

Supporting People Inspection Report

November 2006



Supporting People

Southwark Council

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Supporting People Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

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

The former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)¹ 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.

¹ Now the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

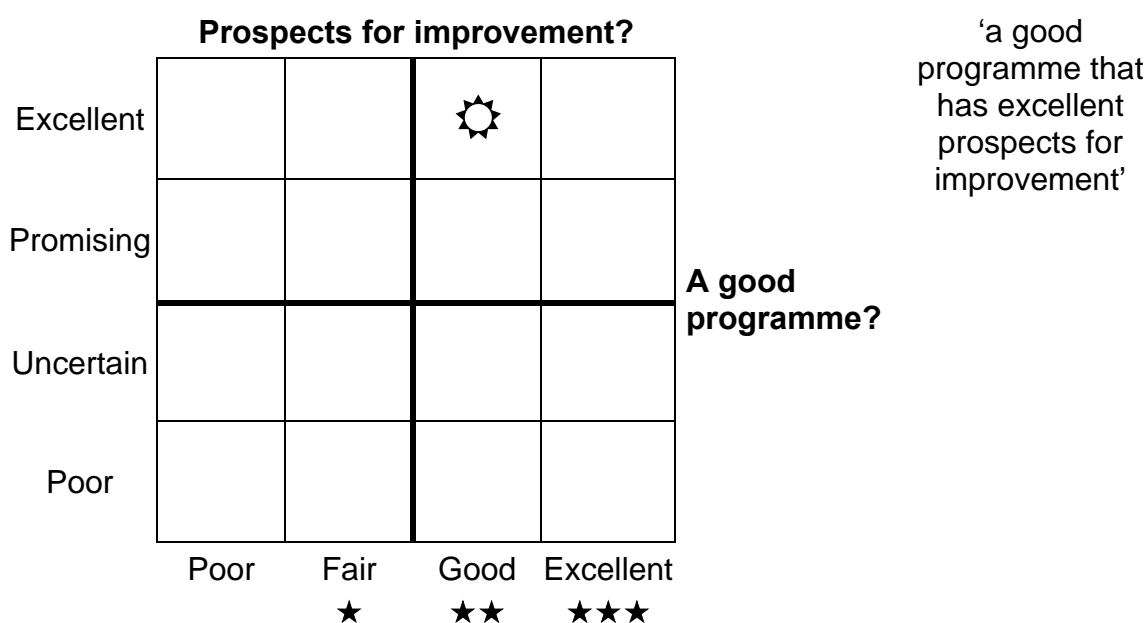
Summary

- 1 Overall, the London Borough of Southwark is providing a 'good' administration of the Supporting People programme with excellent prospects for improvement.
- 2 The programme is delivering a number of positive outcomes of service users. New services have been commissioned which are offering more choice for users, principally by significantly increasing the provision of floating support services. The quality of services has also improved, and almost all services have now achieved a satisfactory rating against the assessment framework used nationally for Supporting People. Service users have opportunities to become involved and have their views heard at a local level, though opportunities for strategic involvement is less well developed and quite recent.
- 3 There are, however, some weaknesses for users accessing the service. Information is not always readily available at the first point of contact. Also the systems for assessment and referral are still being developed. A significant challenge for the Council is the lack of move on opportunities which means the best use is not being made of some supported housing.
- 4 Leadership of the programme has been strong with good partnership working and governance arrangements. This is underpinned by a well resourced and stable Supporting People team, which has worked to support providers as well as take action to improve support services. The Commissioning Body has a track record of dealing with weak performance and taking some difficult decisions. This has included a robust approach to internal services and working to ensure that services are eligible for Supporting People grant funding.
- 5 There is evidence of improving value for money based on a clear strategy for achieving this. There are several examples of how more services have been provided for the same or less money, and overall efficiency savings have been achieved.
- 6 Prospects for improvement have been judged as excellent as the programme has demonstrated a good track record, with clear plans and capacity to deliver further improvements.

Scoring the Supporting People programme

- 7 We have assessed Southwark Council as providing a ‘good’, two-star programme that has excellent prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Figure 1 Scoring chart²



Source: Audit Commission

- 8 We found the programme to be good because it has a range of strengths, including:
- governance arrangements are effective. The Commissioning Body is well established, has clear terms of reference and members demonstrate a good understanding of their role and responsibilities and are kept well informed;
 - partnership arrangements are working well. There is good attendance at meetings and evidence of productive joint working;
 - eligibility criteria are in place and agreed and understood by all partners, with good progress made to ensure Supporting People grant is paying for eligible services;

² The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the programme is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a programme that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent programme (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the programme, also on a four-point scale.

- there is a clear five-year strategy in place which has been developed following extensive consultation with both service users and providers;
 - service providers are supported well. Grant payments have been made accurately and on time, information and training has been provided, and there has been additional support for small providers;
 - service reviews were completed on time using a consistent and rigorous methodology;
 - there has been a robust approach to the negotiation and awarding of contracts;
 - internal services have been treated in a similar way to external ones to ensure a level playing field. This has included prioritising internal services for early review and award of contracts and there clear examples of reconfiguration and tighter specification of services;
 - there are good examples of cross-authority working including some joint commissioning, sharing of good practice and reducing some administrative burdens and costs;
 - there is a clear and robust strategic and operational approach to achieving value for money. Efficiency savings have been achieved while also gaining more units of support that are better quality and more strategically relevant;
 - information for service users is clear and accessible and is available in a range of formats;
 - outcomes for service users are positive. A wider range of support services are now available; creating more choice and improving service quality. Where services have been decommissioned, users have been treated sensitively; and
 - suitable support plans are in place and there are systems for assessing and reviewing support needs.
- 9 However, there are some areas which require improvement. These include:
- limited information about the Supporting People programme has been formally disseminated to the wider body of councillors;
 - robust needs mapping has not been completed for travellers and refugees, though this is planned;
 - a lack of move on accommodation is a significant issue and a move on strategy is not yet in place. There are plans to develop this and some action has already been taken to address the issues;
 - where complaints have been received by the Supporting People team, they have been dealt with, but this has not always been prompt. It could also be made clearer to service users that they can complain to the Council if there is a problem; and
 - the quality of customer service across the Council over the telephone and face-to-face is variable.

10 The programme has excellent prospects for improvement because:

- corporately, the Council's services are improving which is demonstrated through improvements in key performance indicators and the Corporate Performance Assessment;
- there has been good progress against plans for the Supporting People programme. This has included a complex commissioning programme which has led to services which meet local support needs in line with the five-year Supporting People Strategy;
- procurement is based on a robust corporate strategy and decisions have demonstrated a clear focus on value for money and improving quality of services for users;
- plans are clear, detailed and linked to meeting Government requirements as well as housing and corporate objectives. The five-year strategy was developed in consultation with both service users and providers;
- plans addresses weaknesses and proposals to achieve better value for money;
- there is strong leadership and a good understanding of what is required to deliver the programme;
- there are effective arrangements in place to monitor and drive performance;
- the programme has used good practice from other authorities and has also worked jointly with others to improve performance;
- the programme is being administered by an effective and well resourced team. There is effective human and finance resource planning; and
- the Council has attracted inward investment to deliver strategic and government priorities.

11 However, there are some barriers to improvement. These include:

- the contract monitoring framework has been put in place recently , and has not yet been fully implemented; and
- corporate mechanisms are in place to learn from complaints, but this has not been demonstrated specifically for the Supporting People programme.

Recommendations

- 12 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs³ 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 service users, service providers and councillors, and addresses all weaknesses identified in the report. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation

R1 Improve access to Supporting People services by ensuring that:

- *information about Supporting People is available at the Council's access points and that frontline staff are able to direct potential users to the services they need;*
- *assessment and referral arrangements are well publicised and ensure best use of support services, particularly for floating support;*
- *service users are aware they can complain to the Council as well as to their service providers and that complaints are responded to within reasonable timescales; and*
- *all councillors are well briefed about the Supporting People programme and receive regular update information.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- people requiring housing-related support, carers and advocates can easily find out how to obtain services;
- potential service users obtain the type of support most suitable for them and resources are used for those who need them most;
- vulnerable people experiencing problems are able to complain to a third party and have that issue dealt with in a reasonable time; and
- elected councillors are aware of key policy and resource issues for Supporting People and are able to inform constituents about available services.

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

³ Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

Recommendation

R2 Develop a move on strategy as planned, which addresses:

- *making the best use of available housing resources for people in supported housing who need to move on, including through the private sector;*
- *move on arrangements within different type of supported housing; and*
- *the approach to dealing with existing residents of supported housing who are no longer suitably housed but do not wish to move on.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- a better use of supported housing;
- availability of suitable accommodation for vulnerable homeless people with specific needs; and
- promoting independence for people who need to move on.

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

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

Dates of inspection: 25 to 29 September 2006.

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Report

Context

The locality

- 14 The London Borough of Southwark is in inner London. It has a population of approximately 245,000⁴ which is relatively young, with one in five of the total population being below the age of 15. Its total population is set to rise to 285,000 by 2011. Around one third of the borough is from a black or minority ethnic community. This rises to 67 per cent in the school population where more than 100 languages are spoken and 43 per cent of pupils speak English as a second language.
- 15 There are aspects of Southwark's profile that affect the delivery of the Supporting People programme. It has the highest rates for teenage pregnancy and for lone parent households in the country according to recent Department of Health statistics. There are high levels of homelessness - 1,668 households were accepted as homeless in 2004/05 which was the highest number in London, and in March 2005 there were 969 homeless households living in temporary housing. For the period covering May to July 2006, Southwark had the third highest rate of crime of the 15 inner London authorities. The rate of drug misuse is around twice that of the rest of south-east England.
- 16 Southwark is London's fastest growing tourist quarter and a thriving business location with a flourishing small business sector. More than 40 per cent of the borough is covered by a current or planned regeneration area, many of which will contribute to making Southwark part of London South Central, connecting the middle of the borough with the City economy. The scale of regeneration schemes is significant with key schemes like Elephant and Castle, Canada Water, Bermondsey Spa and the Aylesbury Estate planning to attract investment of up to £3 billion over the next 10 years. These programmes have built on previous large scale regeneration projects such as Peckham. This is in addition to Neighbourhood Renewal Funding of some £23.7 million over the next two years.
- 17 Overall, Southwark is the 17th most deprived borough in England and Wales,⁵ and 70 per cent of residents live within wards that are the 10 per cent most deprived in the country. Southwark is one of the largest social landlords in the country and the largest in London with 42 per cent of its residents living in council housing. It has one of the lowest owner-occupation rates in the country which is less than half the London average.

⁴ 2001 Census

⁵ Using average SOA score method.

The Council

- 18 The Council is a unitary authority with a leader and cabinet system of governance, and has 63 councillors. Since the May 2006 election, the Council has been controlled by a joint Conservative and Liberal Democrat administration. There are eight places on the Executive Committee for Liberal Democrats, including the role of Leader of the Council, and the Conservatives have two places. There are an equal amount of Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors with 28 seats each, Conservatives have 6 seats and the Green Party has 1 seat.
- 19 The Council employs 5,338⁶ staff across all services and its overall budget is set out below.

Table 1 Corporate budget

2006/07	2005/06	2004/05
£1,416 million	£1,373 million	£1,236 million

- 20 The Council was assessed by the Audit Commission as ‘improving well’ and having a three-star performance (out of a possible four stars) in the December 2005 Comprehensive performance Assessment. This included an assessment of three out of four for adult social services and housing. The Commission for Social Care Inspection assessed Southwark as a three-star ‘excellent’ social care authority which is serving most adults and most children well, with excellent capacity to improve in 2005.
- 21 The Council’s vision is to make Southwark ‘a better place to live, work, learn and have fun, as a model of urban sustainable living’. The strategic priorities for the Corporate Plan are:
- cutting crime and the fear of crime;
 - improving the health of the borough;
 - making Southwark cleaner and greener;
 - raising standards in schools; and
 - tackling poverty.

The Supporting People programme

- 22 The Supporting People programme is designed to meet the housing-related support needs of vulnerable people, including homeless people, older people with support needs, people with a learning disability, people with mental health problems, those with substance misuse problems, refugees, travellers and ex-offenders.

⁶ 30 June 2006

- 23 The Council acts as the Administering Local Authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in its area. The team responsible for delivering the Supporting People Programme are based within the Housing Department.
- 24 Southwark has Supporting People Grant of £18.77 million for 2006/07, plus £2.12 million carried forward from previous years, totalling £20.89 million. The grant has reduced each year from 2003/04 when the grant was £20.184, and there has been a 1.7 per cent reduction in grant since last year. The Council also received a grant of £327,660 to cover administration costs for 2006/07 and the Council has allocated a further £198,000.
- 25 A five-year Supporting People Strategy has been in place since 2005. Its strategic objectives include enabling vulnerable people to receive appropriate levels of support; to reflect and promote diversity and social inclusion; to ensure outcomes are effective and value for money; and to work closely with other London boroughs.
- 26 There are currently 64 organisations providing 244 support services under 180 contracts, with a further 10 services in the pipeline. These services provide 5,484 units of support. The largest services in terms of the number of users are for older people with support needs (2,622) and single homeless people (1,218), and these services take up 48 per cent of the 2006/07 budget. Other significant expenditure is for people with mental health problems (17 per cent) and people with learning disabilities (8 per cent).
- 27 There have been some changes in the proportion of expenditure for the various client groups as shown in the table below.

Table 2 Changing profile of funding by client group

Client group	2003/04 percentage of budget	2006/07 percentage of budget	2006/07 budget £million
Single Homeless with support needs	36%	32%	6.72
Older people with support needs	19%	16%	3.34
People with mental health problems	14%	17%	3.55
People with learning difficulties	9%	8%	1.6
Young people at risk	7%	10%	2.0
Women at risk of domestic violence	2%	4%	0.73
Rough sleepers	0	1%	0.18
Older people/mental health	0	1%	0.13
Homeless families with support needs	0	1%	0.22
Generic support	2%	1%	0.14

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

- Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
- Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
- Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
- Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
- Councillors: approve key decisions of the Commissioning Body.
- Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.

