

Supporting People

West Sussex County Council

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Supporting People Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 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 We have judged that the Supporting People partnership in West Sussex is providing a fair 'one-star' service and has promising prospects for improvement.
- 2 Governance of the programme is strong with a clear vision and objectives from the Supporting People Strategy and West Sussex County Council. The County Council, the body responsible for administration of the Supporting People programme, has successfully integrated it into adult services in the County. Governance has been strengthened and this has brought the partners from health, probation, the seven district councils and the County Council together to benefit vulnerable people in West Sussex. There is strong political and corporate support for the programme.
- 3 The Supporting People partnership has improved services for vulnerable people in West Sussex. Since 2003 the range and quality of services has improved in line with the strategy the partnership set in consultation with a range of stakeholders including service users. At the same time the number of service places available has been increased and services made more flexible which is the wish of service users. More services are available to a wider range of people at a time when the value of the grant has been reducing. The SP grant is now much more effectively targeted to the needs of vulnerable people in West Sussex. Improving the value for money of the programme has therefore directly benefited vulnerable people in West Sussex.
- 4 The team within West Sussex County Council that manages the programme is skilled and dedicated and has the resources it needs. The management of the budget is strong with the governance bodies in clear control of spending and able to direct resources to the priorities of the Supporting People Strategy. The bodies that provide services are engaged with the new performance management arrangements and are keen to use this to drive up the quality of services further.
- 5 The outcomes for service users are positive and the partnership has a good track record of providing services that meet the strategy and where quality is improving. There are many examples of how the Supporting People programme is benefiting vulnerable people, their carers and advocates in West Sussex and helping people lead more independent lives.
- 6 The partnership manages the programme well. The County Council and its partners manage the grant and the Supporting People programme well and are in control of most aspects of performance. This is evident in the way that improvements have been achieved at a time when grant is reducing. The partnership has the means to continue the improvements in the programme. The partnership is committed, there are skilled staff to manage the programme and other resources are managed well and are sufficient for the needs of the County.

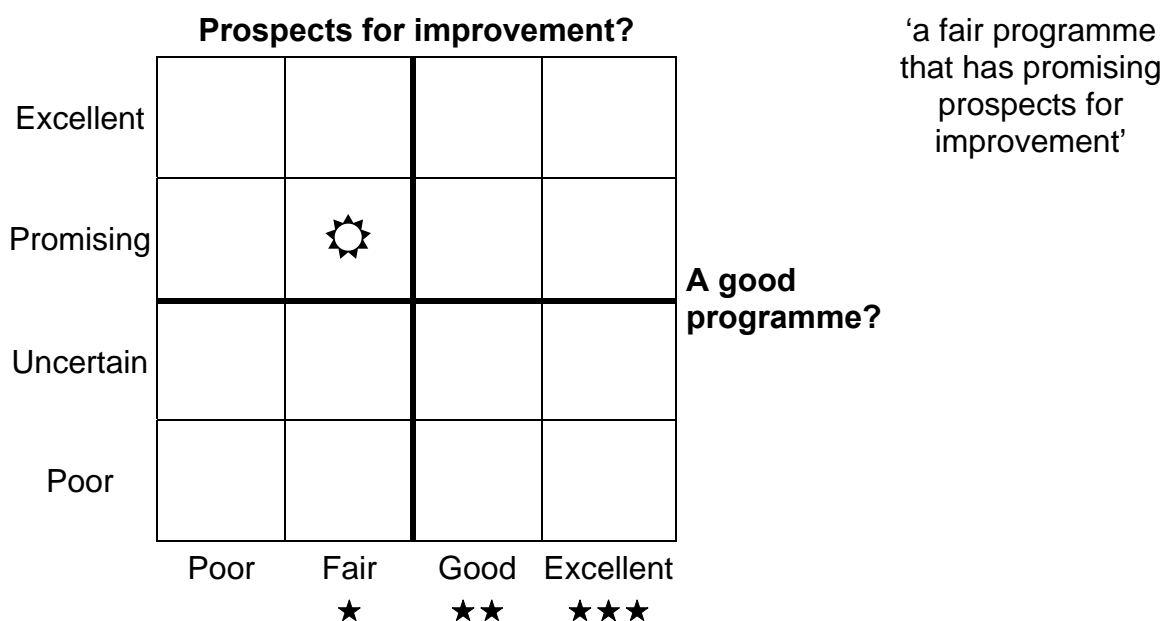
- 7 The partnership achieved the review of services within the timescales laid down by Government and involved service users making alterations to services taking account of this feedback. Service providers are also aware of the contractual arrangements that apply to them although it has been slow to agree longer term contractual arrangements.
- 8 There are, however, a number of weaknesses with the programme and we have made recommendations to address these.
- 9 The needs of young people are not adequately represented in governance arrangements at the moment. There are some gaps in information about the needs of vulnerable people although this will be addressed with the new method of gathering needs information once this becomes effective.
- 10 Access to services is inconsistent. The ability of vulnerable people and their carers to access services varies across the County with some parts having good access arrangements and others poor access arrangements. In addition to this, information about services is not readily available at council offices and other places people would expect to find it. Where printed information is provided it would be difficult for people with poor sight or whose first language is not English to read it. Services are not readily available to members of black and minority ethnic communities although the partnership is taking action to improve this.
- 11 Information about the needs of vulnerable people has been collected to work out the services that should be provided but there are some gaps in this information. For example comprehensive information about the needs of offenders was not available. The partnership has introduced a better way of collecting information about needs but this is not working as well as it should at the moment. There are also gaps in the strategy about the best ways to help people move on from supported accommodation, although the partnership is in the process of preparing a strategy to address this.
- 12 There are no arrangements for the governing bodies to monitor the effectiveness of services to protect adults or to report serious incidents that occur in the services funded by SP grant although the County Council has itself robust processes within Adult Services.
- 13 While value for money has improved, there is scope to look at the way other Supporting People partnerships provide services to learn other ways to improve value for money and increase the quality, range and number of services. The partnership has not looked at whether it could jointly develop services with other Supporting People partnerships, which may also improve value for money. Similarly better information is available from more detailed benchmarking and not being used to judge the quality of services funded by the partnership. Incentives have not been introduced to encourage service providers to be innovative in improving the quality of services.
- 14 The partnership has not consistently involved people who use Supporting People services or their carers and advocates in the way the programme is developed. This means that the approach to services may not reflect the wishes of those that use services.

- 15 Performance management of service providers is not well developed or well monitored by the governing bodies and the ICT system has not been exploited to help with this process.
- 16 The prospects for improvement in delivering the programme are promising. The track record is generally positive with better and more services for vulnerable people, although gaps in the service remain. Financial management is strong and the partnership has good plans with which to tackle the weaknesses and improve the programme. There is strong leadership from the County Council and from the governance arrangements. The partnership has added to the effectiveness of the programme by attracting finance and other resources from other sources to complement the programme.

