtaken by the value for money assessments in the review process; and
  - decisions outside the remit of the assessment appear to be considered.

- 113** Other inconsistencies with the assessments include a nil return for reduced costs on one service with an annual contract of £3.4 million that was accepted as there are plans for de-commissioning. However, there was no justification of the costs to confirm this decision.
- 114** There is a basic model for assessing value for money of services in place but currently this is not sophisticated enough to ensure that maximum benefit is achieved through its application. The model allows for benchmarking the unit costs of services by client group and by organisation type but currently does not include an analysis of costs within the total unit price such as management costs. Additionally within the model there is no regional or core city benchmarking. The model was only agreed by the commissioning body in October 2005 and is being used retrospectively for all reviews. The late introduction of the benchmarking has contributed to delays in assessing the value for money being achieved by services and as a result in completing service reviews. Within the model the following factors are taken into account:
- the average weekly unit cost per client group; and
  - the average weekly unit cost per organisation type which is split over the service type.
- 115** Organisations are highlighted where:
- the average unit cost is more than 50 per cent higher than the average for primary client group; and
  - the average unit cost is more than 25 per cent but less than 50 per cent higher than the average for primary client group.
- 116** Positively, where schemes have unit costs of 25 per cent more above the average for their type of service and client group they are subject to individual financial review to establish the reasons and scope for negotiation.
- 117** The Council acknowledges that further work is required to develop their approach to value for money by using analyses of the following:
- the number of support hours by client group;
  - overhead and management costs; and
  - surplus funds held by providers.
- 118** This further value for money analysis will not be available until March 2006. As a result, the value for money assessments completed as part of the review process will only be completed using the less sophisticated analysis which will only provide part of the picture on the value for money being achieved. As a result, providers will be subject to an ongoing period of uncertainty regarding their future funding.

**119** Currently, there is no systematic way of ensuring that payments are made to actual users of services. Spot checks on the housing benefit system to compare them with people in receipt of Supporting People grant are carried out and action taken to claw back any over payment are made when cases are found. One example is of small scheme where, at the beginning of November 2005, an audit check found that for one service user the last successful housing benefit claim ended on the 25 January 2004 and for a second the payment ended on 26 October 2003. This has resulted in a total claw back of £64,183.45. Whereas it is positive that Supporting People grant is clawed back in this way, there is no system in place whereby this is uncovered in a systematic way. In a programme where there are over 38,000 unit of housing-related support, there is a need to ensure that systems are in place to ensure that payments are made for actual service users.

### **Service user involvement**

**120** The Council has been very slow to engage service users. Service user involvement in governance arrangements, or in influencing the strategic direction of the programme, is a major weakness of the programme with no involvement to date. The Council recognises there is much to do to engage service users, their carers and advocates in the programme and is in the early stages of addressing this area for improvement. At an operation level, service users are involved in reviews of their services.

**121** Service users are not involved in the strategic development of the Supporting People programme. The Council is aware of the need to involve service users in the strategic decision-making but work on making this a reality is in the early stages with meetings currently being arranged with established forums in Birmingham in order to kick start appropriate engagement with service users, their carers and advocates. As a result of the lack of engagement to date, service users have not been in a position to influence the strategic direction of the Supporting People programme in Birmingham.

**122** In order to promote positive practice, fact sheets for providers have been introduced from October 2005 and the first two editions have been based on case studies from individual providers on engaging with service users. The fact sheets are a useful way of disseminating positive practice and sharing learning between providers.

**123** Service user involvement in service reviews has been more successful than on a strategic level. Individual service reviews have involved services users and as highlighted earlier this is the area where providers have the highest level of satisfaction with the Supporting People programme. It is clear from the feedback we have received that the view held is that engagement at this operational level has developed and is appropriate and tailored for the needs of the user group involved and that the review process allowed service user to take part, give their views and this was undertaken in a number of ways that accommodated the needs of all involved.

- 124** Information is not currently fed back to the service users who have given their time and consideration in helping with the review process. This would enable service users to see how they have been able to influence their services.

### **Access to services and information**

- 125** In this area strengths and weaknesses are balanced. There is good information for service users which is accessible and available in a range of formats and a directory of services which is available on the Supporting People website is being developed. Frontline staff are able to appropriately signpost to Supporting People services. However, the ability to access services is weak due to the much reduced commissioning possibilities which are as a result of the overspend of grant and the slow progress in addressing the value for money of existing services. The ability for service users to move from supported housing at time which is in step with their planned needs is also reduced by the availability of mainstream housing for many of the service user groups.
- 126** Accessible information in the form of leaflets and posters about Supporting People is available for service users at public access points. The quality of the leaflets is good and staff we approached were able to signpost us to services appropriately.
- 127** Information for existing and potential service users and also for providers has seen significant improvements recently with a range of high-quality leaflets introduced including a general information leaflet about Supporting People; fairer charging; the service review process from the service users perspective and the appeals process. Leaflets which were on display at the offices we visited are available in a range of formats and those for existing and potential service users have strap lines in community languages. Posters advertising the service give positive achievements from individuals which clearly define the benefits of housing-related support to individual lives.
- 128** The information currently available has not been developed with services users but a communication, consultation and engagement strategy agreed on 2 November 2005 will bring a structure to the development of the methods of communication with clear targets for engagement and the delivery of updated information. Although this has now been agreed it is too early to see any outcomes from the introduction of the strategy.
- 129** The Supporting People team is also beginning to look at opportunities to heighten awareness of Supporting People and engage with potential service users outside of their normal structures. For example, in October a citizens day which was part of the Home Office's pilot initiative to listen to local people regarding the services offered to them was held in Birmingham and the Supporting People team had a stand that represented the housing department. Using a variety of methods for engaging with service users and potential service users in this way will help widen engagement in and awareness of Supporting People.

- 130 The directory of services available on the website is currently incomplete. A directory of services has recently become available but for most services there is still only outline information on the services available as the information from the service providers themselves was not available at the time of publication. For example for services available to young people of the 45 services listed there is only detailed information on six of them. Due to this, it is intended to update the directory when the information is more complete. The directory is available on the website, has been distributed to providers and to public access points.
- 131 The Supporting People website is easy to navigate and contains useful information for existing and potential service users and providers. In addition to the directory of services highlighted above, information includes a useful jargon buster, information on the review process, newsletters; fact sheets and information on payments to providers. The information can be downloaded. The site also publicises the Collaborative Board minutes along with the minutes of meetings but this is not the case for the commissioning body meetings.
- 132 In June 2000, it became a requirement for councils in England providing social care services to produce a local charter entitled '*Better Care: Higher Standards*', setting out how assistance is provided for vulnerable adults and their carers. The charter in Birmingham has been updated with the 2004/05 edition containing information on Supporting People and is helpfully available in summary format.
- 133 Both fair access to an assessment and information on fairer charging has been poor until very recently. There has always been a charging policy in Birmingham but until October 2005 information on how to request a fairer charging assessment was very limited with the result that there had been only 277 requests for assessments. Of these, 35 were not eligible as the policy precluded owner occupiers. Following a full review, however, the commissioning body agreed in October 2005 to amend the criteria to accept owner occupiers and signalled for greater publicity to encourage take up. To date, this has included a detailed guide for service providers, an assessment form and a useful leaflet for service users. All the information can be downloaded from the website where there is also an explanation of the fairer charging policy for Birmingham.
- 134 During the inspection, we tested how users might access Supporting People services by mystery shopping through visits to neighbourhood offices and by telephone contact. In all cases staff were able to appropriately signpost us to the correct services.
- 135 Access to Supporting People services remains a problem with some service user groups that are high priority but continue to have limited access. For example there is an identified shortage of housing-related support for people with a learning difficulty. Due to the lack of commissioning opportunities which has resulted from the grant overspend this position is currently not being addressed and access will continue to be problematic for some service user groups.