29 Southwark Council has put in place the following governance structure.

- A Commissioning Body established in 2000 which has six members:
 - the Head of Community Housing Services, from the Council's Housing Service (current Chair);
 - the Head of Services for Older People and People with Disabilities from the joint Adult Social Care and Primary Care Trust (PCT) (Chair with effect from 1 October 2006);
 - the Director of Strategy from the PCT;
 - the Assistant Chief Officer from Southwark Probation (with deputy from London Probation Service); and
 - the Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT) Manager, from the Council's Community Safety Division.
- The Executive Member for Health and Adult Care also attends Commissioning Body meetings as an observer.
- There are six sub-groups of the Commissioning Body which fulfil the role of a Core Strategy Group. These were established in 2003 and are used for strategic consultation, decision-making and delivery. (Prior to this, reference groups were in place from 2001). The model has been adopted because of the size and complexity of the Supporting People programme in Southwark. The groups are:
 - social exclusion and vulnerable adults;
 - young people and families;
 - physical and sensory disability;
 - older people;
 - mental health; and
 - places to live group (learning disability).

- Some sub-groups were already in existence (mental health and learning disability) as social care partnership boards and their role expanded to include Supporting People. Others were set up specifically for Supporting People.
- A three-borough provider forum is jointly run with Lambeth and Lewisham Councils.
- A Strategic Forum was set up in February 2006 as a means of engaging a variety of community organisations.

How good is the Supporting People programme?

What has the programme aimed to achieve?

- 30 The five-year Supporting People strategy is aiming to:
- work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, and value their respective contributions to the Supporting People framework locally;
 - ensure that there is effective consultation between service users, providers, and the Commissioning Authority in the development and implementation of the strategy;
 - recognise the strategic links between the Supporting People framework and the preventative role that housing-related support services can play in many key areas;
 - ensure that the Supporting People strategy in Southwark reflects the strategic steer offered by Central Government Departments to the programme nationally; and
 - incorporate priorities from other local and national strategic plans, and in turn, influence the agendas of these related strategies.

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

- 31 The assessment was based on the following key issues:
- governance and partnerships;
 - grant compliance, strategy and needs;
 - delivery arrangements;
 - commissioning and performance;
 - value for money;
 - service user involvement;
 - access to services and information;
 - diversity; and
 - outcomes for service users.

Governance and partnerships

- 32** Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the approach to governance and partnerships. Governance arrangements are effective and now well established. The Commissioning Body (CB) has clear terms of reference and is comprised of key partners who meet frequently with good attendance. Partnership arrangements are working well and there was positive feedback from all partner and providers about this during the inspection. One weakness has been the limited information available to elected members in general, though the councillors with portfolio responsibility for social care and housing are well engaged with the programme.
- 33** There is a clear understanding of the Council's role as an Administering Local Authority. Senior officers and members with the relevant portfolio holdings are knowledgeable and well engaged with the Supporting People programme. Links to the administering authority are maintained through an elected member (the Executive Member for Health and Social Care) who is an observer at CB meetings. She has visited a number of schemes, particularly as part of the consultation over the future of sheltered housing. The Director of Housing is kept updated through briefing reports and monthly meetings with the Executive Member for Health and Social Care. There are also links between the Supporting People programme and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). There have been two six-monthly reports to the LSP. The last report in July 2006 updated the LSP on progress with recommissioning services and plans for the coming year.
- 34** However, there has been limited information about the Supporting People programme for the wider body of councillors (apart from information on sheltered housing). For example, there has not been a briefing for councillors on the five-year strategy. The current governance arrangements in Southwark rely on portfolio holders engaging with other councillors. The Supporting People team has also responded to specific queries from councillors on issues relating to the programme. However, this does not ensure a good understanding by elected members of the work and purpose of the programme.
- 35** The CB is well established and is operating effectively. Membership includes key partners from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the London Probation Service. Meetings are well-attended - all partners have managed 100 per cent attendance for the last two years except for probation (84 per cent). This will help ensure partners are engaged in the Supporting People programme.
- 36** Meetings are well chaired with an appropriate level of discussion and challenge. Topics have included key issues of policy and strategy as well as standing items on finance and the commissioning and decommissioning of services. There is evidence of the CB taking difficult decisions and a number of services have been decommissioned or respecified. This has included some internal services. For example, the Council has taken action to deal with poor quality internal services (the resettlement service) and services which are not strategically relevant or in over supply (the sheltered housing service).

18 Supporting People | How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 37 The CB has clear terms of reference which have been recently reviewed and updated to reflect the new contracting environment. These set out the role and membership of the CB as well as the roles of the Council as the administering authority for the grant and the role of the Supporting People team. They set out the dispute procedure if consensus is not reached and the rules for the frequency and conduct of meetings. Membership has been updated and the CB Chair now has authority to agree or delegate authority to amend contracts. Terms of reference include protocols for conflict resolution and measures to deal with conflicts of interest. For example, local authority members are excluded from voting on decisions affecting an internal service.
- 38 The CB is kept well informed and the reports it receives are relevant, clear and concise. These include the outcomes of all service reviews and recommendations for re-commissioning and decommissioning services. There have also been quarterly reports on the implications of commissioning decisions for services targeting minority groups (a number of which have been decommissioned) and an update report outlining areas where changes in provision have not reflected the priorities within the Supporting People five-year strategy. Where relevant, reports have been considered by one of the sub-groups before reaching the CB to allow greater attention and scrutiny.
- 39 The sub-groups are also generally working well though attendance and the role played by the groups does vary. All six groups have recently updated terms of reference which set out their aims, roles and responsibilities and terms of operation. Group members confirmed that there are good opportunities to feed in their views and good communication between partners; that they receive sufficient information about the decisions made by the CB; and that the sub-groups are well serviced by the Supporting People team. Providers are on the sub-groups and these have been chosen by election since March 2006. Sub-groups are using the work plans as a framework for their meetings and activities and are updated with progress to meet the plans.
- 40 The Accountable Officer (AO) has sufficient seniority to take a strategic role and influence decision-making. This is currently a second tier post within housing services and a third tier post within the Council as a whole. The Accountable Officer is clear about her responsibilities and is acting as a champion for the Supporting People programme. She is a member of a number of strategic groups - for example the 'Safer Southwark Partnership' which is a sub-group of the LSP; the Young Southwark Executive which has input into children's services; and also the homelessness forum.

- 41 The AO directly manages the Supporting People Team manager, which is good practice as this ensures control over delivery of the programme. There have, however, been some potential for conflicts of interest as the AO is also chair of the CB and is responsible for some of the internal services funded by Supporting People. To resolve this, the chair cannot vote where there is an internal service and also the AO will shortly no longer be the chair of the CB. From 1 October this will be the responsibility of the head of older people and disability services from the joint PCT and adult services. This is partly due to the structural changes in setting up a directorate of adult social services, but also to give more challenge and to ensure a clear distinction between commissioning and provider functions.
- 42 Partnership arrangements are working well and there was positive feedback about this during the inspection. Sub-group members compared Southwark favourably with other local authorities. Examples of effective working arrangements include:
- the MAPPA⁷ arrangements which are linked to the Supporting People programme through the Criminal Justice Team for adults and also through representation by the Youth Offending Team. This has enhanced the ability of the MAPPA to identify accommodation for offenders who present a high risk to the public and sustain them in that accommodation;
 - the joint structure for the PCT and adult social services which is unusual and recently established, but does appear to be ensuring good communications and joint working for health and social care. For example, there is a focus on minimising hospital admissions and it simplifies the links with the various client group commissioning managers;
 - the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) is engaged with the programme and there are several examples of service improvements, which demonstrate this such as the integration of drug expertise throughout the outreach services; and
 - the Supporting People programme is working with other sections of the Council to reduce teenage pregnancy. The teenage pregnancy co-ordinator attends the young people and family's sub-group and was consulted on the development of the five-year strategy.
- 43 Providers are supported through a forum which is jointly run by Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham Councils, and this supplies them with information about a variety of policy and practical issues. Providers consider that the three-borough provider forum generally works well and has a number of benefits such as joint accreditation and joint training. In addition, providers can attend the strategic forum as well as single issue events, and have received an annual newsletter. These facilities are helping to keep providers of services informed about the programme.

⁷ Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements - introduced in April 2001.

- 44 Engagement with the voluntary sector is improving but, in some respects, this is recent. A strategic forum was established in February 2006. There has only been one meeting so far, and this will be a bi-annual forum. Other opportunities include the multi-agency domestic violence and homelessness forums. The homelessness forum has received regular briefings on progress with the SP programme, including discussions on the issue of move on and proposed strategies for tackling rough sleeping. Wider engagement with the voluntary sector has also been achieved through the Southwark Community Care forum - a membership organisation representing voluntary sector, carer and user organisations.

Grant compliance, strategy and needs

- 45 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. There is a clear five-year strategy that was developed in consultation with service users and key partners, and is based on an analysis of needs for the borough. Eligibility criteria are also in place and there are few services now where eligibility is an issue. Move on from supported housing is a problem and has caused some schemes to 'silt-up'. The Council is, however, taking action to alleviate this including a quota for permanent accommodation and follow up resettlement support.
- 46 Eligibility criteria are in place, and agreed and understood by all partners. Revised criteria were agreed by the CB in July 2006, following consultation with stakeholders through the sub-group structure and the Provider Forum. Information about this was sent to all providers and they are satisfied⁸ with the criteria being used.
- 47 Good progress has been made to ensure Supporting People grant is paying for eligible services. This was routinely checked during the service review programme and 12 services (mainly for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems) were decommissioned for this reason.
- 48 However, this does not cover all services and it is estimated that a further £250,000 of costs may still be ineligible, and needs to be dealt with. This relates to funding for services where eligibility is not clear cut. Some of these costs are likely to be met by PCT funding (for example, services for homeless people with mental health problems). There are also plans to address the five or six learning disability schemes with costs of over £350 a week by providing lower level housing support in shared housing schemes. This will release further funds for the programme.

⁸ Findings of the survey of providers undertaken for the inspection.

- 49 There is a clear five-year strategy in place which has been developed following extensive consultation with both service users and providers. Consultation was linked to the development of the housing strategy and included consultation with BME communities and one-to-one discussions with homeless people. Key partners are committed to and engaged with the strategy. It includes an analysis of the needs of each main client group and the current supply with a consequent gaps analysis. It also identifies the key risks for each client group. The priorities for the authority are clearly laid out in the strategy and these form the basis of a five-year action plan which focuses on the planning and commissioning of services.
- 50 Strategic reviews have been carried out and reported to the CB for most, but not all, client groups. These include strategic reviews in 2004 for support services for older people, hate crimes including domestic violence, physical and sensory disability, and learning disability; and in 2006 for mental health and HIV services. However, there have not been strategic reviews for some client groups receiving Supporting People services. This includes services for young people and socially excluded and vulnerable adults.
- 51 Needs mapping has been completed and is fairly robust with systems in place to update information. This has been the basis of the five-year strategy and subsequent commissioning decisions. A needs mapping study was undertaken in 1999 and provided a basic understanding of gaps in provision and expected demands. The needs of various client groups have been researched and in most cases this has included consultation exercises that took place in 2004. The needs of travellers are less developed and are based on literature reviews, a number of sources of local information and discussion with local groups. Emerging and changing needs are being discussed through the sub-groups and also the homelessness and domestic violence panels.
- 52 The Council is tackling the issues around moving on people with support needs into more suitable accommodation, but this remains a significant problem for the Council. An estimated 1,163 service users are unable to move on. This is having the greatest impact on single homeless people - 770 people need to move on which is 60 per cent of that client group. This is affecting the availability of supported housing particularly for vulnerable people presenting as homeless. A formal move on strategy for the borough is not yet in place, although one is planned to be agreed by January 2007.
- 53 However, a number of activities and plans are helping to assist residents of supported housing to move on.
- The need for move on accommodation is recognised and is a priority in the homelessness strategy.
 - There is an annual quota for people needing to move on from supported housing and this is for 130 one bedroom properties for 2006/07.
 - Schemes to help access to private sector accommodation have been developed and £50,000 from the DCLG Homelessness Grant 2006/07 has been identified for top-up funding for a supported housing private sector move on initiative.

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- There is resettlement support to help people sustain their tenancies when they do move on, as well as tenure neutral floating support for a range of client groups, some of which is operational and some which has been commissioned.
- Action is being taken to move some long standing residents from schemes designated as short-stay, making use of the low demand housing for older people, where this is possible. This is a particular challenge, however, where residents with complex support needs do not want to move on. One example of this is in a hostel for people with alcohol problems where an additional resource for resettlement has been in place for over a year but has so far achieved few moves.

Delivery arrangements

- 54** Strengths outweigh weaknesses for the delivery arrangements for the Supporting People programme. The team is stable and well resourced, and has worked to communicate well with partners and support providers. Arrangements for planning and monitoring performance are in place and include regular information for the CB and its sub-groups. Performance data from providers has a high response rate and Southwark is reporting regularly to the government as required. Service users who have to pay for their support are directed to fairer charging assessments and there are linkages with the Housing Benefit service to help advise users. Performance for this, however, could be better monitored.
- 55** The Supporting People team is well resourced to administer the programme. The Council receives an administration grant of £327,660 from the DCLG⁹ and this is supplemented by an additional £198,000 from the Council. A further £10,000 is being made available later in the year to help cover the costs of an Equality Impact Assessment. These resources are significantly more than for some other London boroughs with similar sized programmes. These resources have helped to deliver the service review programme on schedule and to commission a high number of new services.
- 56** The delivery of the Supporting People programme has benefited from stability in the SP team. The manager has been in post for seven years and has therefore overseen the introduction of the programme, the development of the strategy, the service review programme and subsequent commissioning decisions. Team members have also remained fairly constant, with low staff turnover.
- 57** The team has a good understanding of the Supporting People agenda and is able to convey this to others effectively. Communication is good and queries are responded to promptly. The team is positively viewed across the Council and by external stakeholders.

⁹ Department of Communities and Local Government.