Scoring the Supporting People programme

- 17 We have assessed West Sussex County Council as providing a 'fair', one-star programme that has promising 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

- 18 We found the programme to be fair because it has a range of strengths including:
- strong governance has led to improved services for vulnerable people;
 - the partnership is effective in working together and there is strong political and corporate support for the programme;
 - the County Council as the Accountable Body provides a strong lead to the programme and has assigned a senior officer as the Accountable Officer;
 - providers and service users are clear about the nature of services eligible for support;

² The scoring chart displays 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.

- the partnership is fulfilling the key priorities and objectives in the Supporting People Strategy which was agreed with a range of stakeholders including service users;
- the programme is managed by a skilled team who have the resources to deliver the programme;
- the services funded now represent better value for money and the range, quality and quantity of services has steadily improved over the last three years; and
- there have been positive outcomes for service users with many examples of the programme helping vulnerable people to achieve better life chances and independence.

19 However, there are some areas which require improvement. These include:

- the strategy is based upon needs data that is not complete in some cases and the exercise to update needs data has not yet had an impact;
- there is no agreed strategic approach to the provision of move on accommodation for vulnerable people, services for older people or offenders;
- the programme does not have a plan in the event of failure of services funded by Supporting People grant and there is no monitoring arrangement in respect of the protection of adults;
- cross authority working has not been explored to benefit service users and drive up value for money. The opportunity has not been taken to learn from other programmes why costs are different and how this might achieve improved value for money;
- service user involvement has not been consistent;
- access to the service is not consistent and potential service users in some parts of the County experience difficulty in getting information; and
- the partnership cannot demonstrate that services are available and accessible for all members of the community who need them.

20 The programme has promising prospects for improvement because:

- the partnership has delivered a consistent track record of improved services over the last three years that have directly benefited service users;
- the partnership has delivered more services during a time when the amount of grant has been reduced in real terms;
- objectives and priorities are clear, are linked to the partners' plans and objectives and the partnership is delivering on those shared objectives;
- financial management is strong leading to better use of the grant to provide services;

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- plans to improve services are clear and shared between partners and there is a culture of improving services for the benefit of service users; and
- capacity to deliver improvements is good with a strong commitment from the County Council and its partners.

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

- a lack of track record to provide good and consistent access to services and shaping services to the needs of all sections of the community;
- performance management of services has not yet been fully developed; and
- the investment in ICT for Supporting People is not being exploited to its full potential.

Recommendations

- 22 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:

- *consulting with service providers, service users and other stakeholders to develop and introduce effective access arrangements for service users and link this to corporate plans within West Sussex County Council;*
- *ensure that information in respect of SP services is easily accessible to potential service users and carers at access points throughout the County;*
- *ensure that information in respect of SP services is available in a range of formats in accordance with the community needs in West Sussex; and*
- *in consultation with service providers, service users and other stakeholders develop and introduce effective ways to shape services for the range of diverse needs of people in West Sussex.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- consistent arrangements that enable vulnerable people and carers to access services they would benefit from; and
- ensure that excluded groups are better able to obtain the services they need.

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

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 Revise the five year Supporting People strategy in order to:

- accurately assess the needs of vulnerable people in West Sussex;*
- ensure the needs of young people are incorporated into the development of the SP programme;*
- involve service providers, service users and other stakeholders in the review of the strategy;*
- link the review of strategy to the exercise to involve service users in developing the SP programme;*
- develop a strategy for the provision of move on accommodation;*
- develop a strategy for service for older people to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services currently provided;*
- assess the needs of offenders for SP services;*
- develop a contingency plan for service failure; and*
- introduce robust monitoring arrangements to ensure there are adequate arrangements for the protection of adults.*

The expected benefit of this recommendation is:

- the SP partnership will have an informed and planned programme for the delivery of SP services that meets the needs of a wider range of people in West Sussex.

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

Recommendation

R3 Introduce comprehensive performance management arrangements for services funded by SP grant:

- *to learn from complaints about services to achieve improved performance;*
- *to achieve steady state contracts for all services that meet the quality requirements of the partnership;*
- *with service providers, service users and other stakeholders develop a suitable range of outcome targets and local performance indicators with which to measure the performance of service providers;*
- *develop and introduce suitable arrangements for the CB and SPWG to monitor and manage the range and quality of services funded by SP grant with regard to outcomes for service users;*
- *exploit the SP ICT system with which to regularly capture information with which to monitor and manage services funded by the SP grant; and*
- *actively encourage and support service providers to use electronic means of providing quarterly performance data.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- increased ability to assess the performance of service providers;
- setting performance targets and performance indicators that service providers and service users can relate to;
- to enable the partnership to work with service providers to improve performance where this does not meet targets set; and
- an ability to steadily improve the quality of services funded by SP grant.

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

Recommendation

R4 Develop a more sophisticated approach to value for money based on good practice, in order to:

- *achieve a better understanding of the relationship between cost, intensity and quality of services by benchmarking with other appropriate ALAs;*
- *work with other ALAs to introduce, as appropriate, joint commissioning arrangements for new services amending the procurement strategy as necessary; and*
- *in consultation with service providers, service users and other stakeholders develop a range of incentives for service providers to improve the value for money of services.*

The expected benefit of this recommendation is:

- an improvement in the value for money of services, enabling the partnership to extend the range and or quality of services it provides in line with the SP strategy.

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

Recommendation

R5 Strengthen service user involvement by:

- *asking service users about the ways they would prefer to be consulted and involved with the development of SP services;*
- *developing a range of ways that service users can regularly be involved with the developing SP strategy; and*
- *building the capacity of users and advocacy organisations in respect of the SP programme.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved strategies and process that reflect service users needs and concerns together with those of their advocates and carers; and
- a demonstration to partners and stakeholders that service users are at the centre of the SP programme.

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

- 23 We would like to thank the staff of West Sussex County 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

- 24 West Sussex is located in the south of England and is rural in nature with only three towns with populations above 50,000 people. It has a total population of 761,900 people⁴.
- 25 The largest settlements are Crawley and Worthing with about 100,000 people each. The nature of the two settlements are very different with Crawley located close to Gatwick Airport and having a much larger proportion of the population from black and minority ethnic communities at 11 per cent of the population. This compares with 6.1 per cent identifying themselves as non white in the whole of the County. Worthing and the coastal strip is traditionally an area for retirement. Overall 20.3 per cent of the population of West Sussex is above state retirement age.
- 26 The local economy is largely dependent on smaller employers with just 1 per cent of employers having more than 200 employees and nearly 90 per cent of employers having ten or less employees. Unemployment is below average at 3.2 per cent compared to the south east at 3.7 per cent and England at 4.8 per cent.
- 27 West Sussex is not an area that largely features within indices of deprivation with the County ranked 133 out of 149. But this masks areas of deprivation in some of the coastal areas and 8 wards feature in the 10 per cent most deprived in England.