- 136** Service users are not able to move from supported accommodation at a time which is consistent with their needs. There is a lack of mainstream accommodation which is available to some groups needing to move from supported housing. This is a concern as there is also an expressed priority to move towards more floating support which could add more pressure on the system for those who need accommodation-based services.

### **Diversity**

- 137** This is an area where there is a balance of strengths and weakness. Both culturally specific and culturally sensitive services are available and a limited number of services have been developed through pipeline funding which meet identified need. However the needs of some of the most marginalised groups have still not been established, there is a lack of robust data to underpin commissioning of services to meet identified need and the poor financial situation has fettered the Council's ability to begin commission new services.
- 138** The Supporting People team has commissioned work to be done into the needs of some specific groups. An example of this is the needs of BME substance mis-users and the outcomes of this will inform work with BME service providers to ensure that what is offered will meet the needs of the users.
- 139** Services for diverse groups have been improved through supporting people. Examples include the following.
- Supporting People has helped one small BME organisation build capacity and they have are now looking at moving to more suitable accommodation.
  - Domestic violence providers are now working together in a more collaborative way through all being on the mini fora.
  - Equality and diversity issues are addressed through the service review process. For example, at one refugee hostel the majority of residents are women and children but all the support workers were men. This has now been rectified.
- 140** The shadow strategy published in 2002 included areas of housing-related support services needing to be developed in Birmingham including:
- the supply of supported housing for people with learning disabilities in Birmingham is wholly inadequate;
  - housing support services for people with substance misuse problems in Birmingham are virtually non-existent; and
  - the current level of services for refugees is wholly inadequate, and a significant expansion of floating support services is planned.
- 141** Growth in all these areas was achieved before April 2003, although in the refugee sector the Council was not able to achieve its aim of targeting the growth towards floating support, with a growth of accommodated based units from 224 to 924 and a growth from 6 to only 22 floating support units. Work is continuing in this sector to move away from a reliance on accommodation-based support to floating support.

- 142 As highlighted earlier, one result of the need to bring the Supporting People grant into budget, there has been little opportunity for growth in services but in the five-year strategy services for people with a learning disability are highlighted for growth as are further services for people with drug problems. This includes a safe house for women exiting street prostitution and drugs. As with other areas of the strategy, although the need has been identified, the level of funding required has not been identified.
- 143 In terms of existing services, there is a range of provision specifically for minority groups, for example for refugees; black and Asian women fleeing domestic violence and Chinese elders and service reviews are used to ensure that other services are culturally sensitive.
- 144 An equality impact assessment has been completed for the Supporting People programme which confirms that measures are in place to ensure equality in the provision of services.
- 145 There are gaps in knowledge which cover some of the most marginalised members of society. The five-year strategy demonstrates the need for housing-related support for some of the most eligible vulnerable people in the district but there are still some gaps in knowledge which cover some of the most marginalised members of society including travellers, mentally disordered offenders and older people with mental health problems/dementia. Work is still to be commissioned for these groups and is not within the 2005/06 work plan for the Supporting People team.
- 146 Supporting People is aware that there are exclusions that impact on the choice available to service users. For example, very few hostels will take women fleeing domestic violence who have mental health problems. For example, Asian women with mental health problems are not able to access hostel accommodation which is specifically designed for their cultural needs so their choice is limited.

### **Outcomes for service users**

- 147 Outcomes delivered to date as a direct result of the Supporting People programme have been limited. Only a small number of new services have been introduced with limited progress in filling identified gaps in service provision for which there is currently little choice cross tenure. Additionally, outcomes for service users are not measured. Positively, for individual service users, support plans have been introduced and the review process is being used to address areas of improvement for services.
- 148 Outcomes measures for service users have not been quantified. As a result of this omission, the partnership is unable to quantify its success in achieving positive outcomes for users of the services it supports or in making adjustments to the programme is stated outcomes are not being achieved.
- 149 The financial situation with the programme has limited development of new services with work concentrated on decommissioning and ensuring value for money.

- 150** There is little choice for service users across housing tenure. Service provision is mainly accommodation-based and this restricts choice for vulnerable people and the availability of support particularly for owner occupiers. The low level of floating support particularly disadvantages those who need relatively low level of preventative support in order to avoid the need for high cost intervention at a later date. There are also vulnerable individuals who are very reluctant to engage with statutory agencies who would benefit from floating and flexible support.
- 151** Little progress has been made in filling gaps in service provision. Gaps in services are identified in the five-year strategy, for example, older people with mental health problems/dementia. This means that individuals from the client groups concerned do not yet have access to the housing-related support services to improve their life chances and their ability to live independently.
- 152** The Council and its partners have not yet developed a comprehensive set of outcome measures for Supporting People through which the success of the programme as outlined in its vision and objectives can be measured. As a result, the commissioning body has no indication as to whether the outcomes for service users are those which they are aspiring to through their vision and key objectives.
- 153** The lack of availability of move-on accommodation is a significant problem for service users living in accommodation-based supported housing who are not able to move at a time appropriate to support a successful move. In addition, this also has an impact on potential service users who are unable to access services they need which are occupied by people who no longer need the service and for whom lengthening their stay inappropriately could prove detrimental in their progress towards independence.
- 154** On a more positive note, support plans are being effectively used by service providers contacted during this inspection. Service providers are using the quality assessment framework to improve the way they are delivering their services.
- 155** Examples of good outcomes being achieved for services users are as follows.
- One man whose drug use led to him living a chaotic lifestyle now has now sorted out his debts and is claiming his correct benefits. He is attending an IT course, has few bouts of depression and is becoming more confident and independent financially and physically. He judges that, without the floating support, he would not have turned his life round.
  - A 17 year old woman was a victim of domestic violence from her parents and brother and is living in a refuge. After three months she is now more confident and independent and the support from staff has helped her to believe in herself and her abilities to the point that she has now started on a training course.
- 156** For some potential Supporting People service user groups their housing-related support needs have still not been identified. For example, the support needs of travellers are currently not known. As a result provision has not been identified within the life of the current five-year strategy.

- 157 In other areas, where demand has been identified, the ability to develop new services and opportunities for potential service users has been delayed. This is largely dependant upon the Council's ability to firstly bring the grant within budget to enable the commissioning of services to begin.