- 58 The team has worked to provide good support for providers. Supporting People grant payments have been made to providers accurately and on time. Smaller providers have received training, for example, in completing monitoring returns, and have received mentoring from larger providers. Providers we spoke to and surveyed confirmed this view, with particularly high satisfaction ratings for the support and information provided. Providers are also very satisfied with the arrangements for involving them in the delivery of the programme and the approach to obtaining value for money. There are commissioning and contract officers within the team who lead on a different client groups and attend (or chair) that sub-group of the CB - this provides consistent input and has helped to develop specialist expertise.
- 59 Work plans are in place for both the programme as a whole, for the sub-groups, the team and for individual team members. These are based on the priorities within the five-year strategy and have clear targets. Progress is reported to the sub-groups and CB for the relevant plans.
- 60 The CB has not yet agreed inclusion of Supporting People funding in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Southwark Council, but has considered proposals to do so. Southwark is in Round Three, and is negotiating its LAA with a view to being agreed and in place by April 2007. The first stage submission to the Government Office for London was agreed in June 2006. It is being considered which funds should be included, and this includes a small element of Supporting People funding. The CB has looked at proposals to include projects for homeless families with complex needs and for learning disabilities. The CB decided that more work was needed to explore these proposals with a view to considering inclusion in the LAA for the following year.
- 61 The performance management framework includes robust financial monitoring and regular reporting to the CB and the Housing senior management team. There is clear monthly reporting of spending and projections to the CB in line with corporate financial procedures, including detailed budget projections covering all schemes for the current year and the next two years. Financial data is provided for each service and also summarised by client group and by provider. This helps inform decision-making and to control expenditure within budgets. Current projections show a reserve of £51,000 for 2006/07, and plans agreed by the CB to spend £149,000 of the current underspend.
- 62 Good quality performance information has been provided to the CB, but in a few areas this has been recent or lacks analysis. The CB has received detailed reports on all service reviews, commissioning decisions and update reports on progress against work plans and the action plans following service reviews. Regular quarterly reports on the key performance indicators started in March 2006 and there have only been two of these so far. Reports summarise where there are issues about utilisation of services and staffing levels, but it is not clear from the reports what action is being taken where performance is weak. Although the CB receives detailed reports on Supporting People grant expenditure, there is not similar reporting or analysis of the administration grant, despite this being a sizeable budget in Southwark.

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- 63 Senior managers and key Members are kept well informed about the Supporting People programme. There are regular reports to the portfolio holder, the Director of Housing and to the senior management team in Housing Services. Performance is not regularly reported to full council as highlighted under 'Governance and Partnerships' above. It is, however, reported to the LSP.
- 64 Fairer Charging assessments are carried out within reasonable timescales and are based on a clear procedure. The policy has been in place since 2002 and is due to be reviewed shortly as it is out-of-date. There is also a specific policy for leaseholders introduced in June 2006. Service users not entitled to benefits, who receive long-term support, have to make payments for the support they receive. These people are encouraged to apply and this is publicised in the Supporting People leaflet. Between April 2003 and September 2006, 255 assessments have been carried out (36 so far in 2006/07), of which 50 have resulted in a charge being made (9 in 2006/07). The Supporting People team has direct access to the Housing Benefit computer system which enables them to check whether an assessment will be needed. Assessments are generally turned around within a week of being received by the Social Care team. However, there is no specific turn-around target and performance is not routinely monitored, which makes it difficult to check whether good performance is happening consistently.
- 65 Arrangements are in place to help service users claim benefits and maximise their income. The Fairer Charging team has a dedicated welfare rights service which is available to Supporting People service users as part of their fairer charging assessment. A protocol has been developed for the Housing Benefit service to provide an enhanced service to fast track claims for residents of schemes with a high turnover – for example a women's refuge that opened last year and a scheme for young people at risk.
- 66 Although there has been a risk mapping exercise which captured most risks, it did not include contingency planning if providers failed to deliver. There is now a contingency plan being developed that was considered by the CB in August 2006 and it is now being consulted on. Financial and reputational risks have been mapped and assessed using a corporate framework which includes looking at degree of impact and the likelihood of events occurring, and identifying the areas of greatest risk and what controls are in place. Risks are partly mitigated through accreditation of all providers and through a joint protocol for housing associations and their managing agents. Information about providers has been shared through joint arrangements with other local authorities in the South East London sub region, which has helped to improve information about any concerns with the viability or performance of providers.

- 67 The Council has regularly submitted accurate and complete data to the DCLG¹⁰ within required timescales. Submissions of quarterly milestones reports have been made on time with the exception of one report around October 2005, due to IT problems in Southwark. No problems have been reported by DCLG on this. A high proportion of providers are submitting performance information to the Supporting People team on time and this was 96 per cent in 2005/06. This is significantly higher than the rate of return in the neighbouring boroughs that Southwark has used as a comparison.

Commissioning and performance

- 68 Strengths outweigh weaknesses for the commissioning and performance arrangements for the programme. Good progress has been made in ensuring steady state contracts are put in place, and internal providers have been treated in a similar way to external ones. Service specifications have been discussed with providers, are comprehensive and include performance measures which are partially based on outcome measures. Tendering and commissioning processes are transparent and seek to achieve value for money. There are a number of examples of how Southwark is working with other authorities to improve the approach to Supporting People and this includes the development of outcomes measures. Appeal systems for providers are in place though only recently has this included an independent assessment. Complaints procedures for service users are in place for both providers and the Supporting People team.

Contract management and quality assurance

- 69 Service reviews were completed on time using an effective approach and methodology. All service reviews were completed by the DCLG deadline of 31 March 2006 and the majority by March 2005. The review timetable was based upon the shadow strategy which gave priority to reviewing services with high costs compared to the ODPM¹¹ benchmark or where there were concerns about the quality or performance of the service. All providers and two thirds of services received a validation visit (180 validation visits out of 271 services reviewed), which is a reasonable sample. Providers have confirmed that the service review process was well managed and that they were satisfied with the review outcomes. Document reviews have shown the process to be thorough. All validation visits were based on the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF), effectively consulted service users and examined whether services were strategically relevant and value for money.
- 70 There was also a consistent and rigorous approach to the service reviews for internal services. The Supporting People team carried out these service reviews early in the programme. There is evidence of a comprehensive approach to questions of strategic relevance, value for money and QAF standards - and the approach was consistent with that taken for external providers. This has helped to ensure that internal services are not given preferential treatment.

¹⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government - the government department responsible for Supporting People, which took over from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

¹¹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - now the DCLG.

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- 71 Arrangements are in place to ensure a transparent procurement process. All contracts are approved by the CB. The process requires specific reports to be presented before new contracts are awarded or existing ones are varied. Reports for the Accountable Officer and CB are clear and detailed, and assist decision-making about the strategy for procuring services and the awarding of contracts following tendering processes. All reports include input from corporate services including the legal, financial and procurement services. They also explore the impact on users and include risk maps where relevant.
- 72 The commissioning of new services has demonstrated good management of the process. Tendering timetables have been approved and followed to help prevent delay. In most cases there has been an open tender. In a few, a selective tender has been based on an examination of the market for the service and this has required specific approval as required by the Council's contract standing orders. There are examples of the Council working to develop the market in areas where there were few potential providers, for example, for services for people with physical disabilities. This approach is helping to give good value for money and to ensure that providers with specialist knowledge are able to deliver the service.
- 73 The Council has made good progress in awarding steady state contracts. There are 180 contracts and 62 of these are now covered by either a steady state contract or a service level agreement. Of the remainder, 23 have not been progressed and 95 are at various stages progressing to completion. Contracts are initially for one year in response to the uncertainties about future funding, but can be renewed for a further three years without additional work.
- 74 The steady state contracts are comprehensive and make clear the service to be provided. Contracts have a service specification detailing the support service, targets to be met and the charge for the service. Contracts also include arrangements for resolving disputes and action that can be taken if the provider fails to provide an appropriate service. The content and format of the steady state contracts were developed following consultation with providers through the three borough forum. Individual service specifications were also developed in discussion with the providers of the service, which will help both parties to have a good understanding of issues in service delivery and to be clear what level of performances is expected.
- 75 There has been a robust approach to the negotiation and awarding of contracts. Steady state contracts have not been issued until the provider has been independently accredited through the cross-authority protocol and the service has achieved at least a level C rating under the Quality Assessment Framework. The focus has been on ensuring that the contracts include a detailed and relevant service specification. This has led to some delays against the Council's own timetable, but will help to ensure good contract management.
- 76 Contracts are now better organised than they were. A number of smaller services provided by one provider have been merged. This has led to fewer contracts and these will be easier to administer.

- 77 Internal services have been treated in a similar way to external ones. Although internal providers are technically awarded service level agreements rather than contracts, these are based on the same document used for the externally procured services. The Council has prioritised negotiation and completion of these service level agreements, and most of these are in place and the remainder nearing completion. These were given priority because the Council considered it important to ensure objectivity and create a distance between the provider and the commissioner within the housing service.
- 78 Commissioning decisions have also shown that there is a level playing field for in-house service provision. For example, the sheltered housing service was found to be costly and the service was respecified - and this decision was taken over two years ago. The resettlement service was assessed as a level D under the QAF following its service review and this service has been reconfigured and more closely specified.
- 79 The approach to quality assurance and monitoring of the new steady state contracts been put in place, but has not yet been fully implemented. The Supporting People Team has had many meetings with providers over the last two years, but this has not been systematic performance monitoring. The team has, however, been meeting to discuss the outcomes of reviews and deal with reconfiguration of services. This has included the follow-up of action plans to improve services, and ensuring a smooth transfer for service users where the service has significantly changed.
- 80 Providers are now required to complete an annual QAF self-assessment and this will be streamlined so that only one QAF is required for each contract (and not for each service). The validity of the assessments will be monitored using a spot check approach and all providers will have at least one contract meeting each year. Providers are required to produce an action plan and to demonstrate they are working to improve the standard of their services. This started in June 2006 for the services reviewed in 2003/04 and will commence in November 2006 for the services reviewed in the last two years.

Outcomes measurement

- 81 Outcome measurement for assessing performance is being developed through a joint pilot with Lewisham and Lambeth. The pilot is looking at outcomes of support services for offenders and homeless people. This commenced in July 2006 and is linked with the Local Area Agreements. The pilot is also engaged in the DCLG national Outcomes SP Steering group.

- 82 The steady state contracts include interim outcome measures while the pilot is taking place. The requirements for performance in service specifications are partly based on outcomes and follow the themes being developed by the DCLG - safety and security; developing and maintaining financial welfare; maintaining health; social involvement; fair access and diversity; and maintaining independence. This involves submitting additional quarterly data as well as reports on activities to help improve independence and quality of life. This will help obtain information about how support services are benefiting service users and achieving commissioning objectives, though in the current format it will be difficult to compare between providers.

Cross-authority working

- 83 Cross-authority working is well developed. A number of initiatives have been developed jointly with two neighbouring inner London boroughs, Lewisham and Lambeth. This has included a joint provider forum - with information and training events shared and joint accreditation protocol; the development of the steady state contract format; and developing outcome measures. Southwark is also working with other authorities in the south east London sub-region to improve the quality of contracted services through a contracts sub-group. This includes the joint commissioning of some services (for example for support to teenage parents), needs mapping for sheltered housing, a protocol for decommissioning, and extending joint accreditation to the south west sub region. Southwark is also an active partner in the London Councils¹² Supporting People Strategic Forum and chairs the South East London Regional Implementation Group (a sub-group of the south east London housing partnership). These activities will help the Council to work more efficiently and effectively, and access good practice approaches.
- 84 Southwark and Lambeth are running one of six national DCLG pilots looking at how housing support can impact on improvements in health. The Southwark and Lambeth pilot provides outreach and referrals for hard-to-reach people living with HIV. Following the pilot, Southwark will tender HIV support jointly with Lambeth and Lewisham. The outcomes of this pilot have recently been published and so can help benefit future commissioning of services. Further details are highlighted under 'Positive Practice' in the appendix to this report.

Complaints

- 85 The approach to complaints is clear and based on a policy approved by the CB in December 2003. Users are informed about how to complain in the general leaflet which directs them to their provider's complaints procedure in the first instance and to the Supporting People Team if this is not dealt with well or if the complaint is of a serious nature. However, it is not always made clear in the literature supplied by service providers. The service reviews checked whether this process was working effectively and that complainants are able to get their complaint properly dealt with.

¹² Organisation for London local authorities - until recently known as the Association of London Government (ALG)

- 86 Where complaints have been received by the Supporting People Team, they have been dealt with, but this has not always been prompt. There have been six complaints from August 2004 to September 2006. Two examples showed delays of several weeks in responding to the complaints, though the others were dealt with quickly. Timescales for dealing with these complaints are not clear and systems to monitor them are not in place. Complaints have been taken seriously and resolved, and the complainants have received good quality information in the response to the complaint.

Appeals process

- 87 The administration of appeals has been satisfactory. So far there have been 16 appeals and examples seen have shown that the CB has considered the views of providers before making a final decision. Providers have been advised about the reasons for the decision made and where difficult decision made this has included several meetings with the provider. Where reasonable evidence has been provided, the CB has changed its original decision.
- 88 However, appeals have been considered by the CB without any independent input. A new procedure approved in July 2006, includes reasonable timescales and input from an independent organisation. However, this has not yet been used to consider an appeal. The new arrangement is for the London Borough of Bexley to review Southwark's decisions and this will then be taken into account by the CB when considering the appeal. Southwark has consulted providers and found them to be satisfied with the process in place.
- 89 The Council has tried to keep the number of appeals down by keeping providers well informed about the results of service reviews. Providers get two chances to comment on the content of reports - firstly in response to a draft report and then they receive the final report ten days before it is sent to the CB to allow for an appeal to be submitted.

Value for money

- 90 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the approach to achieving value for money for housing-related support services. Cost comparisons with other inner London councils vary, with services for some client groups costing more and some costing less than in other boroughs. It is difficult to make an accurate comparison as most comparison figures relate to two years ago and significant changes have been made since then in the costs of services. The approach to value for money is supported by a specific strategy and the Supporting People five-year strategy. Savings have been made from the decommissioning and reconfiguration of services which have been reinvested into services which are better value for money. One area that has not been explored is the administration costs of the programme, which have been compared but not analysed for potential efficiency savings.

How do costs compare?