The Council

- 28 West Sussex County Council is controlled by the Conservative Party. There are seven district councils of Adur, Arun, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex and Worthing.
- 29 The County Council is the administering authority (ALA) for Supporting People (SP). It had adopted a Cabinet and Leader system of administration with scrutiny through a number of select committees. There are 70 councillors of whom 45 are conservatives, 17 liberal democrats and 7 labour councillors with 1 vacancy.
- 30 The overall revenue budget in 2006/07 for the Council is £766.647 million of which £164.444 million relates to adult services.

⁴ ONS mid year estimates 2004

- 31 In 2004 the Audit Commission rated the Council as 'performing well, consistently above minimum standards'. In October 2005 the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate rated Adult Services as 'serving some people well and uncertain capacity to improve'. In the latest assessment of Adult Services the County Council was awarded two stars and judged to be serving most people well with promising prospects for improvement in services.
- 32 The overarching plan for the County is developed in the Corporate Plan, County Strategy and the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA provides all the major public bodies with an agreed set of shared targets around which they can direct their own resources. The targets include some stretch targets, the achievement of which will attract additional funding and freedoms from central government. The LAA sets out a number of outcomes to achieve. Outcome 19 of 22 is to increase the availability of suitable housing for those unable to compete in the market. The SP programme plays an important part in achieving this and other objectives in the LAA.

The Supporting People programme

- 33 The mission of the Supporting People programme in West Sussex is:

'to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people by providing housing support services that promote and maintain people's independence'.

The aims and objectives of the programme as set out in the five year strategy are:

'To pursue a stronger focus on preventative and lower intensity support services. We will shift our current pattern of spending towards lower intensity services. In particular we will redirect some existing funding to pay for more floating and other flexible types of services.

To commission services that will support people on the basis of need rather than tenure. By commissioning more flexible forms of support services, such as floating support or accommodation-based services with more flexible contracts, we expect that support services will be able to support people across tenure boundaries.

To ensure that the outcomes of services maximise the independence of the tenants/service users. We will agree with service providers and other stakeholders a more meaningful set of measures for housing support services that reflect the extent to which services commissioned by the Commissioning Body are effective in supporting vulnerable people to become and remain independent in their communities.

To ensure that all services funded with Supporting People grant meet the minimum national quality standards by March 2007. We will use the service review process to bring support services up to the minimum national standard. This will improve service quality for tenants and service users.

To only commission services that are strategically relevant. Through the process of renegotiating every contract funded with Supporting People grant, we will only re-commission or newly commission services that meet the aims and objectives of this strategy.

To commission services that are flexible in response to changing client needs. Our aim is to develop more flexible ways of contracting for and delivering services that allow for services to be more responsive to people's changing need for support, such as the point at which a person may move on to permanent housing from temporary supported housing.

To commission services that offer value for money. We will only commission and fund services that are affordable and offer value for money. We are developing a value for money policy with service providers and other stakeholders to assist in making these judgments.

To promote equality of access through assessment/allocation and referral processes. We want to ensure that all services have open and transparent referral and allocation policies and processes. We propose moving towards referral processes which include a range of stakeholders, typically hosted by District/Borough councils, rather than one single agency having exclusive access to a service, or the provider itself determining access without reference to other stakeholders and potential referrers.'

How good is the Supporting People programme?

What has the programme aimed to achieve?

- 34** The SP team is part of the Adult Services Department of West Sussex County Council. The Accountable Officer is the Assistant Director of Adult Services responsible for resources. The SP team consists of 11 full-time equivalent staff with an estimated additional corporate support equivalent to £72,000 each year. In addition to this consultants are employed to deliver some aspects of the programme including the provider forum and involvement of service users.
- 35** A Commissioning Body (CB) has been established to oversee the delivery of the programme. This is made up of representatives from across the SP statutory partnership of health, housing, social services and probation. The voting membership is comprised of the following representatives:
- West Sussex County Council - one elected member;
 - each of the district councils - one elected member;
 - the probation service - one assistant chief officer; and
 - the five primary care trusts (now becoming one primary care trust) - one chief officer.
- 36** The total budget for Supporting People for 2006/07 is £15.034 million and an administration grant of £497,341. The total has reduced from £16.8 million in 2004/05. The budget helps to fund 405 services supporting 8,088 people and in addition a further 549 supported by the home improvement agencies, 1,420 people who use the community alarm system and 100 leaseholders. Seventy four per cent of the budget is spent on accommodation based services, 15 per cent on floating support, 10 per cent on a mixture of accommodation and floating support and 1 per cent on community alarms. The proportion of service providers is:
- 33 per cent housing associations;
 - 25 per cent private individuals;
 - 23 per cent charitable bodies;
 - 11 per cent not for profit organisations;
 - 4 per cent local authorities; and
 - 4 per cent private companies.
- 37** The cost of administering the SP programme this year will be £562,000 and this includes the cost of corporate support, the employment of the SP team and employment of consultants in respect of the provider forum and service user involvement.

Table 1 Supporting People expenditure in West Sussex 2004/05 to 2006/07

West Sussex	2004/05 £000,s	2005/06 £000,s	2006/07 £000,s
SP grant	£16,238	£15,374	£15,034
Pipeline funding	£1,496		
Administration grant	£552	£497	£497

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

38 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

39 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; and
- Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.

- 40 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the governance of the supporting people programme. There is significant political and corporate support across the County. The Commissioning Body (CB) has appropriate membership and meets regularly. There is a shared vision for the provision of services and partners are supportive of each other. The Core Strategy Group (known as the Supporting People Working Group (SPWG)) plays an important part in developing policy and strategy, it meets regularly, has appropriate membership and its work programme is set from the supporting people business plan and the objectives of the CB. The Accountable Officer is a senior officer within West Sussex County Council and is driving the programme forward although he is fairly new in the role. The partnership is effective, with probation and health playing strong roles, although the partnership is weaker in respect of representation for the development of services for young people.
- 41 Political and corporate support for the supporting people programme is strong among the partnership, district councils, County Council, Probation and the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) (at the time of the inspection five PCTs were merging into one). Supporting people (SP) targets are included within the Local Area Agreement (LAA). SP is integrated into the County Council's adult services department with the profile raised by the SP Team at member level and with commissioners. Partners have contributed to the objectives of the SP strategy with the use of land and other resources. For example at Worthing an additional 55 units have been provided through the use of land owned by the County Council and using the planning power of the district council. One district council and probation have jointly funded the appointment of an accommodation officer to support offenders. The County Council has also committed additional resources for administration of the SP programme with specialist skills made available for legal, finance, audit, personnel and IT support. Where specialist skills are required in respect of services being monitored this is also provided by colleagues in adult services and a recent example is support from colleagues in respect of learning difficulties. This means that partners are working together to achieve shared objectives for support services in West Sussex.
- 42 The membership of the CB complies with national guidance and has appropriate senior councillors and officers as members. It meets regularly five times each year and is well attended by the district councils, the County Council, a senior officer from one PCT representing all five and an assistant chief probation officer. It is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Adult Services from the County Council. The CB has discussed membership following a review earlier this year and the PCTs and Probation are satisfied they are adequately represented. The chairmanship recently changed to the Cabinet Member for Adult Services. The meetings review progress of the five year strategy based around a two year business plan. The business plan enables the CB to monitor progress with:
- the budget and savings plan;
 - the top five priorities;
 - the eight aims and objectives for the programme;

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- the improvement plan; and
- the risk register.