## Summary

- 158 Overall, we have judged that the Council is delivering a poor Supporting People programme for Birmingham.
- 159 Service users have had no influence over the strategic direction of the programme and the strategy through which future services will be delivered does not contain a robust needs analysis across all client groups. This leaves the potential for services to be developed which are not in line with service users needs or aspirations. The lack of access to mainstream housing to allow service users to move on from supported accommodation is also negatively impacting on service users who are unable to move to suitable general needs housing at a time appropriate for their support needs and for those potential service users who are not able to access supported accommodation due to the lack of vacancies.
- 160 A key weakness is the long delay in introducing local eligibility criteria and value for money assessments which would have allowed an earlier resolution to service reviews. Historic problems in capturing all services within the Supporting People grant are having ongoing repercussions in delaying the commissioning of new and reconfigured services.
- 161 Of major significance is the fact that over two years after the ODPM's deadline for having interim contracts in place there were still a significant number of contracts and service level agreements not in place at the time of our inspection. Positively, this issue has since been addressed.
- 162 Grant payments to providers are not being robustly monitored with little assurance that payments are only been paid for service users who are actually still resident within the service.
- 163 Positively, reviews taking into account the quality of services being provided are used to drive up performance and conversely where the standard of service has been found to be unacceptably low without any prospect of improvement, services have been appropriately decommissioned but progress is slow.
- 164 There is clear corporate commitment to the programme and this is now underpinned by a performance management framework which has recently been introduced into the programme although the impact and outcomes from this are yet to fully emerge.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the programme?

### What is the track record in delivering improvement?

- 165** The Supporting People programme has an intermittent record of sustained improvement. Positively, the pace of change immediately prior to, and following inspection, has improved significantly. This lack of sustained improvement has resulted in delays in commissioning services to respond to identified need which results in vulnerable people not having appropriate services to access. Initially, the programme was late in being developed with a manager in post from May 2002 and progress since then has been inconsistent with periods of high levels of activity interspersed with periods when very little progress has been evident. For example, there was little progress in ensuring probity or developing the programme until summer 2004 when priority was given and progress was made. However, this impetus was lost once more during spring 2005 and did not resume until the end of July 2005. This hiatus once more lost the programme a lot of ground at a time when much needed developments to the programme, could have been progressed.
- 166** The pace of change has recently improved. The Supporting People team lacked capacity and leadership during the early part of 2005 and there is acknowledgement that this impeded progress. However, significant progress has been made since management arrangements were put in place. Positive progress has been made tackling weaknesses and draft recommendations made during this inspection. This demonstrates a commitment to improve, although much of it has been too recent to identify impact and improved outcomes.
- 167** Corporately, the Council has been judged as 'two stars and improving well' in the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) undertaken by the Audit Commission in December 2005. The assessment found that 'there are significant improvements to children's social care and its housing service, which were previously poor'. Service areas within the CPA are rated on a scale of one to four with one being the weakest. In the service blocks for housing and social care (adults) the Council scored two.
- 168** On an operational level, the service review process has resulted in improved outcomes for some service users. The quality assessment framework was used to ensure that poor service delivery is challenged and in the worst cases, services have been de-commissioned. This has been done with successfully tested multi-agency decommissioning procedures to ensure that vulnerable service users are safeguarded. One example is a service contract of £1.4 million per annum where the service review showed a number of major failings under the quality assessment framework, including the inability to show that support was been provided in all cases. The provider did not enter into improvement planning, so the service was decommissioned with contingency arrangements for service users.

- 169 The financial position of the programme is consistently reported to the commissioning body and through corporate processes. This has been effective in helping the commissioning body and the Council to focus on reducing the level of grant commitments.
- 170 New 'pipeline' services have been introduced which meet some of the needs identified in the shadow strategy'. Pipeline services are those which were planned prior to the commencement of the Supporting People grant and where the ODPM agreed to make an allocation of grant. The services opened using pipeline funding are:
- 6 units of accommodation-based support for young people;
  - 7 units of move on accommodation for people at of offending;
  - 9 units of accommodation for Asian people with learning disabilities;
  - 8 units of accommodation for teenage parents; and
  - 10 units of accommodation for young people.
- 171 The Council responds well to inspection. During our re-inspection of the Council's repairs and maintenance service in May 2005 it was reported that the Council had fully addressed 17 out of the 27 previous report recommendations and was progressing well with other recommendations which were partially completed. In this inspection there was a prompt reaction to on-site feedback from inspectors, for example the inspectors found the governance arrangements were a barrier to improvements, this resulted in a report to the commissioning body within two weeks of inspection seeking an in principal agreement to develop a core strategy group.
- 172 The recently agreed joint commissioning strategy for older people, which seeks to modernise provision and increase independence and accommodation options is viewed as a positive development by CSCI.
- 173 The track record on securing value for money across all services in a clear and transparent way is poor. There have been delays in completing the joint impact assessments and in ensuring value for money from internal providers. This will impact on the length of time before new services can be delivered to vulnerable people who are currently do not have access to a service appropriate to their needs. More positively, the Council and its partners have secured savings towards balancing the budget so that payment obligations do not exceed contract obligations.
- 174 The ability to access appropriate housing-related support has been delayed for the majority of potential users in areas identified as gaps in provision. This is as a result of the overspend situation and results in an inability to commission new services until the overspend is resolved.

- 175** There is a lack of mainstream accommodation. For example service providers have identified a lack of move on accommodation for clients who no longer need the level of support provided by an accommodation-based service. As a result, there are clients in accommodation-based support services who no longer require support and whose delay into their own home may well reduce the effectiveness of the support whilst there are those in need of support who are not able to access appropriate services.
- 176** In their work, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has judged that partnership working between the directorates of social care and health and housing is at a relatively early stage and that a number of indicators which are directly related to the Supporting People programme are weak. These include:
- performance on delivery of community equipment is poor;
  - completion of assessments of need within required time scales which remains very low; and
  - a reduced performance against all indicators of people helped to live at home.
- However, there has been improved performance against the following indicators:
- admissions into residential care;
  - promotion of choice and independence through increase in take up of direct payments; and
  - an increase in service provision to carers.

### **How is performance managed?**

- 177** Performance management is beginning to become embedded within the Supporting People programme. A strong framework for managing performance of the Supporting People programme corporately, departmentally and through the commissioning body partnership has been developing during the current year. However as the final elements of the framework have just been introduced, outcomes and impact from the framework are as yet limited.
- 178** The corporate performance assessment for Birmingham commented that robust performance management processes operate at corporate and service levels. As a department, housing services has developed performance improvement planning (PIP) arrangements and these are now beginning to impact on Supporting People which is for the first time being performance managed. The performance improvement plan (PIP) has provided the focus of performance management activities and at team level there are regular team meetings and individual supervision with staff aware of how they are performing as individuals. As a result, good performance can be systematically identified and praised and underperformance can be challenged.