- 91 Average cost of services compared with other London authorities shows a mixed picture. The latest available comparative data from the DCLG is for 2004/05. Comparing with other inner London boroughs, more than half of the client groups show costs as lower than average for 2004/05 - for example, for alcohol and drug problems, for people with mental health problems and women at risk of domestic violence. Southwark is ranked on average 9th highest in client group costs out of 14 inner London boroughs and average costs are higher for services for offenders and young people leaving care. However, the data is affected by a few high costing services.
- 92 There has been a small fall in average unit costs from platinum cut data to 2004/05 but there have also been some further cost savings since 2004/05. The average weekly unit cost in 2003/04 was £74.72 and is £72.79 in 2006/07 based on the budgeted figures.

How is value for money managed?

Methodology for contracted services

- 93 The Supporting People five-year strategy has clear value for money themes particularly around procurement and contract management. There are examples of commissioning plans which aim to achieve value for money and good quality services for service users. This includes the joint commissioning of services with other funding streams like probation and social services, cross-authority commissioning, spot purchasing to meet some individual needs, and the piloting of pooled budgets with social care and health. It also considers in detail value for money issues for each client group.
- 94 There is also a value for money strategy for the Supporting People programme, agreed by the CB in September 2005. This is based on benchmarking costs of support services with other councils, examining the providers' costs to ensure charges reflect reasonable costs and ensuring that levels of support provided are reasonable. Part of the approach is to ensure that providers who are good employers are not penalised, and that where costs are driven down it does not unreasonably affect the pay of the support workers. The survey of providers undertaken for the inspection indicated that all respondents were satisfied with the approach to value for money.
- 95 An additional value for money review of services is taking place and is due to be completed by the end of October 2006. This is taking a more robust look at value for money for the services that were reviewed before the value for money strategy was introduced. The assessment of value for money in service reviews in 2003/04 and 2004/05 were based on benchmark figures only. The Council is anticipating further cost savings through this review, as some organisations have high overhead costs and low staffing costs.

- 96 Inflationary costs were born by providers for 2004/05 and 2005/06 apart from some services where the grant payments were low. This changed, however, in 2006/07 and an inflationary uplift of 2.5 per cent was applied in recognition that providers may be adversely affected without an increase. Now that services have been reviewed, there is greater confidence in the charges paid representing value for money. Future efficiency savings are to be achieved through decommissioning less strategically relevant services, rather than withholding inflationary increases which would affect all services.
- 97 Southwark has tackled services that were ineligible for Supporting People grant funding. These have been decommissioned and this has increased the grant available for eligible services. The funding for services decommissioned in this way totalled £621,000. There are, however, some 'grey' areas which have not been tackled. The approach taken to high cost services for people with learning disabilities has been to impose a spending cap rather than look in detail at the eligibility of services. The spending cap is £600 per week and was set at this level to prevent jeopardising services for vulnerable people. Costs over £350 are being reviewed this year - this affects a very small proportion of the services.

Benchmarking

- 98 Southwark has benchmarked its costs using both the DCLG¹³ figures for 2004/05 and by participating in a local benchmarking group. The DCLG data has been compared with inner London, the whole of London and nationally. The benchmarking club involves six London boroughs comprising Southwark, Lambeth, Camden, Croydon, Sutton, and Bromley. This has looked in more detail at the support service costs for each client group in 2005/06. For example, it looks at the costs of different types of schemes. These comparisons have been used to check whether costs are high and have been applied during service reviews and in contract negotiations. The benchmarking data is also being used as part of the value for money review which is currently ongoing and will help inform decisions to make efficiency savings.

Procurement

- 99 The approach to procurement has been consistent and is based on a corporate framework. Input from the central procurement team helps to ensure that a value for money approach is taken.

¹³ Department of Communities and Local Government

- 100 There are examples of joint procurement used to provide more effective services. For example:
- Supporting People and Youth Offending Team budgets have been used to jointly fund four units in the Gateway Foyer for young offenders leaving institutions who would otherwise be homeless;
 - Supporting People and social services have jointly funded four units of temporary housing for older people leaving hospital ('Step down' project); and
 - Supporting People and DAAT funding is providing 11 units of move on accommodation for drug users on successful completion of detox programmes, which is helping people who would otherwise be vulnerable to a relapse.
- 101 Since 2004 Southwark has outsourced the accreditation of providers in a joint arrangement with five other London boroughs. This cuts down costs and also is less onerous for providers working in more than one of these boroughs. Negotiations with other boroughs are currently underway to increase the number of local authorities involved, and this should reduce costs further.

Improving value for money

- 102 Decommissioning services has released £2.7 million, and £2.4 million of this has been reinvested in other services, leaving £255,000 efficiency savings. Most of these services were decommissioned because of a lack of strategic relevance. Others were not eligible for Supporting People funding or have been transferred to a new provider. At the same time more units of support have been provided – an increase of 244 units from 2003/04 to 2006/07. More people are benefiting from support services and it is costing less.
- 103 The reconfiguration of services is also improving value for money. There are a number of services where costs are less or there is an improvement in the quality and relevance of services. Examples of this are as follows.
- Provision for offenders – average weekly costs were in the highest 25 per cent of London Councils at £314 for 2004/05 (inner London median average was £160). This was due to one high cost scheme¹⁴ for offenders with drug issues, decommissioned following the service review, because it was not achieving significant reduction in drug use and was poor value for money. Savings from this were reinvested in more cost effective alternatives for offenders including an assessment and resettlement service. The average weekly cost for this client group is now £106.
 - Sheltered housing - overall costs have reduced significantly from £3.79 million in 2003 to £2.34 million in October 2006. The number of units has also reduced as there is a lack of demand for this type of supported housing. The average weekly cost per support unit has decreased from £51.81 to £33.97. This has been mainly due to a decrease in staffing for the in-house out-of-hours service. Costs of this service are likely to reduce much further as plans already being implemented include the merging and better management of the out-of-hours service and use of SMART technology.

¹⁴ £646 per week

- The community alarm service for older people - average weekly cost per person reduced from £6.21 in 2003 to £2.50 in October 2006. This has saved over £100,000 and is still being delivered to the same number of clients.
- Mental health services - expenditure is still the same for this client group but more units of support are available - this has increased from 475 to 527, and the type of services have changed to better meet needs.

Cross-authority approach

- 104** There is recognition, in both the housing strategy and the Supporting People Strategy, that sub-regional working has a significant role to play in providing services for vulnerable people. For example, by providing shared services across boroughs for small client groups where there may not be a critical mass of demand in Southwark to support a service. This is the approach taken in the joint pilot for HIV services, referred to above, where Southwark is working with Lambeth to deliver services for Southwark residents that the Council would not be able to commission on its own.

Administration grant

- 105** There has not been a value for money assessment of the expenditure on administering the Supporting People programme. The Council has, however, compared its administration budgets with 11 other London boroughs, as a percentage of the grant budget. This shows it to be the fifth most costly of the 12 authorities to administer the programme. Southwark has not explored whether the administration costs should remain the same now that the service review programme has been completed.

Service user involvement

- 106** There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses for user involvement. Although consultation has been strong in the service review process there has been less evidence of user involvement at a strategic level. This will now be happening through the representation at the sub-groups and through the strategic forum, though this is too recent for clear outcomes. There are however, some examples of where users' views have led to changes in the type of service procured, and there is also evidence that the CB has taken user views into consideration about the future of specific services. There are also good opportunities for service users to be involved at the schemes where they live.
- 107** A strategy for strategic service user involvement has been developed, but the approach is recent and has varied in its achievements depending on the client group. The approach was developed through the sub-groups of the CB and has varied according to the wishes and needs of the different client groups. Service user representation has now been identified for young people, people with physical disabilities, and older people – and in other groups a means of engaging with users has been identified. The groups for mental health and learning disabilities (Mind users' council and Speaking Up user group) do not want to elect a representative to a sub-group but want to be consulted on specific issues.

- 108** Only two of the sub-groups have had active service user representation. These are the group for elderly people, which commenced in January 2006 through a representative from the Pensioners' Forum; and the group for young people, which commenced in July 2006 by a representative elected through a focus group for young people held in 2005. Other groups have plans to address this. For example, a user representative has been elected to the physical disability group though has not yet attended a meeting. The sub-groups for learning disability and mental health have expressed a preference for using existing forums for consultation through the partnership boards and reporting views back to the sub-groups.
- 109** A strategic forum has been established, though terms of reference are not yet in place and there has only been one event, in February 2006, with another planned for October 2006. Attendance at the forum included people from provider organisations and over a third of attendees were from various community or user representative groups. This will help to gain views of users through representative groups.
- 110** Service users have opportunities for being involved and informed in the service they receive. Service reviews routinely checked the arrangements for this and it is now included within service specifications. We also found that schemes hold regular meetings with users and that users are aware of how they can put their views forward. There are examples of service delivery changing as a result of user engagement.

Involvement in contracting and monitoring

- 111** The methodology for service reviews used a robust approach to involving users. All validation visits included engagement with users and a variety of approaches were used depending on the nature of the service and the client groups. For example, there was a postal survey of all sheltered housing tenants receiving the service from the Council. In some smaller schemes, user meetings were held at the schemes as part of the process. Reports to the CB have included the views of service users, which has helped to inform commissioning decisions.
- 112** Service users have also been consulted as part of the strategic reviews of services and there is some evidence that views have been used to make strategic decisions, for example in the strategic review for older people's services.
- 113** Service users who were consulted during service reviews did not routinely receive feedback on the outcomes of the reviews or how their views contributed to changes or improvements in the service. They were, however, kept informed where there were plans to significantly change the service provided. There has, for example, been regular consultation with older people living in sheltered accommodation and in services that have been decommissioned. Service users have been consulted following decisions taken to decommission or reconfigure services and there are several examples of treating users sensitively in this respect

- 114 Service users have sometimes been involved in the selection of new service providers and the development of service specifications. For example,
- a service user sat on the selection panel for a contract for floating support for young people; and
 - the specification for the floating support service for people with physical disabilities was developed following consultation with the Southwark disablement association.
- 115 Service user involvement in contract monitoring has not yet been developed. This is because there has been limited contract monitoring so far. However, there are plans to involve users in this when routine monitoring is established.

Outcomes from user involvement

- 116 Service user views from consultation exercises have been used to inform the commissioning plans of the programme and have led to a different approach to service delivery. Examples of this include:
- the reports to the CB following each service review include service user views;
 - the commissioning of pre-tenancy support for people with learning disabilities moving on from supported housing into permanent housing, to provide independent living and tenancy sustainment skills;
 - floating support for vulnerable adults is now better co-ordinated with other services, based on the views of users at a forum held at a day centre; and
 - consultation with older people highlighted the need for the outreach project for elders.

Access to services and information

- 117 There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses in the access to services. Improvements to access arrangements include better assessment and referral arrangements, some of which are already in place and others which are currently being developed. Access to floating support is not that clear except for homeless applicants. The service at the first point of contact is variable with some issues about getting through on the phone and the information available in some offices. Written and electronic information is generally good and available in a range of formats appropriate for vulnerable people.

Access to services

- 118 Corporately there has been a focus over the past three years on modernising and improving customer care and access. This has included the setting up of the three one-stop shops and a central telephone contact centre between May 2005 and May 2006. There are also five area housing offices and other access points such as social services area offices, the homelessness and housing advice services.

- 119 The helpfulness of staff at the reception areas in various offices is variable. Mystery-shopping checks made for the inspection showed that in some locations there was a lack of knowledge about where to refer vulnerable people requiring support services, including a social services office unable to direct our inspector to homelessness services for young people. One housing office was unable to help with advice about domestic violence and advised that this must be referred to the authority where the victim lived and another housing office had little information to offer to young people experiencing drug problems. Other offices were helpful and knowledgeable about the services available, however, including the homeless person's unit and most had leaflets about the Supporting People programme on display. This will help potential users to find out about the programme and access relevant services.
- 120 The Council's new one-stop shops have ready access to interpreters and are responding to over 400 requests for interpreters and translations a month. This is a significant increase in demand prior to the one-stop shops being set up showing that this was an area of unmet need.
- 121 A specific housing advice telephone service was set up in 2005 and receives over 1,000 calls a month. Specialist housing advisers can give initial advice, make appointments for face-to-face interviews or refer people to other services. It takes calls from three direct lines - for homelessness, housing advice and allocations - as well as receiving calls routed via the main service centre. The telephone advisers have access to an online directory of advice services.
- 122 There is scope for improvement in the arrangements for the housing advice telephone service. Firstly, the corporate call centre is not yet handling many housing advice and homelessness calls well. The housing advice team is receiving a number of inappropriate referrals and there has not been liaison or meetings between the two services or consultation on scripts. Secondly, the housing advice team has been dealing with a high volume of calls (recently as high as 45 per cent) relating to the choice-based lettings scheme. This has impacted on the performance for the housing advice telephone line.
- 123 The advice line is not meeting its targets and the targets set are not particularly ambitious (to answer 80 per cent of calls within 60 seconds). For the year ending 31 December 2005, 95 per cent of calls were answered and 63 per cent within target times, with the average waiting time being 1.25 minutes. In the nine months to September 2006, 94 per cent of calls were answered and 66.6 per cent within target. There are similar performance ratings for the homeless persons unit. Although the performance has not been poor it is still a weakness and service users have not been dealt with as promptly as they should be.
- 124 The Supporting People Team, however, is responding promptly to telephone calls, which helps communications with its customers and partners. In March 2006 it answered 98.5 per cent of all calls and answered 99.9 per cent of calls within 30 seconds.

- 125 Mystery shopping telephone calls found a variable service in the advice given to potential service users and their advocates through the Council's telephone service. Some calls were responded to promptly and with relevant information, whereas others were unhelpful and directed to telephone numbers that were continually engaged (children's services duty line and sheltered housing assessment). This could make it difficult for vulnerable people to access services.