Meetings keep members up to date with national issues and progress with key projects. This shows the CB is in control of the key issues with which to manage the SP programme.

- 43** Members of the CB have a range of skills with which to manage the SP programme. Members show a good understanding of their brief although the CB has some new members and plan an induction and assimilation process as part of development day to reinforce this. Discussions take place about key issues within the five year strategy and the CB is in control of the direction and development of the SP programme.
- 44** The CB is clear about its role. The terms of reference are clear and were reviewed in April 2006 and agreed between the partners. These include a procedure to resolve conflicts between partners but it has not been necessary to use this. This is supported by a memorandum of understanding that sets out how the partnership works and in more detail the responsibility of each partner. Therefore there is a clear framework in which the partnership operates.
- 45** The CB has made a number of difficult decisions that shows the maturity of the partnership. This has included the de-commissioning of ten services some of which are small local services providing good services to vulnerable people but which are not strategically relevant. This is providing the resources to move towards a larger floating support service that meets the joint objectives of the partners to provide more flexible and cost effective services.
- 46** The CB has achieved a shared vision for SP services across the County although some elements have taken time to develop. SP objectives are reflected in key strategies at district council level and in County Council strategies. Similarly strategies for the PCTs reflect the joint SP objectives and the operational improvement plan also has links to SP. The CB has tasked the SPWG to review the five year strategy over the next four months. It has agreed that the key aims and objectives within the strategy are sound but has embarked on a programme to improve the collection of needs data. The CB knows from discussions among partners that further services are needed for young people and people who misuse alcohol. An older person's strategy is being developed but this has been slow in its progress compared to other key SP issues. The partnership is clear about its strategic objectives and priorities but needs to review these following improved needs data.

- 47 The SPWG plays an important part in developing policy and monitoring progress. The group has clear terms of reference and plays an important part in achieving the programme for SP. It has a clear work programme set from the business plan and priorities set by the CB. It is able to achieve its work programme because it forms working groups for specific elements of the programme. For example it has set up a working group to carry out the review of the five year strategy, has a group overseeing the new needs assessment process and has a group that monitors the budget. This is an effective use of resources by the partnership to carry through its objectives to develop the SP programme.
- 48 The SPWG meetings are effective but could be better managed. Agenda management is effective and there is sufficient time to discuss key issues such as the development of the programme and current performance against the business plan. However, agendas and papers are sent out too late and some partners said this makes it difficult to prepare for meetings. Improved management would lead to more effective meetings.
- 49 The SPWG has the necessary skills with which to carry out its work programme and meets regularly to manage its work load. It has clear terms of reference agreed among the partners. Membership of the SPWG is drawn from senior officers at district councils, a senior representative from the PCTs and Probation. The lead officer attends from the County Council with other members of the team and the Accountable Officer attends as necessary. Ten meetings are held each year together with various working party meetings and there is regular attendance by the members.
- 50 The partnership ensures individual partners have the opportunity to consider matters of direct concern to them. The SP lead officer meets separately with the Assistant Chief Probation officer, senior officer from the PCT and attends the Chief Housing Officer's Group for West Sussex. This provides a further opportunity to discuss matters in more detail.
- 51 The Accountable Officer (AO) is an effective champion of the SP programme. The AO is the Assistant Director of Adult Services responsible for resources and as such does not have responsibility for the provision of services provided by the County Council that are SP funded. Because of the AO's position in the County Council he has considerable influence at corporate level and with partners in the SP programme. The County Council has embarked on a fundamental services review and part of this is a transformation programme of change within Adult Services. The programme is led by the AO who is able to ensure the requirements of SP are fully taken into account in the way the service develops.
- 52 Effective Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are in place. Partners report this is working well. The current MAPPA protocol is in the process of being revised, although a specific date for implementation of the new protocol has yet to be set and this needs to be finalised. This enables agencies to share and manage information about risks posed by dangerous offenders.

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- 53** There are strong links between governance arrangements and the provider forum. The partnership in consultation with the provide forum employs a specialist consultant to organise the provider forum on behalf of providers. This met four times in 2005 and has met three times this year. The Forum is used as a link into the governance and strategic direction of the programme. Discussion takes place around key matters of interest to providers and in recent times has included: cross authority working in the south east; national changes taking place with the SP programme; implementation of the SP strategy, including the move to floating support away from accommodation based support; decommissioning and how the partnership is improving value for money with services funded by SP grant. Messages from the provider forum to the CB and SPWG are taken both in the minutes and by the consultant and two provider representatives who attend both meetings. This means that provider interests are well represented and their views are taken into account in the management of the programme.
- 54** Smaller providers are supported by the SP partnership. The partnership has recognised that some small providers have limited resources and the specialist consultant has been employed to provide a series of workshops for smaller providers. Additional support has also been provided by the SP team to help smaller providers achieve level C of the quality assessment framework and manage the administrative requirements.
- 55** The SP programme is subject to scrutiny within the County Council. The SP programme has been subject to scrutiny by the Adult Services Select Committee in June 2006. The Committee examined governance of the programme, how it was meeting the needs of vulnerable people in West Sussex and how the SP grant had been used to meet these objectives. Scrutiny provides a further check on the programme and helps to raise awareness of the programme among council members.
- 56** The needs of some young people are not fully represented with the governance of the programme. The youth offending team are not represented at the CB or SPWG. This has meant that accommodation and support needs as part of a strategy to prevent re-offending has not been taken into account fully by the partnership.
- 57** The partnership value the role of the voluntary sector and use existing mechanisms to consult with them but there is some confusion among voluntary sector organisations. Voluntary organisations are involved through the provider forum and the north and south inclusive forums. The inclusive forums are organised by the specialist consultants and do not meet regularly enough to fully inform the SP programme with the views of the voluntary sector. This means that feedback is not consistent and there is confusion among the voluntary sector of the best way to be involved.