- 179 At a corporate level, Supporting People features regularly on the agenda for executive management team meetings of executive directors and cabinet members. The cabinet member responsible for Supporting People is regularly briefed and is well informed about Supporting People and the chair of the overview and scrutiny committee attends commissioning body meetings and again is well informed of both progress and the challenges facing the programme. Quarterly update meetings between the Accountable Officer for Supporting People and the Interim Chief Executive have recently been introduced and financial reporting is undertaken on a monthly basis. These mechanisms ensure that Supporting People is appropriately championed and will remain on the corporate agenda and outcomes from this in terms of impact on improvements to the programme delivery and development will become apparent in future months.
- 180 At a departmental level within housing, a Policy and Performance Board which gives internal support and supervision with the aim of driving improvement has been introduced. The board includes corporate performance staff, peer reviewers from within the department and an external critical friend. Assistant directors are able to call their own services in for review or services can be called in by the policy and performance team. Supporting People has been a focus of this group in order to help drive performance.
- 181 A Supporting People team plan, which is linked to corporate priorities and to the Supporting People five-year strategy, has recently been introduced and has clearly identified tasks with targets and outcomes identified and the majority of tasks are appropriately time bound although the resourcing of targets is not identified. The plan will be monitored through the Policy and Performance Board.
- 182 There are clear and robust plans to update the IT system for Supporting People to respond to weaknesses in the service for example the lack of formalised contractual arrangements; a consistent payment system for internal and external providers; reconciliation of THB information; service review management; leaseholder payments and facilities for providers to update monitoring and service user information.
- 183 The current and future need for services is currently not robust The five-year strategy sets the direction for the programme and there are weaknesses in that the data to assess both current and future need for services is not robust and there is no system in place to measure progress against priorities articulated in the strategy. One objective within the Supporting People team plan is:  
*'to collect/interpret needs information in appropriate formats to enable decision-making'.*
- 184 However, this task which is central to future commissioning decisions, has no timescale for completion with the work 'ongoing'.
- 185 Work on the 2006/07 action plan to support the five-year strategy will be aimed at addressing the acknowledged weaknesses in the strategy with the intended result of a more robust basis from which to deliver the programme.

- 186 Plans which are complimentary to the objectives of the Supporting People programme are not co-ordinated. For example, the homeless and Supporting People strategies are not aligned and the draft housing disability strategy only mentions Supporting People once and does not integrate the various policies to address the needs of different groups in Birmingham. In order to deliver co-ordinated and complimentary services, plans need to identify and be clear about the opportunities for complimentary work which benefit service users.

### **Does the programme have the capacity to improve?**

- 187 The capacity for the programme to improve has changed for the better since the end of July 2005.. A recent restructure of the strategy and housing needs function within the housing department has brought greater management capacity and has helped to mainstream Supporting People as a component part of the overall housing needs function. A new head of service has responsibility for the programme with the role of ensuring that the programme is delivered in a timely manner through the introduction of improvement planning across the programme. This is now starting to take shape, but the impact in terms of improvements to the programme delivery and development has yet to be fully realised.
- 188 In recognition that development of the service was not taking place at the pace necessary, consultants were engaged as interim lead officers for a three month period leading up to our inspection. This has resulted in positive movement in working towards implementing policies and procedures but the increased pace of change has not been conducive to working alongside providers of services who, at the time of our inspection, were feeling disempowered.
- 189 In response to concerns about the programme, senior officers have shown that they are willing to co-opt support from the wider department and council to help improve delivery of the programme. Examples of this are an Accountable Officer who has been seconded from the corporate centre and the Interim Lead Officer for Supporting People is a senior manager with a strong reputation within the department. A permanent Supporting People Lead Officer has since been appointed. This focus helps to ensure that the recent pace of change is sustained to help deliver significant improvements to the Supporting People programme.
- 190 Within the team, a skills matrix has been drawn up which identifies the current range of skills available within the team. This is complemented by a training and development opportunities with training based on the skills needed to achieve the departmental plan. External Supporting People specific training has been provided. For example, SITRA have delivered training on reviews and protection from abuse and MIND on mental health issues which included a service user as trainer.

- 191 Work has been commissioned to identify support and accommodation needs. The five-year strategy has highlighted priorities to take the programme forward and there is an awareness that work has to continue on accurately identifying need and that this must continue to be a priority to ensure that reconfiguration of the programme is in line with actual and identified housing-related support in Birmingham. To facilitate this, work to identify unmet need has been commissioned which is due to be completed by March 2006. However, the work will not identify aspirational need to ensure that future commissioning plans provide choice for service users.
- 192 There is also a willingness to look outside the boundaries of Supporting People to influence the wider agenda. An example of this is with the current strategic review of sheltered housing where a senior member of staff from the Supporting People team is now leading the review. The Commission for Social Care Inspection have noted that they are optimistic regarding delivery of this strategy.
- 193 The Council is beginning to look outside in order to improve services. For example, the new communication, consultation and engagement strategy was developed using best practice' the team has visited Manchester City Council who achieved three stars for their Supporting People programme and there is an arrangement for the new interim Supporting People manager to be mentored by an experienced Supporting People manager from another Midlands authority.
- 194 Positively, there has been a clear corporate commitment made to the Supporting People programme and the redistribution of resources to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the city and which has helped to safeguard services. Corporate funding has being redirected to write-off the overspends from 2003/04 to the current year. The intention is to allow the Supporting People programme to start from a level position at the earliest possible opportunity to allow for new services and a reshaping of the supported accommodation in Birmingham.
- 195 Moving to a position where Supporting People is becoming embedded at a strategic level within the work of the probation service and PCT's has been slow. In response to acknowledged difficulties in engagement from partner organisations, the Director of Housing meets quarterly with the Chief Officer from West Midlands Probation Area and the link officer for Supporting People to maintain involvement and ensure a better understanding of the programme at a strategic level. This arrangement is replicated with health partners. In addition, agreement has been reached for all four PCT's to be represented on the commissioning body. However, the impact of these improved partnerships has not yet impacted on joint working to identify ineligible services and realign expenditure form appropriate budgets.
- 196 West Midlands Probation Area has also recently committed additional resources to Supporting People and introduced a Supporting People co-ordinator into their structure which should increase their capacity to engage more fully with the Supporting People agenda during the coming months. Links with the probation service in Manchester have also been established.

- 197** Internal partnerships are being strengthened with the Director of Social Care meeting with the Director of Housing on a six-weekly basis which is helping to lay down some strong foundations between the two departments and there is evidence of growing connectivity between housing and social care such as joint commissioning of services.
- 198** Work has also now begun with neighbouring authorities. For example, agreement has been reached with Walsall to act in a critical friend role on two reviews each per year and a joint review of a provider in common has been agreed with Solihull. Working with neighbouring authorities will help to share positive practice and challenge working practices.
- 199** Positively, work on introducing shared outcome measures at both strategic and operational levels has started with an approach agreed at the Housing Policy and Performance Board on 21 October. The work planned will also facilitate shared learning as proposals are to work with a local housing group who specialise in supported housing provision. Importantly the planned measures include access to move on accommodation as a key outcome. As part of this process, partners are also starting to look at how data can be shared across the partners to facilitate joint outcome measures. Although still in an embryonic stage this is an indication of the change in the culture of the organisations and the move away from silo thinking.
- 200** Consultation and engagement within the programme has been a weakness to date. A recently agreed communication, consultation and engagement strategy to support work is now in place along with an agreed timetable for 2005/06. In order to start addressing the absence of any service user involvement at a strategic level, arrangements have been made to meet with groups in order to agree methods of meaningful engagement for different user groups. The strategy will bring structure and rigour in moving this agenda forward.
- 201** The Council has committed significant additional resources to the Supporting People programme and in part this is in acknowledgement of the fact that the legacy of implementation will take some time to unravel. This commitment which is backed by a timetable to bring the grant within budget will give the programme the capacity to move towards commissioning at an earlier point than would otherwise have been the case. However, as we have identified, work on moving ineligible services from the programme has not been timely and the Council could have been in a position to withdraw a larger part of its financial commitment at an earlier stage.
- 202** The commissioning body is too operational with the current governance arrangements reducing effectiveness and capacity and would benefit from some time to consolidate what it has done so far and strategically plan for the future. However, under the current governance arrangements this is not possible. Positively, the Council has taken on board our concerns regarding the current governance arrangements and is looking to introduce a core strategy group into the structure. If successfully configured and encouraged this will free up the commissioning body members time to concentrate on strategic and future planning particularly in areas where services need to be jointly commissioned to meet need and assist all partners in achieving their targets.