Assessment and referral arrangements

- 126 Access and referral arrangements for support services, but particularly the floating support services, are not as clear as they could be. For homeless applicants the situation is clearer, as staff there have more information and experience of services. However, for people not going through that route, there is no central point of assessment of suitability for the services available. There is a possibility that various advice staff will not know which service is the most suitable and that the potential client could be referred to inappropriate organisations and services. It is planned that there will be a floating support forum that will enable providers to discuss any issues with access to the services and referral between them, but this is not yet in place.
- 127 There has, however, been some improvement in the approach to assessment and referral for services funded by the Supporting People programme. For example:
- steady state contracts specify how referral arrangements will operate, how service users will be able to contact the provider and how the service will be delivered. This will help monitor access to services;
 - the commissioning of assessment and referral services for offenders and homeless people moving on to unsupported accommodation;
 - the access to support services for people with mental health issues being discharged from hospital has been streamlined through a joint assessment panel (Housing and PCT/Adult services); and
 - referral arrangements for young people at risk have been improved by better joint working arrangements between the housing service, education, Connexions, youth services and the Youth Offending Teams.
- 128 The present assessment and referral system for supported housing is heavily dependent on manual systems and does not always effectively match people with suitable vacancies. A project to improve access to supported housing is in progress and the new system is due to be ready for use by March 2007. This will be web-based and will provide information on supported housing vacancies. It is intended to help place homeless people needing support as well as enabling existing residents of supported housing to move on to a more appropriate level of support.
- 129 There are currently no providers making additional charges for housing-related support. This was challenged during the service review process and is being checked again through the value for money review. One provider was making such a charge, which was subsequently found to be eligible for support costs and the grant paid to the provider was increased to remedy the problem. This will help potential users to access services.

Information

- 130 Information for service users is clear and accessible, though limited to one generic leaflet and the Council's website. The leaflet includes information about accessing services, how to complain and fairer charging. In common with other council publications, the Supporting People leaflet is available in alternative formats – in seven other languages and in Braille and large print. The straplines also make clear what the leaflet covers, which helps customers know if it is worth asking for in another format.
- 131 Service users also receive information from their service provider. This was routinely checked during service reviews and is now part of the service specification within contracts. Our reality checks during scheme visits showed that information was readily available.
- 132 There is a good range of information about Supporting People on the Council's website, and navigation is fairly easy. The website does not provide a directory of local services, though there are links to the national on-line directory, to the housing advice service and a directory of homelessness support providers. However, the website does not offer information in other formats and does not make it clear where this can be obtained.
- 133 The 'Better Care, Higher Standards' charter has been recently reviewed by the Council and PCT. This informs people about the care and support services delivered by the Council and PCT, including Supporting People. It is aimed at helping users and carers to find out about services that will help to promote independence for those needing support. It sets out to ensure people receive sufficient information about services in the formats they need and know what standards of service to expect.

Diversity

- 134 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. A robust corporate approach is now being taken to help ensure that the needs of all communities are being addressed. Although a full impact assessment for the Supporting People programme has not taken place, it has already started and resources have been identified to assist this. The impact on diversity has been assessed for all service reviews and has informed commissioning decisions. The Council is aware of the diverse needs of clients and potential clients of the programme. The proportion of spending for BME groups has increased as a result of programme changes and there are examples of new services meeting specific needs.

- 135** Recommendations from a corporate report on equalities in 2005 have helped the Council to focus on its diverse communities. The Council invited a previous executive chair of the Commission for Racial Equality to look at how the Council is meeting the needs of its diverse population. The report has been used as the basis for improving the Council's approach. It has led to a programme of equality impact assessments, improvements in ethnic monitoring of services and new approaches to engaging with communities. There has also been an improvement in information - a recent programme of equalities awareness training has been delivered to elected members and is now being rolled out to staff. All reports now include equality and diversity considerations to better inform decision-making.
- 136** A programme of equality impact assessments within the housing service is mostly completed. This has included input from an independent equalities panel comprised of members of the community who oversee the scope, methodology and results of the assessment. A recent assessment looked at the impact of the choice based lettings scheme and led to additional support for vulnerable people bidding for properties. Community impact assessments became an integral part of the service review process for the Supporting People programme from 2005. A full impact assessment for the programme is planned for completion by March 2007 – resources of £10,000 have been identified and some initial work has already taken place. This will help to ensure that the Supporting People programme is addressing the diverse the needs of vulnerable people.
- 137** The CB has demonstrated that diversity issues are a priority and has requested and received update reports on a number of aspects. This has included reports on the take up of services and the impact on BME providers. Data for the take up of Supporting People services by ethnicity and gender has been reported on and compared to other London councils, though not fully analysed. This is planned as part of the full impact assessment.
- 138** A higher proportion of services provided by BME-led organisations have been decommissioned for cost, quality, or strategic relevance reasons, following service reviews. These organisations have found it more difficult to comply with contract conditions and demonstrate value for money. For example, in April 2005, of ten such services reviewed, seven were decommissioned or substantially remodelled. In response to this, the CB has considered detailed reports on the implications of commissioning decisions on services targeting minority groups. The CB has decided that it is more important to provide good quality services that reach a diverse range of customers than to support a diverse range of providers. Nevertheless, it has agreed to resource research into the costs of capacity building for small providers. It has also recognised that the Council as a whole needs to play a role in this and the Accountable Officer is participating in the corporate review of community engagement, which is due to report in November 2007. Southwark is also looking at capacity building for small BME providers jointly with other authorities through the three boroughs meetings.

- 139 The proportion of the Supporting People programme being spent on services for BME communities and people with disabilities is now higher than it was three years ago. The level of spending by the end of 2006/07 on these groups is projected to be 6 per cent lower than in 2003/04. However, this compares favourably with the overall fall in Supporting People grant of 12.5 per cent.

Identifying diverse needs

- 140 The Supporting People Strategy has considered the needs of BME communities within each client group, based on data for the profile of each group. Needs mapping research has included diversity issues and consultation exercises with service users and potential users has included a high level of people from BME communities.
- 141 Needs mapping has also identified the gaps in provision for some vulnerable and excluded groups like travellers and refugees. Interim needs mapping based on existing information has already been carried out, and the 2006/07 Supporting People action plan includes a more detailed mapping exercise for these groups by March 2007. Southwark is not currently intending to provide specific support services for refugees, but intends to respond to specific needs from groups requiring support. One example of this is the outreach service for older people which has targeted Somali and Vietnamese elders, as two groups with support needs who were not accessing traditional sheltered accommodation. Support services for travellers were consulted on when developing the shadow strategy. This found that the travellers' community in Southwark is a settled one and already receiving some services from the housing service.

Cultural sensitivity

- 142 Support services have been reviewed to assess the suitability of the services and whether they accommodate the various needs of the people using them. This was a standard feature of the Quality Assessment Framework and the validation visits. During service reviews checks were made to ensure information is provided in relevant formats, that staff are aware of cultural issues and have had relevant training and that where food is provided this takes account of the needs of various faiths and cultures. This will help ensure service users are receiving support services appropriate to their needs.
- 143 Some of the savings made through the service review process have been reinvested in services for specific groups. This has included BME elders - for example, there is now a scheme providing outreach support for frail elderly people and 45 per cent of its clients are BME compared to less than 5 per cent in sheltered schemes. Other examples are the additional funding for women at risk of domestic violence and outreach support for people with sickle cell anaemia.

Outcomes for service users

- 144** Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. Savings achieved through the service review programme have resulted in a number of positive outcomes for vulnerable people. Decommissioning services that were poor quality, ineligible or lacking strategic relevance, has released considerable funds and enabled reinvestment in more appropriate services. A number of services have been reconfigured to improve the scope and quality of provision. The quality of services provided is generally high and service users have expressed satisfaction with the support provided. A greater choice of service is now possible with a significant increase in floating support so that people do not always need to move to receive a service. Support planning arrangements are helping to ensure that individuals receive appropriate levels of support to help achieve greater independence.
- 145** Twenty six new services have been commissioned though not all are yet operational, and there are now 244 more units of support than in 2003. This includes increased provision of specialist floating support, resources to improve access into supported housing, and additional and remodelled services to meet some previous gaps in provision including higher support needs. For example, some of the funding for single homeless people has been redirected into services for homeless people with mental health or drug problems.
- 146** A wider range of support services is now available, creating more choice for service users. This includes the decommissioning of some accommodation-based services and commissioning additional floating support. At 1 April 2003 there were 583 units of floating support and by September 2006 there were 1,054 units in operation or commissioned and shortly to become available. This is a significant increase and applies to a number of client groups. An additional improvement was to decommission support services that were specific to one tenure or landlord and commission tenure neutral services. The largest new contract resourced in this way (300 units) is for single homeless people. Other examples of increased options through floating support are:
- the floating support service for women at risk of domestic violence to compliment the sanctuary scheme (6 units);
 - outreach and floating support for people with learning difficulties (122 units);
 - floating support for young people at risk (70 units); and
 - floating support for people with physical disabilities (34 units); and
 - outreach support for older people (150 units).

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- 147 The range of services has also been widened by commissioning specialist support services rather than generic ones. One example of this is the support service for young people which was predominantly accommodation-based and providing low levels of support. Services now include jointly funded schemes with Housing Services to prevent homelessness and resettle young offenders; a floating support service; additional hostel spaces for care leavers, and the re-provisioning of some existing services to include young people with more complex needs. Similarly, services for people with mental health problems now include support to enable discharge from hospital and more specialist floating support. This is helping service users by the better targeting of more complex needs.
- 148 The approach to providing housing-related support services for older people is part-way through a fundamental change. Legacy provision included a large supply of traditional sheltered housing much of which is low demand, a lack of extra care for the growing frail elderly population and a community alarm service. An options appraisal has been undertaken for the sheltered housing service which includes some decommissioning and remodelling into general needs housing, and is being implemented gradually to avoid distress. A range of outreach and cross-tenure services has been developed for older people, as follows:
- a proactive outreach service is in place which has provided support to people not wanting to move into sheltered housing and this has particularly benefited BME elders and owner occupiers (150 units);
 - another scheme in place since April 2005 has provided outreach support for people with dementia and mental health problems (40 units);
 - the community alarm service is being amalgamated with the out-of-hours service for sheltered housing and an assisted technology service (jointly funded with Social Care), partly for cost reasons but also to provide services across housing tenures;
 - increased support for elderly owner occupiers through the home improvement agency by funding an additional post and the provision of a handy person service; and
 - step down beds to avoid delayed hospital discharge.
- 149 The quality of services has improved. Following service reviews, 46 services were assessed as being level 'D' under the Quality Assessment Framework, which means they failed to reach expected standards. Some of these have been decommissioned and others have improved through the monitoring and follow-up of action plans. By August 2006 only six services were at level D and these are being dealt with or apply to unusual circumstances.

- 150** Support plans are in place and there are systems for assessing and reviewing support needs. Support planning processes were checked as part of validation visits and included interviews with service users. These checks looked at the assessment of support and quality assurance arrangements for this. Visits to schemes during the inspection found that support plans were in place and contained eligible services that promoted independence. Service users were aware of their plan and held their own copy. Support plans are being regularly reviewed and updated to ensure support provided is suitable for the service users. This is helping to ensure that service users are receiving a level of support that meet their needs and that Supporting People grant is being properly spent.
- 151** There are examples of good quality services being provided in the schemes that we visited. This included services that were helping to maintain or enhance independence, and in most the quality was of a high standard. Service users were able to describe the benefits of the service and most were very satisfied with the service. The schemes provided fair or very pleasant environments to live in. There was evidence of an ethnically diverse range of users and that cultural needs had been addressed.
- 152** There was, however, one example of management issues at a scheme visited which related to insufficient control of anti-social behaviour in a hostel for people with alcohol problems. The Supporting People Team had not been aware of this, but had previously dealt with complaints at another scheme managed by the same provider.
- 153** Case studies setting out examples of the benefits of the Supporting People programme in Southwark are set out in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3 Case study one

Support services for people with mental health problems

J has been living for a year in a scheme for service users with mental health and forensic backgrounds, which is jointly funded by Supporting People grant Health and Social Services. The project consists of 12 one bedroom flats with staff on-site 24 hours a day.

He is a 40 year old political refugee granted legal right to remain after fleeing the Cameroon having been a victim of torture. One year after settling in the UK he attacked his wife whilst in a psychotic state. He then attempted suicide. He received treatment in a secure ward and then moved to supported housing with 24-hour cover. Over a one year period he was frequently re-admitted to hospital with suicidal thoughts.

Since his move a year ago there have been no more re-admissions to hospital. Staff have supported him in conjunction with the mental health team to deal with the loss of access to his children through increased meetings and structured activities.

Support services for people with mental health problems

He is now participating in Service User involvement activities such as planning the annual conference, giving the opening speech, and attending the Regional Service Users group. He has also completed a ten-week photography course at a local college.

This has resulted in a moderate saving of £5,000 in care and support costs and more significantly in the service user's quality of life by avoiding hospital admission and improving meaningful occupation of time, and stabilised mental health.

Table 4 Case study two

Support services for people at risk of offending

D is a 19 year old man who was being supervised under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) having committed a sexual offence. After a period in custody he returned to his mother's flat but the arrangement broke down shortly afterwards, and his probation officer referred him to the Criminal Justice Team. He was not eligible for housing under homeless legislation and the Criminal Justice Team thought private rented housing would not be supportive enough for him.

He was referred for supported housing in a specialist project for young homeless men and moved in within two weeks. D is now benefiting from the support and the constraints of living in the project, is more stable and is learning life skills to help him cope in independent accommodation. D has not re-offended in the 11 weeks since being accommodated. This is considerably less costly than the court and prison costs of re-offending and since DB is a sex offender, this financial cost saving can be added to the benefit to the community in reducing the risk of serious harm to members of the public.

- 154 The decommissioning of services has been well planned and executed. There is evidence to show that care has been taken to ensure that vulnerable people have been consulted during the process. Some service users have had to move as a result of decommissioning decisions which has presented a considerable challenge. Interim support arrangements have been commissioned while decanting has taken place to help provide a seamless service. An example of this is shown in the case study in Table 5 overleaf.

Table 5 Case study three**Decommissioning services for vulnerable people**

Two services provided by local housing associations provided keywork outreach support to 19 service users to people living in shared houses. It was decided that the services were not strategically relevant as there was an over supply of shared housing and the service delivery model was inflexible. The support could not be provided to others when clients no longer needed support, as they were assured tenants. In addition these were all contracted as short-term services and many of the clients had been resident for more than two years. It was decided to decommission the four services and use the money saved towards the cross-tenure wide floating support service.

The original timetable to close the service after six months was extended for a further six months to give time to arrange move on and support services for residents, including resettlement support. An interim support service was procured and 13 service users were decanted. To facilitate this, the Supporting People Team met regularly with service providers. Service users were given needs assessments for housing and support requirements, and helped through the process of applying for housing and given information about housing choices. An additional move on quota was negotiated. Service users are in the process of moving into a variety of alternative accommodation – general needs, supported housing and sheltered housing – except for one who was evicted and another is going through possession proceedings.