Grant compliance, strategy and needs

- 58** There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses with grant compliance, strategy and needs. The partnership has complied with grant conditions and there is a clear eligibility policy that sets out the housing related support services that are eligible and can be funded by SP grant. The five year strategy is in place and now subject to review. It sets out clearly the partnership's approach to the development of services and this contains a clear assessment of needs. The partnership has been effective in reducing ineligible costs. But while the methodology to assess needs is robust there is some data missing. There is no researched and agreed strategy for move on accommodation although District council partners and RSLs are supportive.
- 59** The partnership complies with grant conditions. There is a clear eligibility policy of the services that qualify for SP grant and what scheme costs can be apportioned. The policy has been agreed with partners and providers and was used as part of the process to review services. There is widespread understanding of the criteria. Through the service review process the partnership has been effective in eliminating ineligible costs. This means SP grant is being maximised for housing related support service with resources not being applied outside of the eligibility criteria.
- 60** There is a clear five year strategy in place. This was developed by the partnership and covers the period April 2005 to March 2010. There are strategic links to the strategies of partners such as the housing strategies of the seven district councils and the strategies of the five PCTs. There are also links to the crime and disorder strategy and high level strategies of the County Council. Partners, providers and service users were consulted and this was confirmed by partners we met during the inspection. PCT representatives for example were positive the SP strategy supported the aims and objectives of the PCTs. The strategy therefore reflects the broad aims and objectives of individual partners.
- 61** There are some gaps with strategic links. For example there is no reference within the published Probation Area Business Plan to the SP programme which is an important provision for support to offenders although the Probation Operating and Improvement Plan has an objective to improve access for offenders to suitable accommodation. Additionally there is no probation accommodation strategy in place. An absence of substantial links means that SP services are less likely to be aligned to the needs of offenders.

- 62 The five year strategy is clear about the key aims and objectives for the SP programme. For example it sets the scene for the move towards more flexible floating support and a reduction in accommodation based services. This has led to tendering of four new floating support services to be operational from April 2007 and the decommissioning of ten accommodation based services. It is also clear about the need to support people according to need rather than tenure. This has led to the commissioning of some new services that provide support to people regardless of tenure and the impending review of services for older people. This has also been demonstrated through the service review process where a number of services not strategically relevant have been decommissioned to provide resources for new services. The strategy has therefore provided a good base for the partnership to improve services for vulnerable people.
- 63 The strategy has been strengthened with a two year business plan that is clear about key outcomes to be achieved. Following a review by consultants the partnership produced a more extensive two year business plan that sets out targets to move away from accommodation based services to floating support and to reduce the level of tenure specific services over the next two years. The targets are to increase floating support from 4 per cent last year to 30 per cent by the end of 2007/08 and to increase the level of services available outside the social rented sector from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. This will provide services for a wider range of vulnerable people.
- 64 The methodology to assess needs is robust. An extensive analysis of needs was carried out with which to inform the five year strategy and the method with which information was assessed and analysed was robust. Data was plotted for each district council area to allow a comparison with the supply of support available. This has led to the identification of the top three gaps or services that require development for each district council area. Of particular note is the gap identified for extra care accommodation for older people. This has been the basis of service development over the life of the strategy and has informed the service review process.
- 65 There are, however, some gaps with needs information and information has not been updated for two years. For example information about offender needs was not available for three district council areas from data held by the probation service. The partnership is aware of the deficiencies with needs data and that data has not been regularly updated. A programme of rolling needs assessment has been implemented where data is collected about the needs of vulnerable people who approach district councils and other providers. This exercise is at an early stage and not currently collecting robust data. There is also concern among some people that offender needs may not be adequately assessed as part of the new needs assessment process. This means the assumptions made in the five year strategy may not be based upon a full set of data that may have informed priorities for service development and the review of the strategy due to take place may not have fully robust data to base it on.

- 66 The service review process has been used to reduce services not strategically relevant. In 2004/05 it decommissioned two services and used the resources to partly fund four new services that met the objectives of the SP strategy. Similarly in 2005/06 seven services were decommissioned and four new services commissioned. In particular this has shifted resources away from high cost services for people with learning difficulties or mental health issues where the service was either more appropriately funded from other sources or not a strategic priority.
- 67 The service review process has not been wholly successful in addressing the gap in services for people with alcohol misuse problems. There is a lack of services in West Sussex for people who misuse alcohol and this was confirmed by a range of people we met. This has partially been met with a new service in Worthing but there is more to do. The gap in service was identified in the five year strategy as part of the assessment of needs and gap analysis. This means an opportunity has been lost to redirect resources to a priority area for the partnership.
- 68 The partnership has not assessed the barriers to move on accommodation and reached a strategic agreement to address this issue. There are issues in West Sussex where some services become silted up due to a lack of move on accommodation for people who no longer need accommodation based services. This in part reflects the high proportion of accommodation based services funded by the partnership. The SPWG has considered a paper on the elements of a move on strategy but at this stage there is no strategic agreement across the County. This means that resources are not being used to best effect as people no longer in need of accommodation based services cannot move to more appropriate accommodation.

Delivery arrangements

- 69 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the delivery of the programme. The SP team is skilled, well led and respected and an integral part of the County Council's Adult Services Department. There is a good quality work plan in place for the delivery of the programme and SP objectives are aligned with the local area agreement (LAA). Advantage has been taken of the individual budget pilot to improve services for vulnerable people. Performance management of services is in development and not fully effective yet but financial management is robust. There is no contingency plan for service failure but the partnership is successful in achieving deadlines to return data to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

- 70 The SP team is effective with a range of skills with which to deliver the programme. The team has a range of skills with which to manage the SP programme and this includes contract management and service review. The team is well regarded by providers and other partners and stakeholders. The team works together well to share skills. For example there are five contract commissioning officers (CCOs) who have a geographical and service specific responsibility. Each CCO is responsible for developing specific skills around service types such as learning difficulties, mental health, for elements of delivery such as management of service providers and manage a range of services in a geographical location. This means they are effective in the way they approach development of services and delivery of the programme.
- 71 The range of skills and capacity within the SP team is well supported by other departments in the County Council. For example, the team is able to call on expertise, including financial support and legal advice as necessary. A finance assistant has been seconded to the team on a permanent basis to add capacity with financial management and management of data returns to the DCLG. Financial management is overseen by a senior finance officer within Adult Services who reports directly to the CB and SPWG in respect of management of the grant. Model contracts have been prepared by the Council's legal officers for use in steady state contracts. The County Council is therefore making effective use of specialist skills to support the SP team.
- 72 The County Council is supplementing the administration grant to provide adequate resources with which to manage the SP programme. The annual administration grant is £490,000 and the annual cost of administration is £562,000. The additional resources represent the additional skills the County Council brings to supplement the skills of the SP team.
- 73 The SP team is effectively integrated into the adult services department. The SP team reports to the Assistant Director responsible for resources within adult services. SP is considered part of the commissioning framework for adult services and there are clear working relationships in place. For example SP is included in the development of strategies for service provision and there are examples of joint commissioning of services for people with learning difficulties and others. West Sussex is also a pilot local authority for individual budgets to services users of adult services. The Council agreed with the SP partnership that individual budgets apply to people who access SP services and eight people now receive direct payment of support costs with which to purchase their own support. Integration is therefore leading to improved choice and services.
- 74 The two year business plan is a good quality plan with which to deliver the five year strategy. The plan is regularly reviewed and monitored each quarter by the CB and SPWG. The plan is SMART with milestones and targets to achieve the five year strategy. There are clear targets to achieve the key priorities of the strategy which are highlighted as a separate part of the business plan. The business plan also highlights the financial strategy to align resources to the grant which is reducing in real terms year on year. There is evidence of effective work planning with the move to more tenure neutral floating support and savings of £877,000 achieved towards the target this year of £1.238 million.