**203** There have been delays in implementing the new IT system due to a lack of capacity within the Supporting People team that have hampered progress for example the delays mean that transitional housing benefit information has not been reconciled for some services which has delayed the signing of interim contracts as financial information about the contract price has not been available. A recent restructure however has seen recent progress in the capacity of the team to undertake tasks in a timely manner. The system has the capacity to meet the needs of the organisation, for example, to manage the review process; maintain data about providers and services; benchmarking information; manage contract changes and monitoring; reconcile data with the housing benefit system; manage communications with providers or other stakeholders; provide reports to manage the programme and an adequate audit trail. It is supported both internally by the IT staff in SP and by corporate IT.

## Summary

- 204** We judge that the programme has promising prospects for improvement. However, there has not been a sustained record of improvement for the Supporting People programme. Positively, weaknesses have been accepted and are being addressed and the pace of change has improved considerably since July 2005.
- 205** Performance management processes to deliver the programme have been introduced into the Supporting People programme at all levels from individual team members to the corporate centre and are being managed well. These processes will be strengthened through the introduction of the planned outcome measures which will allow the commissioning body to assess the success of the programme in achieving positive outcomes for service users.
- 206** The service review process has resulted in improved services and the commissioning body has shown that it is willing to take difficult decisions and has agreed actions to de-commission underperforming services. Prospects to improve capacity and delivery of the programme have been enhanced with improved corporate involvement and increased ownership by the PCT's and Probation service.
- 207** Other drivers for improvement include the Council's improving CPA assessment and improvement in other services, such as repairs and maintenance.
- 208** Organisational structures are better but there are still considerable financial hurdles to be overcome which have been exacerbated by slow progress in some key areas.
- 209** Although improvements can be seen in programme delivery, this has yet to be continued over a sustained period of time with a 'stop-start' effect being evident. This has severely impeded continuous improvement.
- 210** Although all interim contracts were signed following our inspection the historical lack of rigour attached to confirming correct payments to providers is a barrier to future improvement. Action to remove ineligible activities from the programme has not been robust with a substantial level of ineligible services still being paid from the Supporting People grant.

# Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

## Demographic information

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

**Table 3 Demographic information**

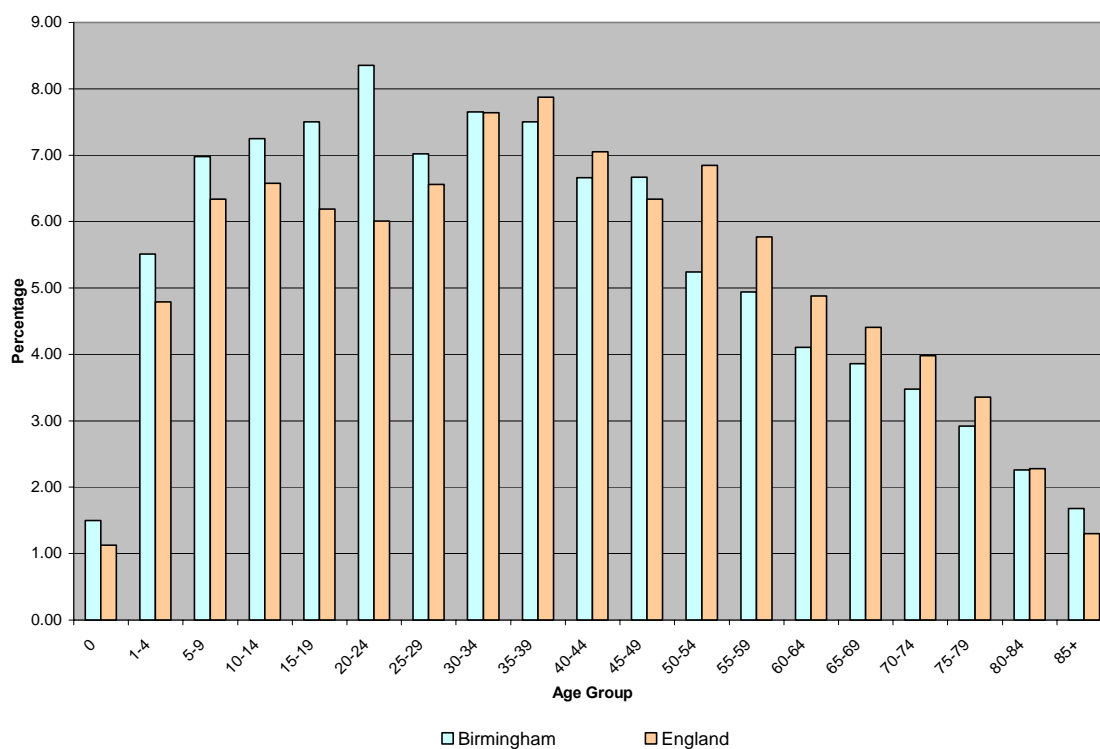
Measure	Birmingham	England
Population (mid-2003) <sup>4</sup>	992,100	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2003)	16.3%	18.5%
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than white – British 2003)	29.6%	10.44%
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) <sup>5</sup>	5.5%	2.4%
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) <sup>6</sup>	16	-

<sup>4</sup> Source: midyear population estimates (2003).

<sup>5</sup> Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (August 2005).