Summary

- 155** We have assessed the administration of the Supporting People programme by the London Borough of Southwark to be a good, two-star service.
- 156** The delivery of the programme demonstrates more strengths than weaknesses overall and positive practice in some areas. Governance and delivery arrangements are effective and have helped to drive a complex programme of improvements to support services, which are in line with the five-year strategy. Outcomes for service users flow from improvements in the quality of services and a reconfiguration of services which now give greater choice and better meet needs. The decommissioning of some services and reinvestment in more strategically relevant services has improved the value for money of services. Partnership working in the borough was another strength which is evident at all levels, and contributing to effective delivery of the programme.
- 157** There are also some areas of weakness and this is mainly in the arrangements for accessing services and in the involvement of service users which are still developing at a strategic level.

What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

What is the Council's track record in delivering improvement?

- 158** There is evidence of a strong track record with good progress made in most respects. There have been improvements corporately in assessments made by regulatory bodies and in key performance indicators. Actions within the Supporting People plans have been mostly delivered within target timescales, though there has been some slippage with commissioning specific projects. There is a track record of tackling some difficult commissioning decisions and handling these sensitively. The focus of the programme has been on improving value for money of the housing-related support services.
- 159** Corporately the Council's services are improving. The latest Audit Commission Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) is three stars and improving well (December 2005), with a three out of four score for both the Housing and Social Well Being categories. The latest assessment for Social Care is a three-star 'excellent' service with excellent capacity to improve in adult services. Over the last three years 55 per cent of key performance indicators have improved with 41 per cent now in the top two quartiles.
- 160** In 2006 Southwark was given Beacon Status for transforming the delivery of services through partnerships involving social services and the PCT for services for older people. It has also won other recent awards including 'Most Improved Council (Local Government Chronicle Awards 2005), and highly commended in 'Business of the Year Awards in 2005. This is a further indication of a positive direction of travel.
- 161** The Council has made good progress against its plans for the Supporting People programme. Actions in the 2006/07 plan are mostly being delivered on time - of 32 actions using a 'traffic light' system, 27 have green status, five amber and none are red. There are, however, some small areas of slippage, for example, in implementing joint monitoring arrangements and in some services coming on stream. These include delays in the commencement of the Community Mental Health Team support pilot; postponement of the older people's Telecare service from October 2006 to early in 2007; and a delay in recruitment to the HIA handyperson service. There is a similar finding for progress made against plans for previous years - they have been progressed and key actions completed, though with some slippage. It is, however, clear that plans are being delivered.
- 162** The Supporting People team has completed actions required by the Government within the timescales allowed. This includes the service review programme by 31 March 2006 and having in place the five-year strategy by March 2005. It has also submitted required quarterly data.

- 163** Southwark has made good progress with commissioning services which better meet local support needs in line with its five-year Supporting People Strategy. A large number of services that were either poor quality or not strategically relevant have now been decommissioned, and more appropriate services have been commissioned. Funding has shifted from low level provision to more specialist support particularly for some older people, offenders, young people at risk and people with mental health problems. The other main shift has been towards a greater variety of services with a reduction in accommodation-based services. This provides more choice and is generally a more cost effective means of provision. A significant proportion of new services are jointly funded with other partners, and others have been integrated or aligned with partner organisations' commissioning plans.
- 164** The priorities for increased provision within the five-year strategy have yet to be fully addressed. The strategy set out to increase provision for offenders and for people with physical and sensory disabilities. So far the expenditure for offenders has reduced and expenditure for physical disability support has remained broadly neutral. There are schemes in the pipeline, which should address provision for these two groups. Most of these are expected to be delivered by the autumn of 2006 and the remainder in the summer of 2007.
- 165** There is a track record of taking commissioning decisions which affect internal services as well as those provided externally. For example, action has been taken to remodel and reduce the costs of the expensive in-house sheltered housing service. The resettlement service, which had been classed as 'D', was recommissioned with a more robust service specification and has now achieved level C, which is an acceptable service quality.
- 166** The decommissioning and reprovision of services has been handled sensitively. For example, the strategic aim to reconfigure sheltered housing and reduce staffing cover and costs has been well handled. There has been extensive consultation with residents and briefing of councillors on the issue. A number of decisions have led to the decommissioning of services, with some requiring the decanting of residents. There is evidence of good communications and liaison with providers and service users through this process.
- 167** There has been a focus on value for money which is evident both in the strategic decision-making process, through the CB and at an operational level through the review process. Commissioning decisions have resulted in improved value for money and costs have been challenged. There are clear examples of achieving more services for less money, and of a better quality.

How does the Council manage performance?

- 168 There are more strengths than weaknesses in the approach to managing performance. There is effective leadership and a clear vision which is helping to deliver the programme. There is a robust planning structure, with plans that are co-ordinated, include areas of weakness that need addressing and have clear and specific targets to be met. There are also effective arrangements for measuring, monitoring and reporting performance, though the systems relating to the performance of the contracts are still being put in place. The Council has also demonstrated that it is networking, benchmarking and learning from good practice. However, it could do more to learn from complaints about Supporting People issues.

Improvement planning

- 169 There is a clear vision for the Supporting People programme. The Supporting People Strategy contains a vision which is linked to themes in the Community Strategy - addressing crime and fear of crime, improving the health of the population and addressing poverty. Key members of the CB also are clear about the challenges that need to be met over the next three years. This includes ensuring that the steady state contracts are put in place, focusing on the quality of the service specifications for those contracts; to consolidate the progress made and ensure the strategy is being delivered; and to manage the impact of reduced funding in adults and children's services.
- 170 There is a robust planning structure for the Supporting People programme. The five-year strategy contains the indicative five-year action plan and there are annual action plans. At the end of each year the five-year plan is reviewed and a new annual plan drawn up for the following year. Each of the six sub-groups has an annual work plan which flows from the overall annual plan. Sub-group workplans are monitored through line management arrangements as they are all chaired by, or involve, members of the Supporting People Team.
- 171 Plans are clear, detailed and linked to meeting Government requirements as well as housing and corporate objectives. The five-year strategy has clear aims and objectives and was developed in consultation with both service users and providers. Plans are 'SMART' and indicate who is responsible for actions and by when. Higher level plans could be improved through inclusion of outcomes targets and clearer milestones for some actions. However, lower level plans do include these details, with clear milestones and specific and measurable targets.

- 172 There are linkages between the Supporting People strategy and other council strategies and plans which relate to the delivery of housing-related support. It sets out the links with government plans for housing and in other areas like crime and disorder and health services. The Housing Strategy (2005/10) includes a strong focus on housing support needs and makes clear links with the Supporting People Strategy and includes a set of priority actions for each client group. It outlines the current and developing partnerships needed to deliver the strategy's objectives for effective housing support services. For example, the need for partnership working with health and probation services. The Homelessness Strategy (2003/06) has good links to the Supporting People shadow strategy and includes the Supporting People priorities. The homelessness plan for 2006/09 includes a number of actions which will impact on the provision of housing support. For example, it includes the sanctuary scheme for women at risk of domestic violence, the initiative for preventing homelessness for 16 and 17 year olds, and plans to improve access to health services for homeless people. There are also links with the Plan for Older People and the Mental Health Accommodation Strategy. These strategies are integrated into the commissioning plans for Supporting People and will help provide a more co-ordinated service.
- 173 Supporting People plans include measures to address most issues raised in the report. The key objectives for 2006/07 include good budget management, more robust contract management, and continuing to provide new services. There are also plans to improve processes by fully implementing the service user consultation plan, improving cross-authority working, joint monitoring and by conducting an equality impact assessment. To address access issues, corporately there are plans to improve the first point of contact with the Council through the telephone service. There are also plans to improve the assessment and referral arrangements for support services. A working group linked to all sub-groups of the CB is being formed to look at co-ordination of floating support services. An IT project is developing a system to improve access to and movement between supported housing schemes.
- 174 Plans include proposals for improving value for money. Value for money themes are included in the overall five-year strategy and during 2006/07 a value for money review is planned. This will involve revisiting services reviewed early in the programme before eligibility criteria and a more sophisticated approach to achieving value for money were in place. This will contribute to making further savings

Approach to continuous improvement

- 175 There is strong leadership and a good understanding of what is required to deliver the programme. This reflects the governance and partnership arrangements, and the political commitment mentioned earlier in the report. This has helped to deliver the programme and has included taking some difficult decisions.

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- 176** There are effective arrangements in place to monitor and drive performance. Firm and challenging targets have been developed at strategic and operational levels. For example, targets to address housing support objectives are in the Housing Strategy and plans for the Supporting People programme; and there are targets to improve the quality of services as assessed by the QAF and DCLG key performance indicators.
- 177** Systems to regularly monitor performance against Supporting People plans and targets include:
- delivery of the Supporting People strategy is monitored in several ways - through progress reporting to the CB, but also as part of business plan performance progress reporting within the Housing Service and corporately, and there are update reports to the Director of Housing and the Executive Member for Health and Adult Care;
 - the housing senior management team considers regular monthly performance reports and this includes reporting of the performance of the supporting people team;
 - IT systems are set up to monitor key performance indicators set by the DCLG, and this performance is regularly reported to the CB;
 - membership of a benchmarking club of London authorities which is comparing and analysing performance; and
 - robust and detailed financial information is reported monthly to the CB.
- This will help to ensure that the programme is meeting its targets.
- 178** The arrangements for monitoring services within the programme have, however, only recently been put in place. The steady state contracts are still being finalised and these include targets and performance measures. There is a programme of monitoring visits in place, which was just starting to happen at the time of the inspection and it will help to ensure that the contract requirements are being met. Monitoring of key performance indicators is also fairly recent but is now a regular report to the CB.
- 179** There are a number of steering groups responsible for delivering specific projects and which are linked to the Supporting People sub-groups. There are 16 of these and examples include groups to deliver the Telecare initiative, implementation of newly commissioned services and joint planning of capital-related service developments. Findings are fed back through the sub-groups and the CB for decision-making, and this is helping to improve the support services.
- 180** There is effective performance management of staff. All staff within the Supporting People team have detailed annual work plans, which include specific targets and milestones and are linked to key priorities for delivery of the programme. These are used as the basis for supervision meetings, which are held every four to six weeks. This process is audited by the human resources unit which has been found the team to be complying with procedures. There are also regular staff meetings held within the Supporting People team, which helps to ensure staff are kept well informed.

- 181** The programme has used good practice from other authorities and has also worked jointly with others to improve performance. There are a number of examples of this. In developing the referral and assessment service the team looked at the arrangements in place in Lambeth and in Kensington and Chelsea. The work to improve customer access across the Council followed consideration of existing models including those in Westminster, Liverpool and Sheffield. The value for money methodology was based on the approach taken by the local authority in Manchester, and Manchester has also helped with training on development of steady state contracts. Team members have been to several events hosted by other Councils and to see Supporting People services operating in other boroughs. This has helped the team to develop the programme, inform commissioning decisions and improve performance.
- 182** Mechanisms are in place to learn from complaints, but this has not been demonstrated specifically for the Supporting People programme. There are corporate performance monitoring policies and systems for complaints and a more detailed process for each directorate. Quarterly complaints reports to the Housing Services senior management team include detailed trend analyses of complaints and performance against targets. There is also a section on lessons learned from complaints which includes the action being taken to try to make sure mistakes or poor service are not repeated. However, there have been few complaints to the Supporting People team and it is not clear how lessons from complaints to the providers have been captured and used to drive improvement.

Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

- 183** There significant strengths in the Council's capacity to improve the programme. The Supporting People team has good capacity as it has been relatively stable and benefited from low sickness and staffing turnover. It is also supported by a human resources framework that has sufficient resources for training and development. There are sufficient financial resources to deliver the Supporting People strategy and the CB has agreed a small reserve for contingencies. There is also a robust approach to procurement which is helping to keep costs down and the Council is working to attract inward investment.
- 184** The programme is being administered by an effective and well resourced team. Funding of £198,000 for this year has been provided by the Council which is in addition to the DCLG administration grant. This will help the programme to continue to be delivered.
- 185** Officers and councillors involved in the delivery of the programme are clear about their strategic and operational roles and responsibilities. The role of the Commissioning Body is also clearly defined and it has been providing a strategic steer and overview.

52 Supporting People | What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 186** There are adequate financial resources to deliver the programme. Cumulative underspend from previous years of £2.124 million has been brought forward into 2006/07. This has arisen partly from void levels in sheltered housing and from some commissioning delays. Plans to spend this have been developed, except for a small contingency, to prevent the risk of the DCLG not allowing any underspend to be carried forward to 2007/08. A further £200,000 underspend has been projected for the next year, which would translate to a £220,000 overspend if an inflation increase is applied to the payments to providers in 2007/08 as planned. This shortfall is projected to be met through the current value for money exercise, which is identifying efficiency savings.
- 187** The financial reserves planned for the current year are £51,000, which is a fairly low level at 0.25 per cent of the programme. The CB has considered this and looked at the approach taken in other authorities. The decision is based on the lack of certainty about whether underspend can be carried forward and the consequent risk that grant not spent will be lost. The Council has also taken the view that financial risks are now fairly low as the major contracts are with organisations that have been accredited. Most providers also have their financial viability assessed by various regulators, and in addition to this there is an annual viability check carried out by an independent organisation. All these factors should help mitigate financial risks.
- 188** Human resource planning is effective. The Supporting People Team is fully staffed and capacity has benefited from low turnover and staff sickness. For three of the last four years turnover has been at 9 per cent, well below the sector average, though 18 per cent in 2005. Sickness rates have been within the Council's target of eight days (5.7 days to 31 August and 7.9 days to 30 September). There have also been no significant management problems. This will help the team continue to deliver the programme.
- 189** The Supporting People Team has a diverse profile, reflecting the community it serves. It is 50 per cent female, has over 50 per cent from BME backgrounds, and 40 per cent have been assessed as being disabled.¹⁵ This demonstrates the Council's commitment to equalities in its employment practices.
- 190** The programme is supported by training and development resources and planning. The Housing Service has achieved and retained Investors in People (IIP) status since April 2000. Training needs are identified and there are sufficient training opportunities. Team members have annual training and development plans, which identify specific and relevant training courses. This is integrated into the work plans and linked to strategic objectives.
- 191** IT systems are in place to help manage delivery of the programme. The system in place has been effective in monitoring the financial position though less effective at producing management reports. To help providers supply performance management information, a spreadsheet has been developed, which has contributed to the response rate for quarterly information.