- 75 There are suitable arrangements in place to align individual work programmes to the business plan. Staff have an annual review and regular supervision from managers as part of the performance development framework. Individual targets and work plans are therefore aligned with the business plan and staff are able to identify their part in delivering the aims and objectives of the business plan. Therefore staff resources are aligned to the overall strategy and work plan for SP.
- 76 Evidence of the strength of the partnership is the alignment of SP to the LAA. The partners in the CB agreed to align SP to the LAA and the LAA and SP strategy have shared objectives. Currently the partnership has decided not to pool funding as part of the LAA but plan to revisit this as part of the strategic review to be carried out later this year. This means the objectives of the SP strategy are enhanced by the wider objectives of the LAA and progress is reported to the Public Services board as the governing body for the LAA.
- 77 Financial management of the SP grant is robust. Information to the CB and SPWG is of good quality and a medium term financial plan has been adopted that takes into account the likely reduction in grant to 2010/11. There is currently a projected underspend of £637,000 for this year representing 3.9 per cent of the budget of £16.029 million. The underspend has occurred due to savings made to meet the anticipated withdrawal of grant next year at 5 per cent. The reduction in grant has now been confirmed at 0.24 per cent and the partnership intend to use the projected underspend to commission new services this year and next.
- 78 Performance monitoring and management of services is still under development. Management of individual services is being developed and is not yet fully effective. The SP team has partially developed a range of outcome indicators with which to measure the quality of services with regard to the outcomes for service users. However, local indicators still need to be developed and performance with individual services is not effectively reported to the CB or SPWG.
- 79 The performance of services below level C of the quality assessment framework (QAF) is closely monitored and managed. Service providers not achieving agreed quality within the quality assessment framework have action plans that are closely monitored. This has led to 95 per cent of service providers achieving at least level C on the QAF. Therefore the quality of services to service users has improved from the performance management framework.
- 80 The partnerships decision not to introduce fairer charging will disadvantage some people and make access to services more difficult. The partnership decided in 2003 not to introduce fairer charging due to the cost estimated at £500,000 or more each year. The partnership reviewed this policy in April this year and decided to retain the policy. This means there will be some people who do not receive housing benefit, pension credit, income support and job seekers allowance that may not be able to afford services funded by supporting people grant.

- 81 Identification of risks is comprehensive but there is no strategy in respect of service failure. The risk profile within the business plan is comprehensive, there is good assessment of the impact and the actions to mitigate risk and responsibility is assigned to manage the risk. But there is a lack of consistency as no documented procedure is in place to address the issue of service failure. It is understood that other service providers would step in to provide continuing services but there is no agreed procedure to address this. As a result staff may not adopt a consistent approach to service failure and there could be delays in maintaining services for service users.
- 82 The County Council has successfully uploaded DCLG data on time and the majority of providers submit workbooks electronically. The Council's ICT system assists them with the collection of data electronically in the required format to submit to the DCLG and the deadlines are being achieved. The ICT system enables providers to submit work books containing the information required for the DCLG return electronically. This helps to free resources from completion of returns for other priorities.

Commissioning and performance

- 83 There is a balance of strengths and weaknesses with commissioning and performance. Providers are aware of contractual arrangements, although the partnership has been slow to issue steady state contracts. Service reviews were completed on time in a robust and consistent manner and services have been improved. Opportunities for cross authority working have not been fully explored and the complaints process is not developed. Services have been aligned with the five year strategy although there are gaps around services in respect of misuse of alcohol. There are no arrangements to monitor the protection of adults or to report serious incidents.
- 84 The partnership has been slow to issue steady state contracts. Twelve steady state contracts have been issued following the service review process and a further 16 more are in negotiation. But as 95 per cent of services are at level C or above in the QAF there is no reason not to complete negotiations quickly and have the large majority of services under steady state contracts. This leaves some uncertainty for providers.
- 85 There is a performance and contract monitoring policy in place which has been agreed with providers. Service specifications support the steady state contracts and include KPIs and other targets and indicators. Providers are therefore well informed of the process being used to manage.

- 86 All providers have been subject to a consistent framework for reviews and contract monitoring. Service reviews were completed on time with high cost services targeted for earlier review. There is clear evidence that all providers were subject to the same process whether services were provided by SP partners or not. The SP team has a contract monitoring template that ensures all service providers have the same degree of scrutiny. There is clear advice and information given to providers in respect of the contract review process along with guidance and support for providers if they require it. This helps to ensure that individual providers are not disadvantaged and provides the SP team with accurate information with which to make decisions.
- 87 The performance management framework is underdeveloped in respect of the protection of adults. The CB and SPWG do not have a monitoring procedure to ensure the requirements for service providers to have adequate arrangements to safeguard people receiving their services are followed up with a suitable reporting arrangement. The requirement is written into contracts and follows the good practice used by Adult Services. Further more there is no procedure to report serious incidents in SP funded services and for the SP team to be confident that appropriate action has been taken. This means the CB and SPWG cannot be sure providers have adopted suitable procedures to protect vulnerable adults, may not be aware of serious incidents that occur in services funded by SP grant and will not be in a position to take appropriate action.
- 88 Providers are largely positive about the review and contract process. Providers we met were positive about the contract monitoring arrangements. They confirmed they receive payments in a timely manner and agreed the service review process led to improved services. The SP team engaged specialist consultants to assist smaller providers to build up capacity for the new contract management process. They were concerned about the de-commissioning of services to fund the implementation of more floating support services and wanted to be consulted about how this is developing but were supportive of the need for more flexible services. This shows the SP team has been successful in forging links with providers and building up a good working relationship around contract management.
- 89 Partners are engaged in contract management. For example the Probation Service has been involved in managing contracts relating to offenders with the SP team. In addition because of adequate attendance at the CB and SPWG partners have been enabled to take part in the review and re-alignment of services. This ensures that specialist skills are available from the partnership with which to manage contracts and services meet joint priorities.
- 90 The partnership is achieving improved services and reduced costs from joint commissioning of services with Adult Services commissioners. For example services jointly commissioned with two providers for people with mental health issues has achieved savings of £160,000 per annum to the programme and has increased capacity from 77 service users to 100. SP has also been jointly commissioning services for people with learning difficulties for three years and can point to reduced costs and improved quality of services from a joint approach.