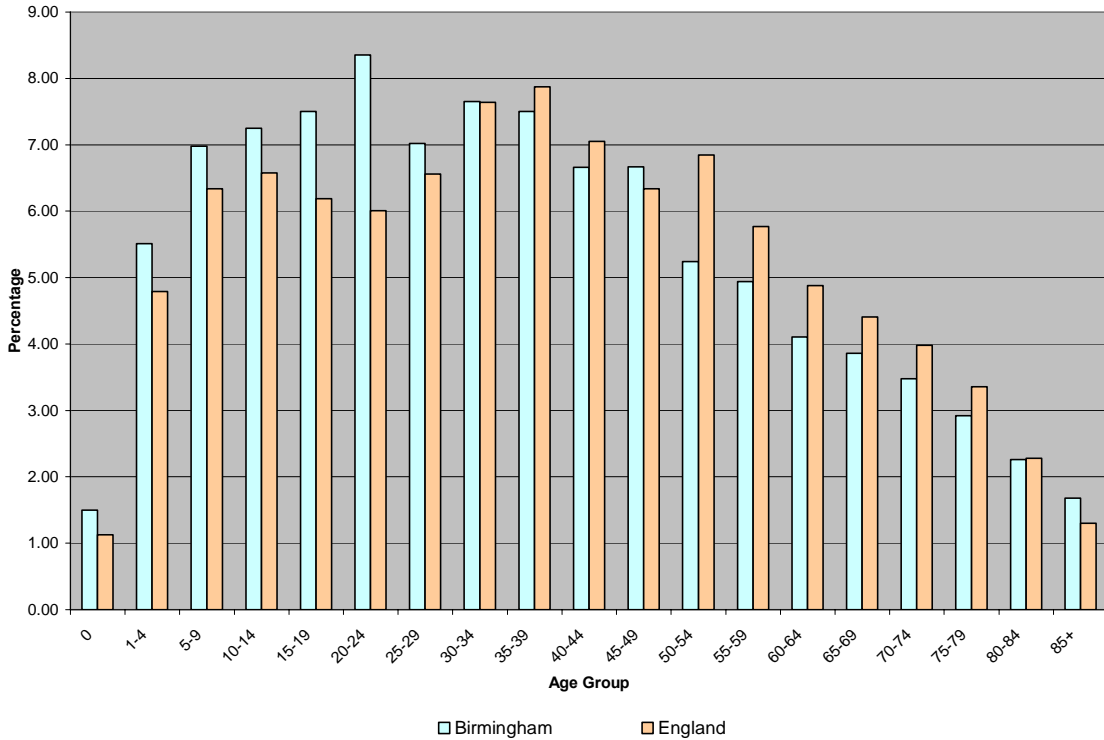
<sup>6</sup> Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the Authority.

**Figure 2 Percentage of the population<sup>7</sup> in each age group compared with England**



<sup>7</sup> Source: midyear population estimates (2003).

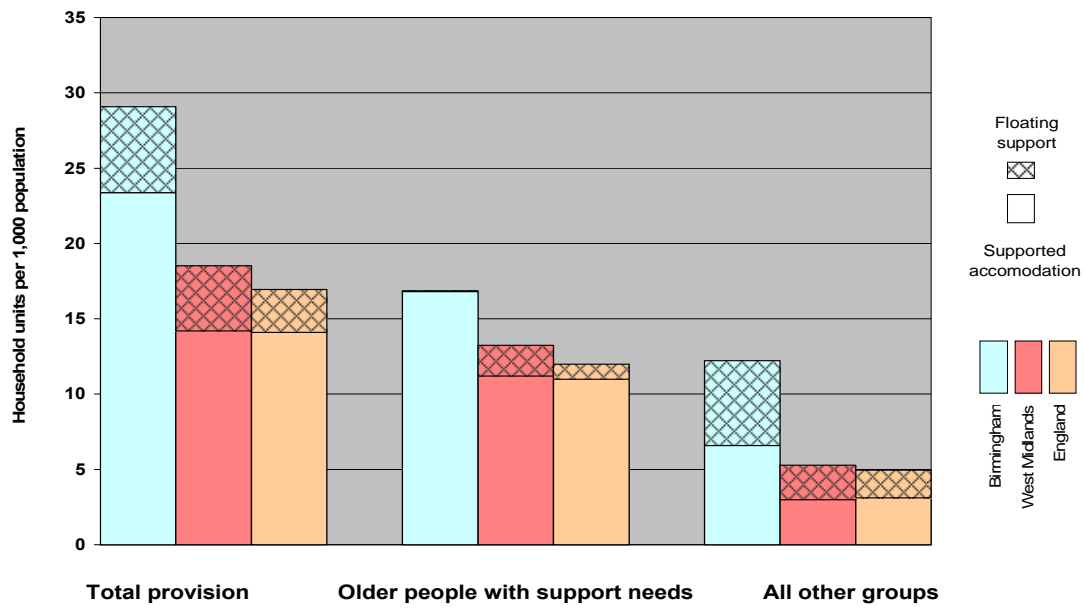
**Figure 3 Households accepted as homeless between 2000 and 2004 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)**



## Supporting People data

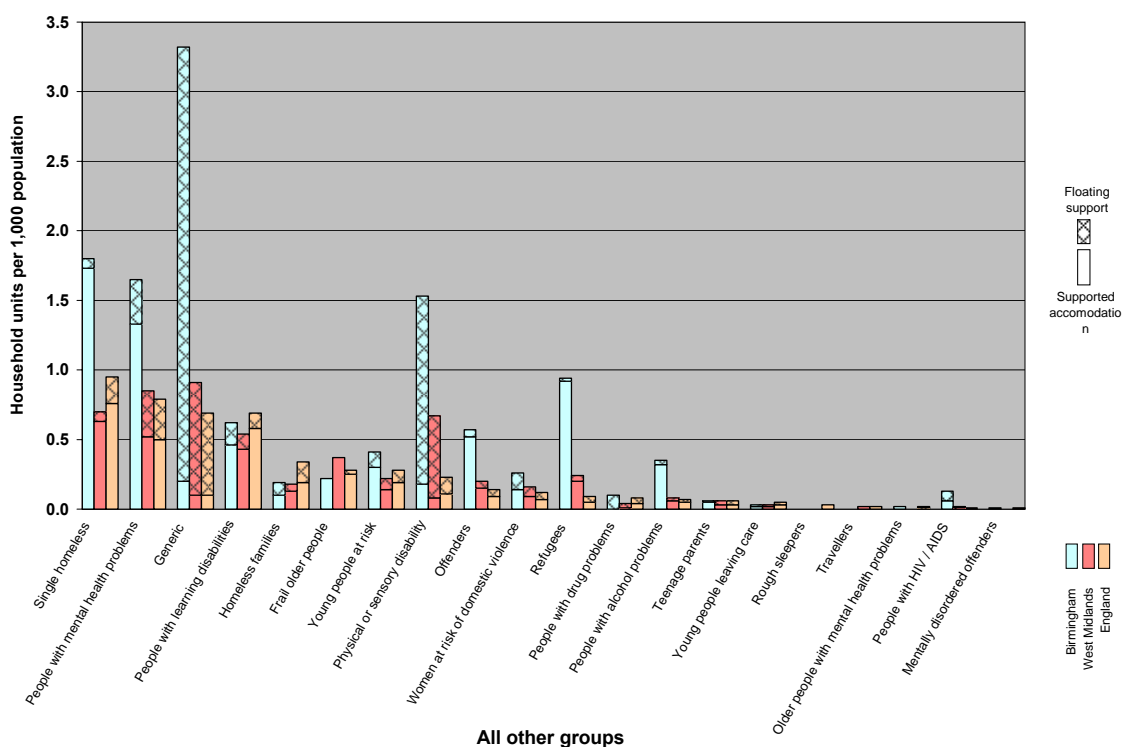
**Figure 4 Total service provision funded through Supporting People<sup>8</sup>**

Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England<sup>9</sup>



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

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

**Figure 5 Services for other groups compared with the region and England<sup>10</sup>**

**Table 4 Funding for Supporting People<sup>11</sup>**

<b>Birmingham</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>
Final Supporting People grant	£55,335,249	£55,004,990	£52,234,629
Pipeline allocation	£449,815	£791,863	£-
Administration grant	£656,806	£736,983	£759,092