¹⁵ By the Council's Occupational Health Adviser with reference to the Disability Discrimination Act.

- 192** There is a robust approach to procurement which is seeking good value for money but is also seeking to treat suppliers of services well and to consider sustainment and equalities issues. Southwark Council has been implementing a new approach to procurement since 2004 when its current procurement strategy was developed. The Supporting People Team has been working with the central procurement team which was established to centralise control of procurement and achieve efficiency savings. The team has found this a useful resource and there is evidence of a methodical approach to procurement.
- 193** The Council has worked to attract inward investment to deliver strategic and government priorities. In 2003, it bid jointly with Lambeth Council to become one of the Supporting People health pilots designed to help support the development of partnerships contributing to health objectives (further details in positive practice in the appendix to the report). Another example is the recent decision by the CB to bid for Department of Health capital funding to develop extra care in one of Southwark Council's existing sheltered schemes. This is helping to gain additional resources and to contribute to good practice approaches.

Summary

- 194** Our judgement is that the Council's Supporting People programme has excellent prospects for improvement.
- 195** Southwark has made good progress against its plans for delivering the Supporting People strategy and has achieved key tasks like the completion of service review by the government's deadline. Commissioning decisions have been taken to implement a complex programme and results are now being seen which include more appropriate services and better value for money. The Commissioning Body has a track record of taking difficult decisions and this includes substantial changes to internally provided services.
- 196** There is a clear vision for the programme which is underpinned by the strategy and associated plans which are 'SMART' and well co-ordinated. Performance systems are now in place for monitoring plans and targets, though the roll-out of the steady state contracts is still to be completed.
- 197** There is good capacity to deliver the programme which is being administered by a well resourced and stable team. There has also been good human resource and financial planning and sufficient IT resources to support this. There is also a robust approach to procurement which is monitored by a central team.
- 198** There are also some weaknesses which include some slippage against plans, including the roll-out of the steady state contracts and the commissioning of some services. Until the contracts are in place, the services will not be routinely monitored.

Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

Demographic information

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

Table 6 Profile of residents

Measure	Southwark	England
Population (mid-2004) ¹⁶	254,700	57,851,100
percentage of the population aged 65+	11.9	18.5
percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than white-British 2004)	37.0	10.44
percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ¹⁷	4.7	2.4
Deprivation index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ¹⁸	18	-

¹⁶ Source: mid-year population estimates (2004)

¹⁷ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (September 2006)

¹⁸ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority

Figure 2 English population by age group¹⁹

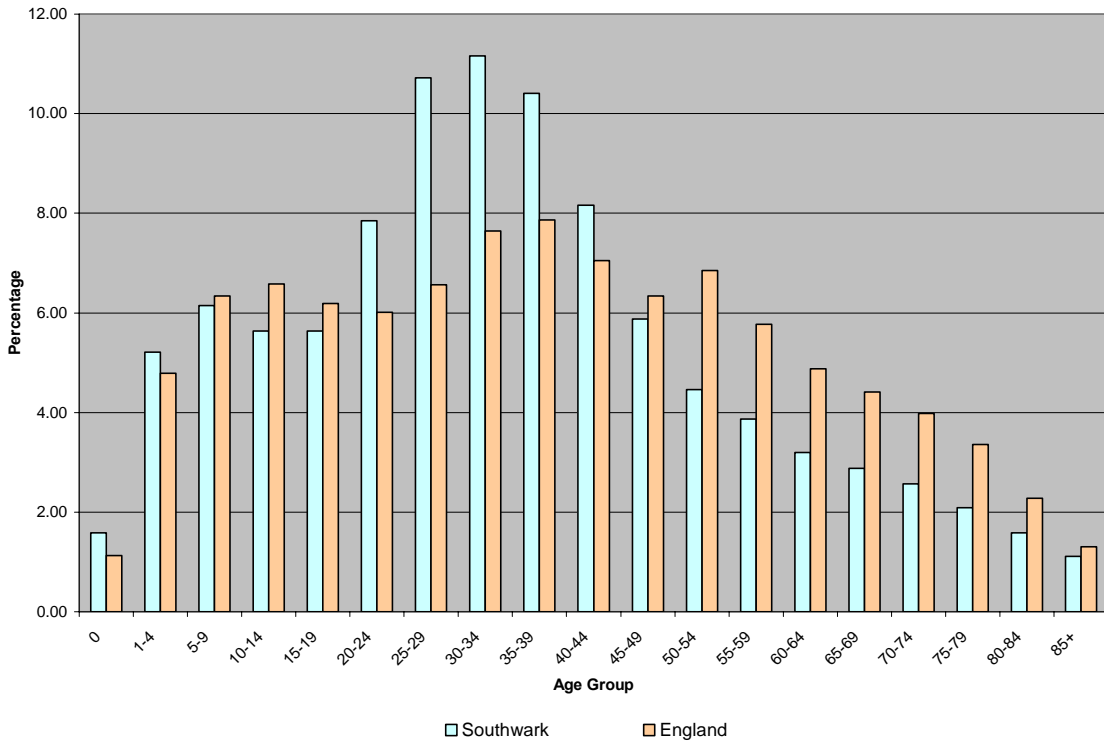
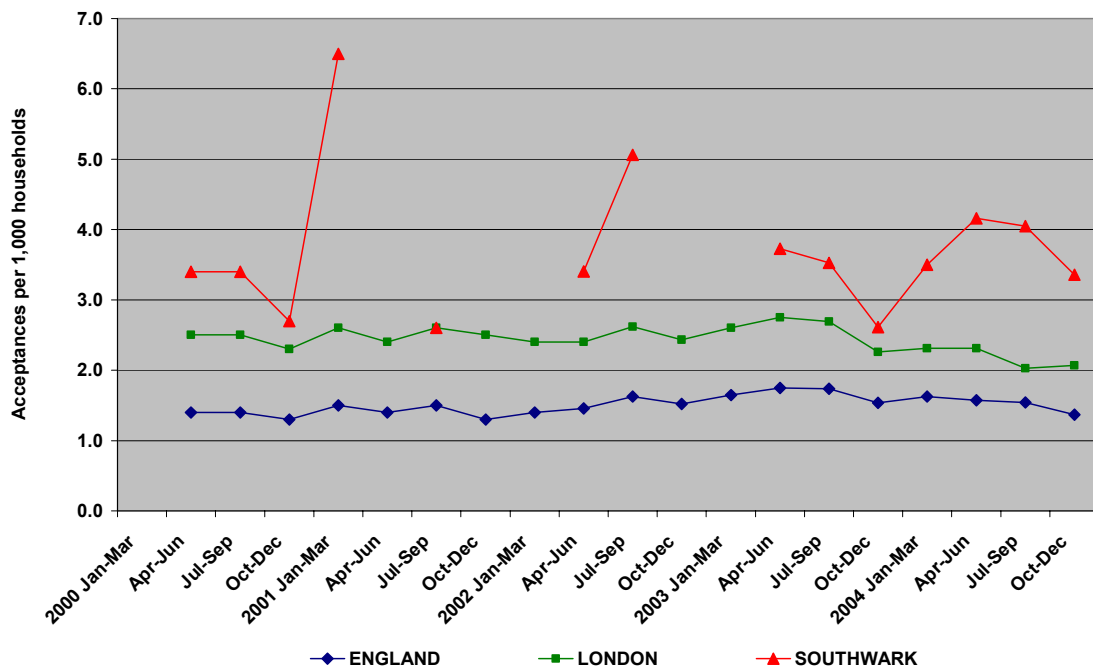


Figure 3 Households accepted as homeless compared to the region and to England (2000/04)



¹⁹ Source: mid-year population estimates (2004)

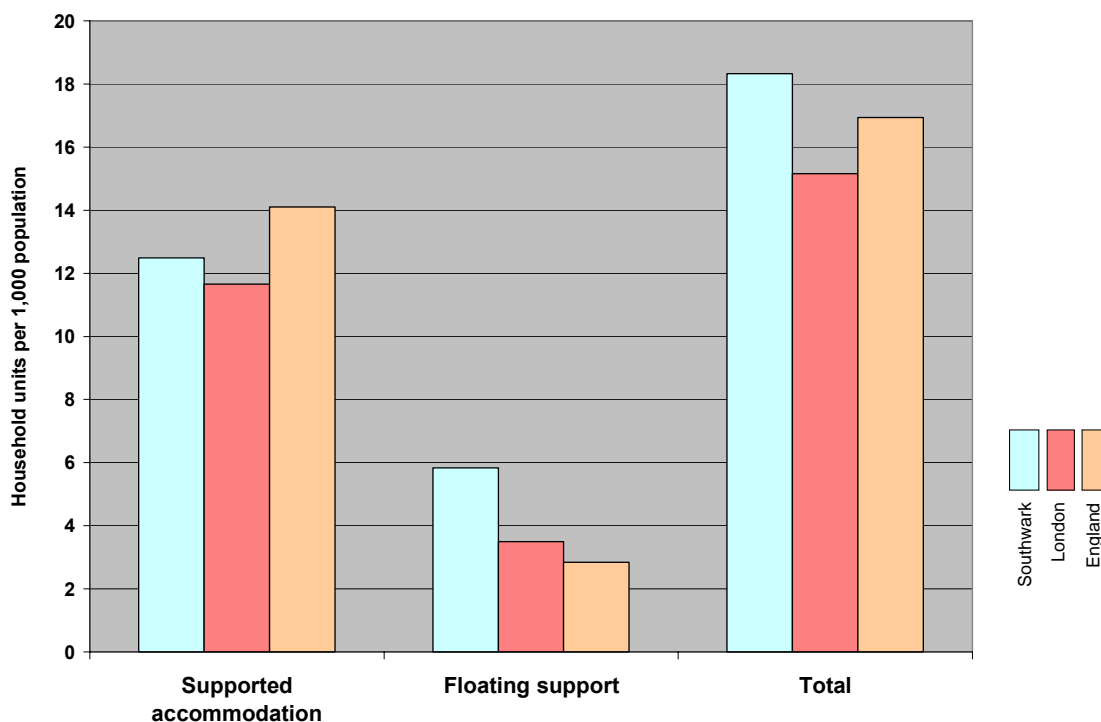
Performance information

200 This section highlights strong and weak areas of the Council’s performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements:

- data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores;
- star ratings for social services;
- Performance Assessment Framework indicators for social services; and
- relevant best value performance indicators.

Supporting people data

Figure 4 total service provision funded through supporting people²⁰



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

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

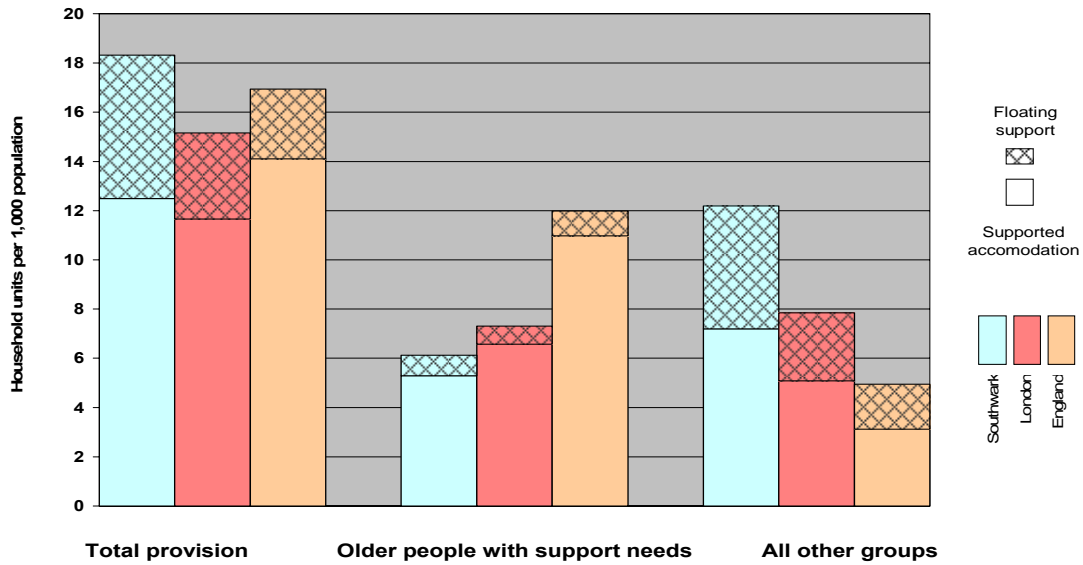
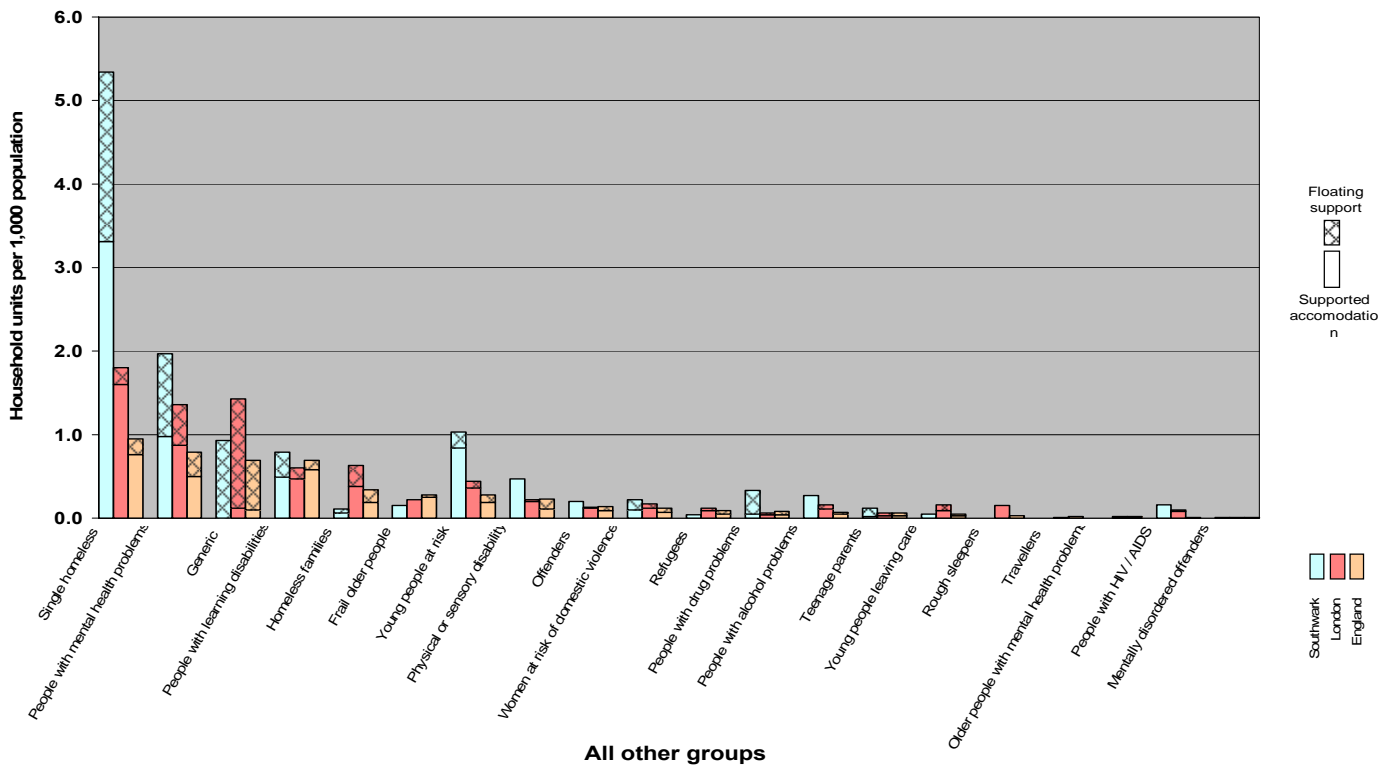