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- 91 Reports to the CB and SPWG are mixed in respect of services. The service review process provided good quality reports with which the CB and SPWG were able to judge the relevance and quality of services. The process has led to 95 per cent of providers achieving level C or above on the QAF. Ongoing reports to the CB and SPWG do not, however, provide sufficient information with which to judge the quality of services being funded.
- 92 User involvement in the contract monitoring process has been limited. Service users were consulted when their individual services were reviewed but there are no arrangements in place to involve service users with ongoing management of their services or the development of the SP programme. The weakness is recognised and specialist consultants are working with the partners and service users to improve the situation. The partnership has however begun to involve service users in the recruitment of staff through the work being carried out by the specialist consultants in the recruitment of a CCO. Overall though the opportunity has been lost to enlist service users to improve the programme.
- 93 The SP team has good information about the use of services. The ICT system is easy to use and contains a significant range of information available for planning. Checks showed that information is kept in good order both electronically and in paper copies.
- 94 Progress with cross authority working is limited. The partnership are members of the south area group of SP partnerships. There is an agreed policy and procedure for accreditation of providers throughout the south east and this has been used in respect of 14 providers working in West Sussex. But there has been no progress at this stage with joint working to commission services or joint management of cross authority services.
- 95 Improvement planning of services is robust. Providers who failed to achieve level C on the QAF as part of the service review were subject to an improvement plan. Interim contracts were issued for these providers that would become steady state contracts once performance was improved to the agreed standard. The outcome has been an improvement where 95 per cent of providers now meet level C or above in the QAF. Providers were complimentary of the process and the improvement in the services that followed.
- 96 The lack of promotion of complaints is a weakness. Complaints have to go through the corporate complaints process. There have been no complaints about the way the programme is managed or about service providers. Information to service users encourages them to use the providers own complaints procedure and there is inadequate information provided to enable service users to make complaints to the County Council. Where service users have accessed the corporate complaints process there is evidence that services have changed. This means the partnership may not be aware of some service failures and is not comprehensively learning from the complaints made to improve the SP programme.

- 97 A transparent appeals process is in place. Providers receive timely information of action proposed in respect of services they provide and are able to challenge decisions to remodel or de-commission services. The procedure allows for an informal stage where the SP team will reconsider their report and if the matter is not resolved at this stage there is an escalation process with ultimately the CB considering the appeal. To date only one provider has made an appeal which was resolved at the informal stage. The appeals process provides re-assurance to providers that their views can be heard by the CB if they consider action to change the service they provide unjustified.
- 98 There has been a range of positive outcomes for service users. For example there has been an increase in floating support from 279 service users to 628 since 2003. An average of 98 per cent of service users have maintained independent living and 71 per cent of service users moving on did so in a planned way. There has been an increased provision of extra care services for older people in three areas of the County despite Department of Health funding not being available to help development on the coastal strip which is the area of most need for this service. Overall the provision of services is more closely aligned to the objectives and priorities within the five year strategy.
- 99 The partnership has been slow to implement change with some services for older people. There has not been a strategic review of services for older people and there is a mixture of traditional sheltered housing and more flexible floating support. The partnership is aware that some of the services funded may not be strategically relevant or provide value for money and has now agreed a draft strategic plan for older peoples' services. While services for older people are low cost per unit they represent 22.19 per cent of the SP budget of £16.029 million. A more timely approach aligned to the service review process would have released resources for further development of the programme.

Value for money

- 100 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the way the partnership is achieving value for money. The partnership has agreed a methodology to assess value for money of services, value for money has been improved significantly from the review of services and the corporate procurement strategy is being utilised to achieve value for money with procurement of new services and re-commissioned services. The partnership has achieved its savings plan to align costs with a reducing budget. However benchmarking outside of West Sussex is limited.

How do costs compare?

- 101 Limited progress has been made with benchmarking. The partnership is represented at the south east group of SP administering local authorities (ALAs) and information is shared on the unit cost of services by service type. Similarly the partnership is part of a wider embryonic benchmarking group and has information on unit costs in respect of six further ALAs. It is therefore able to compare its costs but does not yet have an understanding of why costs vary between ALAs or carried out any work to explore in detail the reasons for the variations. A better understanding of benchmarking information would help the partnership highlight areas where costs may be excessive or where value for money is not being achieved.
- 102 The partnership understands the benefits of benchmarking and has carried this out at a local level to reduce costs and drive up quality of services. It has an agreed benchmarking framework with providers and has compared the costs of services within West Sussex as part of the service review process. Benchmark costs have been shared with providers. This has helped to reduce costs and increase capacity at a time of a reducing grant. The framework also sets out the basis for more detailed benchmarking outside of West Sussex in the future.
- 103 The following table shows figures supplied to the DCLG for the Platinum Cut in 2003 which shows the average unit cost in West Sussex is comparable to the costs in the south east and England. The figures pre-date service reviews and will now be lower in West Sussex.

Table 2 Unit cost of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit - excluding community alarms	Per unit - excluding community alarms and sheltered accommodation
West Sussex	£0.40	£24.92	£29.51	£78.08
South East	£0.52	£24.94	£32.26	£71.78
England	£0.70	£28.30	£34.71	£76.37

How is value for money managed?

- 104** The partnership has defined its approach to value for money and this has led to improved value for money. A value for money policy has been produced and agreed with providers and data is collected through a defined process. The partnership and providers are aware that value for money is a key objective and not simply about driving down costs. The outcome of this has been to reduce the cost of SP services in West Sussex over the last three years and at the same time increase the capacity of services to help more service users. For example mental health housing support has been re-contracted with a 16 per cent decrease in spend, 56 per cent increase in capacity, improved quality with the provider moving from level D to level B and level C in the QAF rating. The service also provides flexible floating support for people living in a variety of tenures.
- 105** The partnership has developed its approach to value for money in its methodology. The SP eligibility policy gives clarity on what activity is fundable and there is a framework within the performance management framework to analyse practice. The contract pricing policy is clear and stakeholders have been consulted. The partnership contracts services based on hours and has applied a maximum hourly rate of £18.27 this year which is based on an analysis of the hourly cost of services provided in West Sussex. Service specifications for steady state contracts set out value for money targets and indicators showing the output and some outcomes for service users to be achieved. This provides clarity on the costs and quality the partnership expects from providers.
- 106** The impact of reducing costs where services are reviewed is clear. Where services have been de-commissioned or price reduced the impact is set out in the service review report. To date 15 services that were found not to be strategically relevant have been de-commissioned which cost annually £536,000 each year and ten services re-configured at an annual saving of £290,000. Where changes to services have been made action plans have been agreed with providers and this has minimised disruption to service users.
- 107** The partnership is achieving savings from the management of the programme and using this to commission services in line with strategy. There is an annual savings plan linked to the reducing grant. The partnership has reduced costs through contract savings by £1.8 million and is on course this year to achieve further savings of £371,000. The plan is to achieve further savings next year of £1.619 million. Savings have been used in part to address the reducing grant and to commission new services. To date 14 new services have been commissioned in line with the strategic objectives of the five year strategy. For example, two extra care services for older people, a new service for women at risk of domestic violence, a teenage parent scheme, two services for young people at risk and a scheme for people with substance misuse issues. Resources are therefore more closely aligned to the priorities in the five year strategy.