<sup>10</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

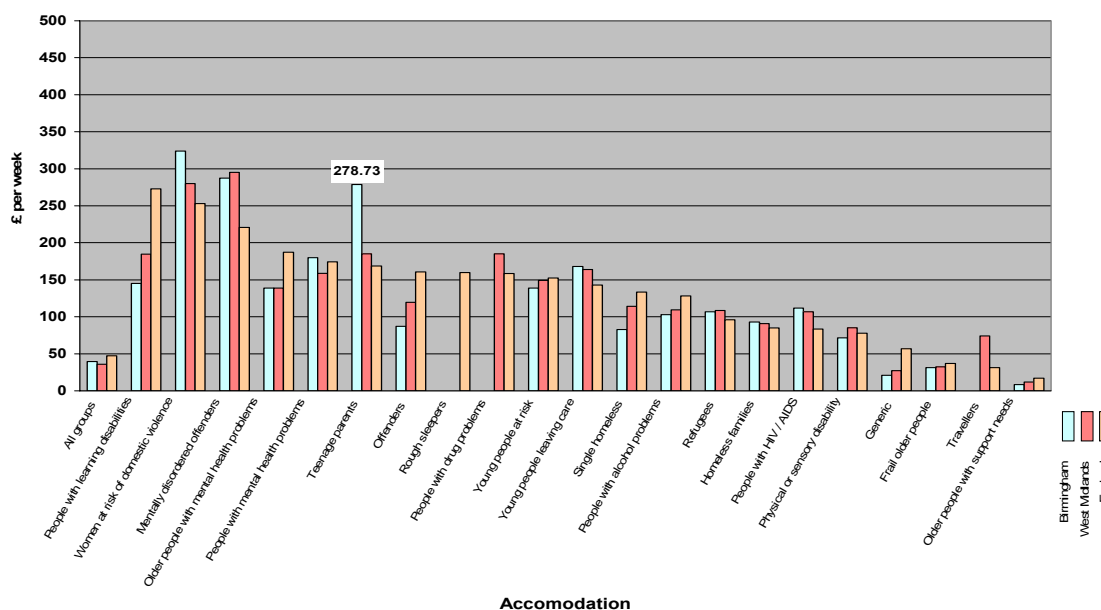
<sup>11</sup> Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

**Table 5 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)<sup>12</sup>**

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Birmingham	£1.07	£27.25	£31.80	£55.26
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 from September 2005 and this will then be used.

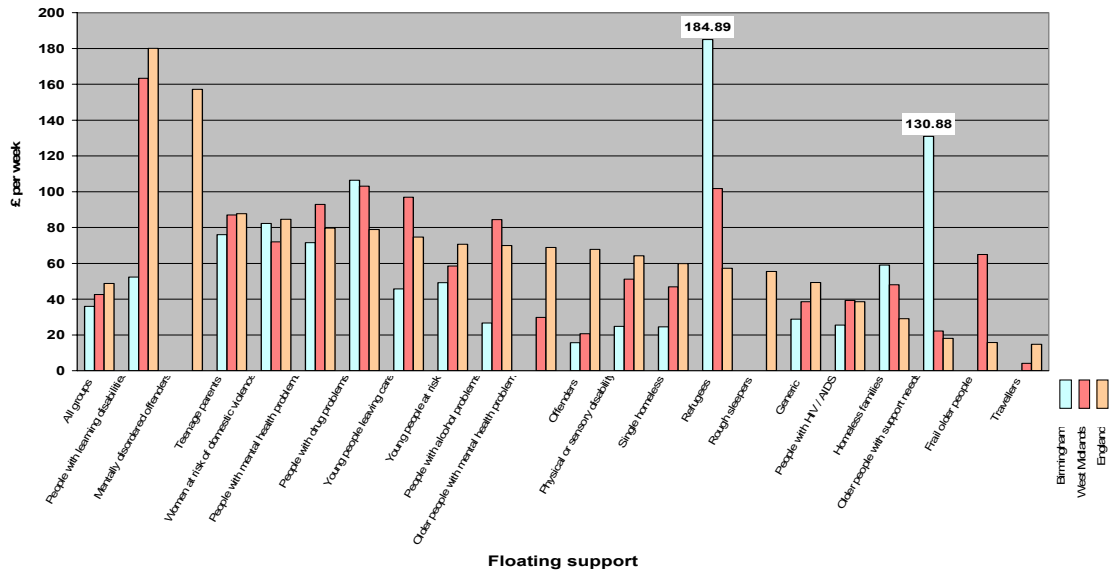
**Figure 6 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)<sup>13</sup>**



<sup>12</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003.

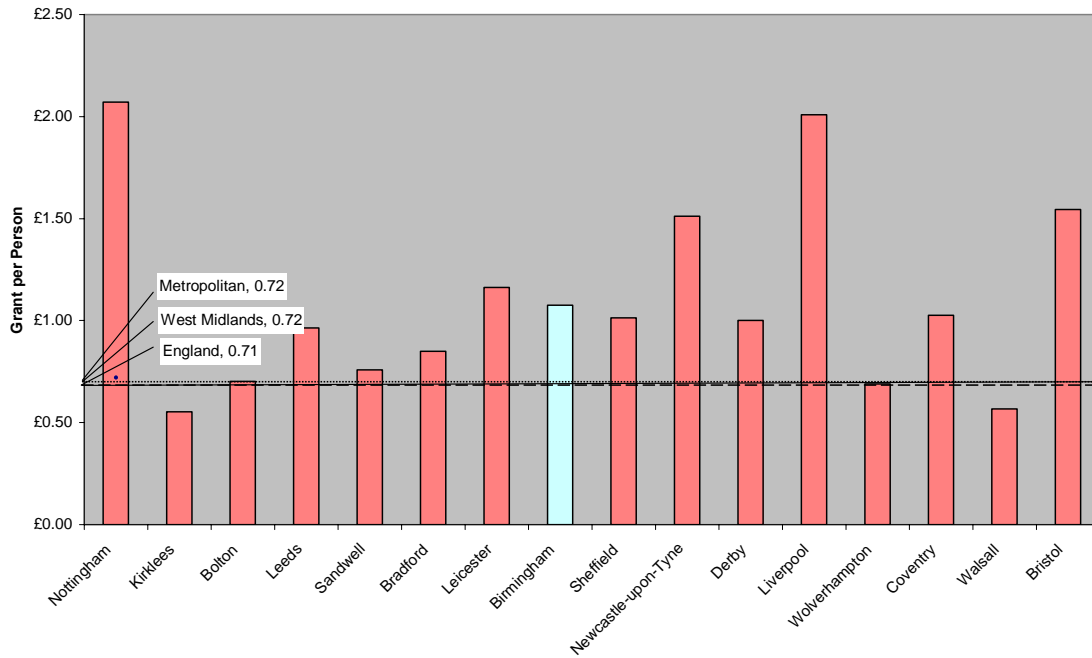
<sup>13</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Figure 7 Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent) <sup>14</sup>**