Figure 6 Services for other groups compared with the region and with England²¹



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

Table 7 Funding for Supporting People²²

Southwark	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Final Supporting People grant	£ 20,184,059	£ 20,108,613	£ 19,095,830
Pipeline allocation	£ 345,102	£ 609,700	£ -
Administration grant	£ 392,100	£ 406,675	£ 327,660

Table 8 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)²³

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Southwark	£1.54	£69.61	£77.00	£90.35
London	£0.97	£42.37	£48.73	£68.40
England	£0.70	£28.30	£34.71	£76.37

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

²² Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

²³ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003.

Figure 7 Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)²⁴

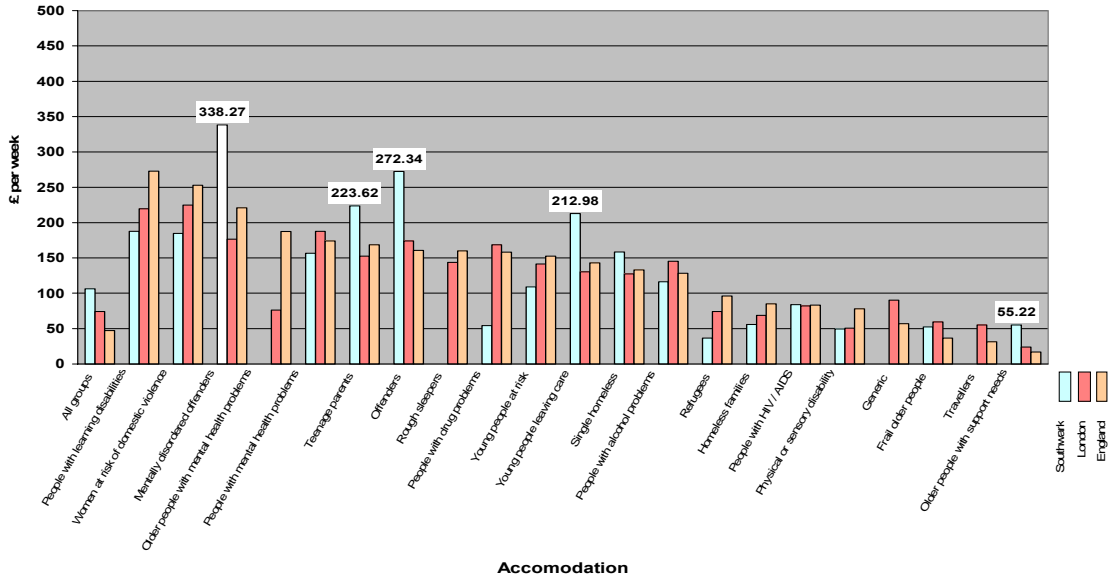
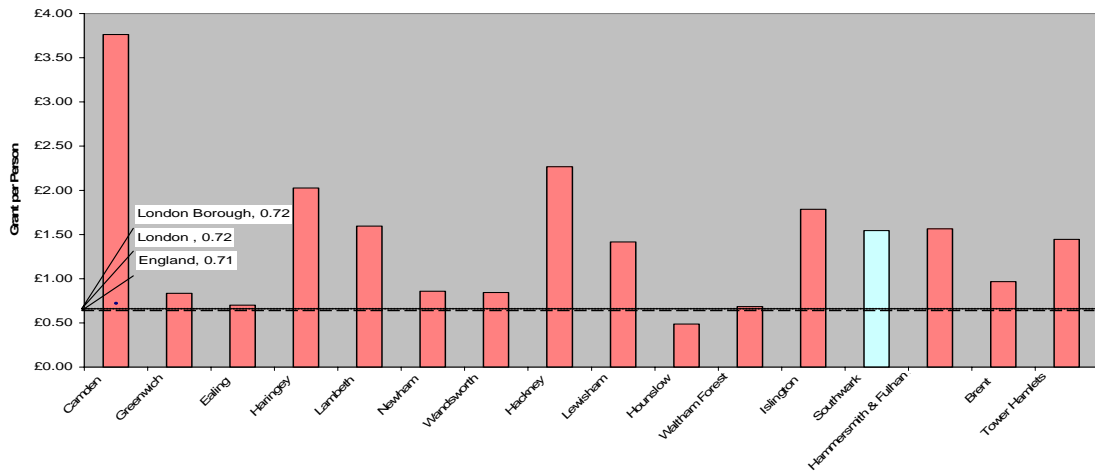


Figure 8 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours,²⁵ all London boroughs and all English councils (2004/05)



²⁴ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

²⁵ A comparator group of similar councils.

Figure 9 Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours,²⁶ all London boroughs and all English councils

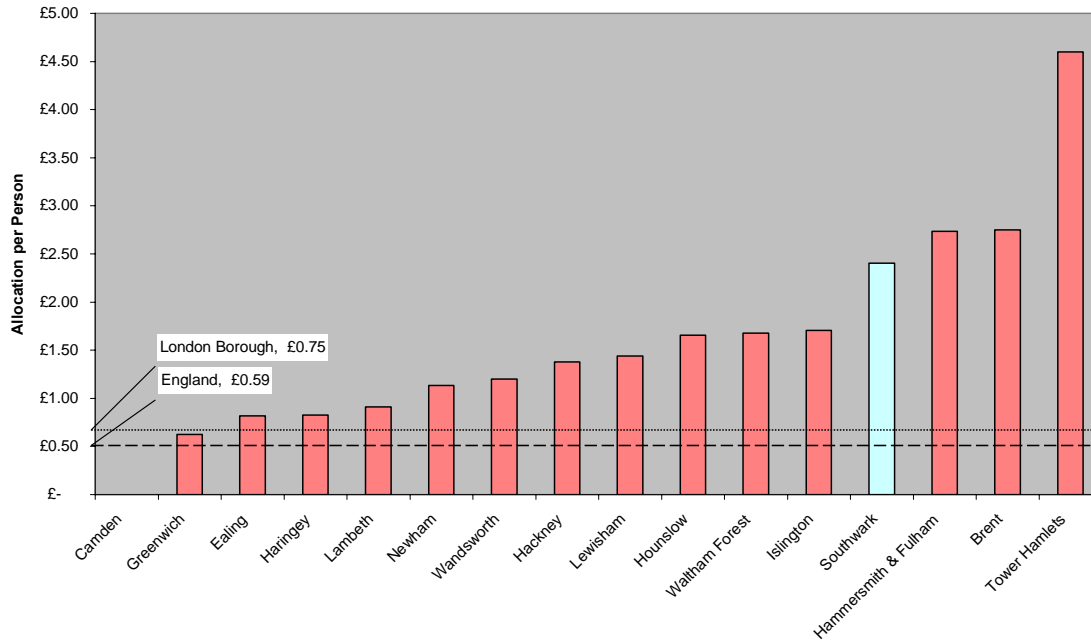
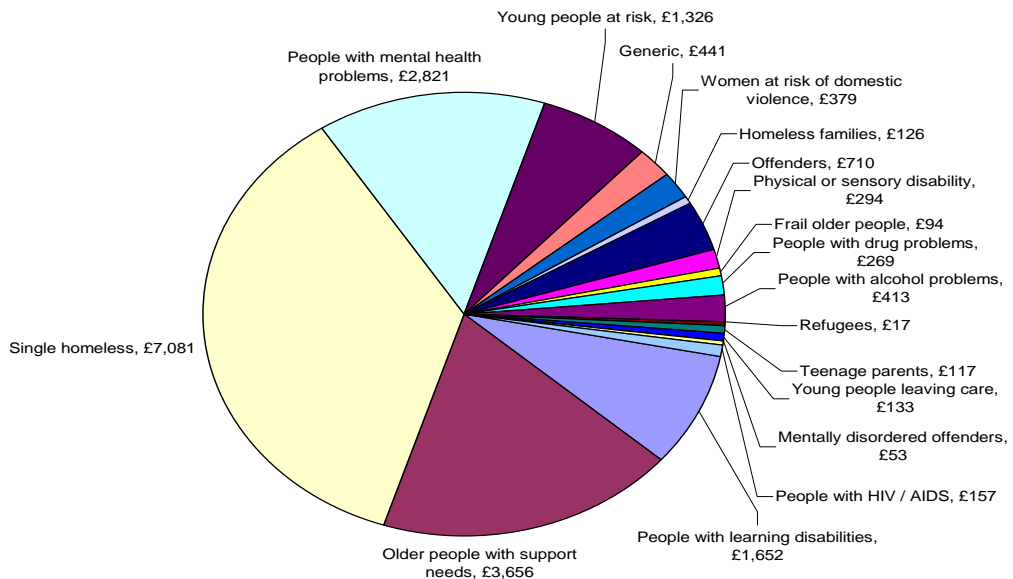


Figure 10 Share of spending between user groups (£000s)²⁷

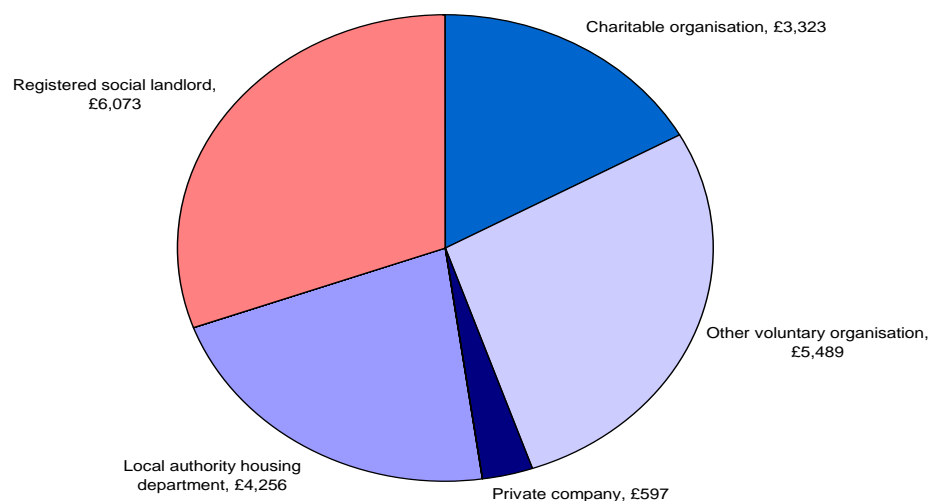


Southwark
Funding by user group

²⁶ A comparator group of similar councils.

²⁷ 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)²⁸



Southwark
Funding by provider type

Social services star ratings November 2004

Table 9 Social Services Inspectorate ratings of the Council's performance

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?	Performance rating (CPA equivalent)
Adults' Services	Most	Excellent	☆☆☆ (3)
Children's Services	Most	Excellent	

²⁸ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Social services performance indicators

Table 10 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

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

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

Best value performance indicators

Table 11 Performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04 compared with London boroughs

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

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

Appendix 2 – 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:
 - interviews with key personnel, including commissioning body and sub-group representatives, members of the Supporting People team and key councillors;
 - visits to services funded by the Supporting People grant;
 - mystery shopping at a sample of council offices asking for information;
 - mystery shopping phone calls to various numbers asking for information;
 - questionnaire to all service providers funded by the Supporting People programme;
 - focus group with providers from a range of Supporting People services;
 - focus groups with members of the sub-groups to the Commissioning Body; and
 - file reviews of complaints and appeals.

Appendix 3 – Positive practice

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

Cross-authority working

- 1 Southwark has demonstrated positive practice in its approach to cross-authority working. This has included a joint forum for providers and sharing good practice both within its sub-region and also with two neighbouring boroughs.
- 2 Of particular interest is the pilot project to help support people living with HIV, by providing an outreach and referral service. This is one of six national pilot projects contributing to health service objectives, and is the result of a joint bid with Lambeth Council and the PCT to access Government funding. A specialist voluntary sector organisation, the Terrence Higgins Trust, was commissioned to provide support for tenancy sustainment and ensure clients engaged with all health services. The six pilots have now been evaluated and the findings published in September 2006.
- 3 Lambeth and Southwark have the highest HIV rates in the country. Achievements of the project include 56 referrals of which 27 met eligibility criteria. Of these, 15 people received tenancy support of which 12 were helped to access temporary accommodation and 4 of those have since moved to permanent tenancies with support. Following the pilot, Southwark will tender HIV support jointly with Lambeth and Lewisham.