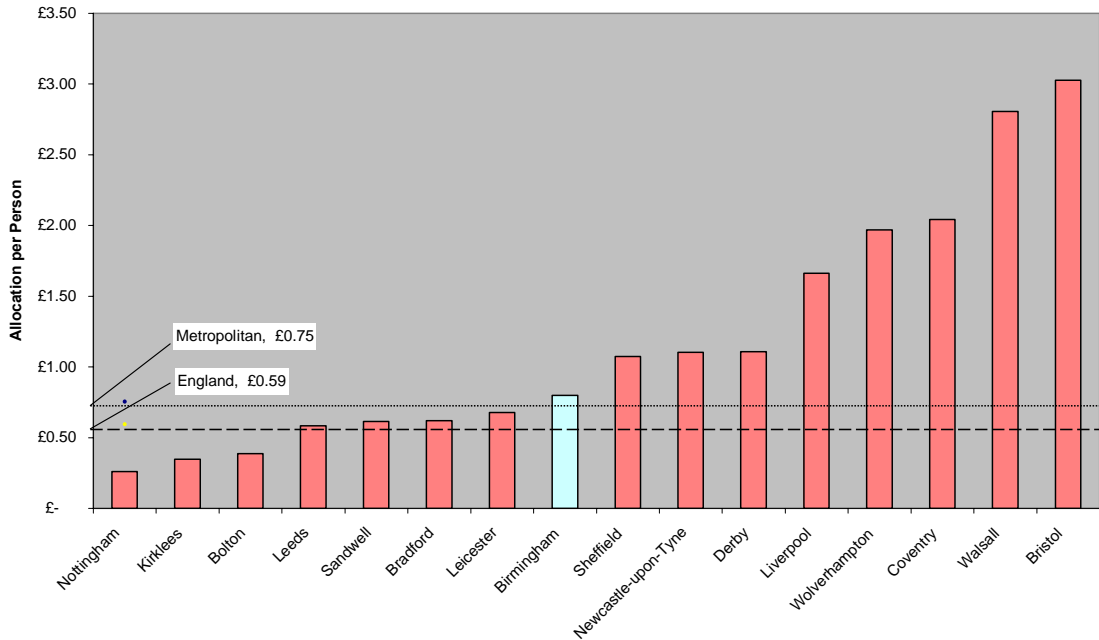
<sup>14</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Figure 8 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours<sup>15</sup>, all metropolitan councils and all English councils (2004/05)**

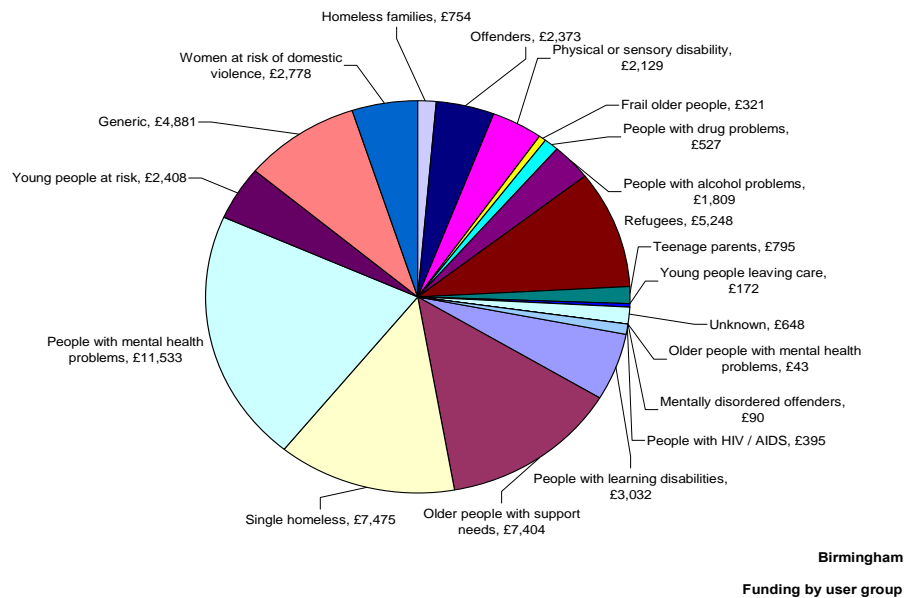


<sup>15</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

**Figure 9 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours<sup>16</sup>, all metropolitan councils and all English councils**



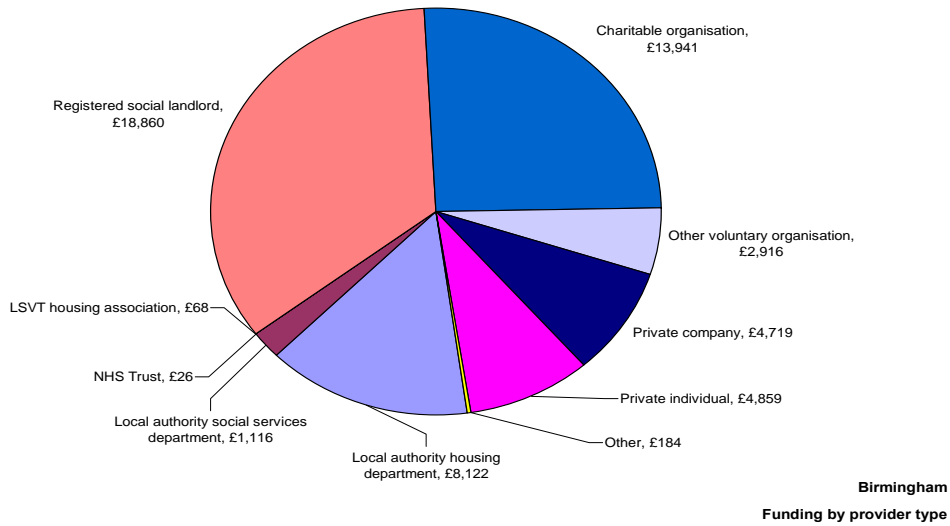
**Figure 10 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>16</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

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

**Figure 11 Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)<sup>18</sup>**



**Table 6 Social services star ratings November 2004**

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

	<b>Serving people well?</b>	<b>Prospects for improvement?</b>	<b>Performance rating (CPA equivalent)</b>
Adults' services	Some	Promising	(0)
Children's services	No	Promising	

<sup>18</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

## Social services performance indicators

**Table 7 Performance assessment framework indicators 2003/04**

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

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

## 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;
  - the Council's corporate strategies with impact upon Supporting People, including the strategic plan;
  - 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;
  - terms of reference for key governing groups; and
  - minutes of the commissioning body and Collaborative Board.

## 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;
  - focus groups with service providers and with carers, advocates and voluntary organisations;
  - visits to contracted supported housing services, to talk to service users and frontline staff;
  - visits to service user access points to test the level and extent of information available for service users;
  - telephone calls to test how easy it is to access services;
  - interviews with key staff and stakeholders within the City Council, the primary care trusts and the probation service;
  - interviews with the Leader of the Council and with the relevant portfolio holder
  - staff focus group;
  - review of the website;
  - mystery shopping visits to housing and social services area offices;
  - desktop checks of procedure guides and service review files; and
  - observation of a meeting of the commissioning body and Collaborative Board.