- 108 Service users have been consulted in respect of value for money and their views have been taken into account. Service users were consulted as part of the service review process. Their views informed the outcomes of reviews. In addition the partnership has organised a number of focus group one of which looked at the value for money policy. The outcome was the view from service users that more flexibility is needed in the way services are provided. The partnership plans to task the budget and performance group of the SPWG to meet with the service users from the focus group to discuss progress to move away from accommodation based services.
- 109 The approach to procurement is strong. The partnership is using a robust procurement methodology to improve value for money with new and re-commissioned services. The partnership is using the procurement policy and procedure of the County Council and procuring new services on a competitive basis. The SP team and corporate colleagues have invested time in running workshops for potential providers to ensure fair access to contracts and the tender process. This has meant that small providers are able to compete for contracts and ensures a more robust market for the delivery of services.
- 110 The partnership has not considered how it can incentivise providers to improve the quality of services. The performance management framework does not include at the moment a system to reward good performance against targets and performance indicators. Neither do commissioning arrangements enable the partnership to increase provision for providers who are improving services. Service standards have been driven up as set out earlier in the report but this is not linked to the performance levels in the QAF. This means the partnership are not using innovation to drive up standards and improve services for service users.
- 111 The partnership does not routinely compare how much it spends on staffing, support and corporate costs with other similar authorities. This is within the work plan of the south east group this year but to date the cost of administering the programme cannot be compared. It cannot be sure it is getting value for money from its administration of the programme.
- 112 There are elements of the programme that may not provide value for money. For example the majority of services for older people have been continued on interim contracts without the partnership considering its strategic approach to support for older people. There will be some service users in traditional sheltered housing schemes who will have a need for a more flexible service depending on their needs. This means the partnership is meeting the costs of inappropriate support for some service users.

Service user involvement

- 113 This is an area where weaknesses outweigh strengths. Service users have been involved in the review of the individual services they receive and are able to attend the inclusive forums. There have also been a few consultative events to obtain service users views. However, there is no comprehensive strategy for service user involvement and the impact from service user involvement is limited.

- 114** Service user involvement is under developed. Service users and groups representing them have not been effectively identified and there is no mechanism in place to regularly consult them on the development of the SP strategy. This is an acknowledged weakness by the partnership that has employed a specialist consultant to contact service users and groups that represent them to find out how they wish to be involved and how best to do this. At the moment though there is no embedded mechanism to regularly involve service users and the partnership is missing important information for the development of the programme.
- 115** Service users are not playing an effective role in ongoing monitoring of services, contracting and planning for the future. Other than inclusion in the review process and in developing the five year strategy, service users have not been involved in needs assessment, service planning or the development of the strategy. The partnership cannot therefore be sure that the range of services it provides is appropriate and meeting the needs of service users.
- 116** Consultation with service user groups and potential service users is under developed. For example consultation does not routinely take place with young people who are service users. Neither does it take place with young people who may become service users. The SP team know from work being carried out to introduce a service user involvement strategy that young people in this case would like to be involved in the way that services are developed. The partnership is therefore missing information from service users and groups that represent them with which to develop the programme and services.
- 117** The views of service users have not been obtained with which to manage services. The partnership is considering how best to do this but at the moment the views of service users about the services they receive are not routinely taken into account with the management of individual services. The partnership are missing an important opportunity to gather information with which to drive up standards in services or to consider how services might be re-modelled more closely to service users needs.
- 118** Inclusive forums have not been an effective way to involve service users. Forums are held every six months in the north and south of the County. Attendance at the forum meetings has been limited and feedback from service users we met is that they are not always aware of where and when meetings are taking place. The partnership is therefore missing an opportunity to involve service users in discussions about the SP programme.

- 119 Service users have influenced service development through the service review process. All service users received information and a letter about the impending review of their services. They were invited to meet the review officers or to speak to them by telephone. In addition satisfaction surveys were carried out to gauge the views of service users. For example in the review of a homeless persons' project in Worthing, questionnaires were sent out to 27 service users and nine were returned. The questionnaires asked for information about support plans, adult protection, health and safety and fair access and inclusion. Service users were also interviewed when the validation visit was carried out. Concerns expressed about the management of the service were taken up in the action plan that followed the review and these changes are being monitored by the SP team. Therefore the service review process has been used to improve services in line with service users concerns.
- 120 The partnership has consulted service users on specific issues using one off focus group meetings. Focus groups have been held to discuss the policy to achieve value for money, choice of services and individual budgets. This has confirmed the partners approach to create more flexible services and move away from tenure specific accommodation based services. Four new floating support contracts are being tendered and will be in place from April 2007. Feedback from service users about individual budgets has also been obtained and is positive. It is now the policy of the partnership to offer this as a method of creating more choice for service users. To date eight service users now choose their own provider and pay from the direct payment they receive for their support costs. Where consultation has taken place this has led to positive outcomes.
- 121 The partnership has involved service users in decisions about de-commissioning of services and has provided support to service users in this process. For example service users and their carers were consulted about the de-commissioning of an accommodation based mental health service for 19 service users and an accommodation based learning difficulties project for 7 service users. In both cases the partnership provided advocacy support to help service users make informed choices about their future. At first members of the SP team did not visit service users to explain what was happening and this raised anxiety levels but the team learnt from this and changed its procedure. Advocates were able to ensure that service users received the support and guidance they needed from other specialists. Service users have now moved to independent living in alternative accommodation. Outcomes for service users have been improved from this process.

Access to services and information

- 122** This is an area of weakness with the SP programme. Access to services is not consistent with some services users and care staff reporting a lack of knowledge of services but there is recognition by the ALA that a step change is required. The website does not contain sufficient information and the directory of services is only available on the website and the tool is not easy for some people to use. Printed information does not have adequate strap lines to make these accessible. There is no tailored communications strategy and newsletters do not provide sufficient information for service users and are not always available. Access to adapted housing is improving with a new adapted housing register in place in three of seven districts.
- 123** Access to support services is not consistent. The approach of the partnership is to form panels of professionals at district council level, who are able to assess needs and sign post people to appropriate services. However, this approach is not consistent with for example only one panel in operation in one district that only handles cases of people with mental health issues. Access to other services in this area is by direct application to service providers. In only three of the seven districts are the panels comprehensively covering all service user groups. There is also concern that the resources to operate the panel system are not available and this calls into doubt the frequency of panel meetings and deliberations.
- 124** Access to services is delayed by the panel system. Providers report the panel system creating delays in filling spaces in projects leading to a lack of a service to service users and loss of income to providers. There is a system to fast track urgent cases but this is not well known to providers. This means that some service users cannot access services in a timely manner and resources where places are vacant are being wasted.
- 125** The panel system has not been thoroughly thought through. The lack of resources to operate the panel system either comprehensively or in a timely manner means that insufficient planning has gone into this process. It is clear the partners are not working effectively together to provide a consistent and timely method of access to services for vulnerable people.
- 126** Access to specific services is not always available. In particular we understand that access to some young peoples' projects is limited. While there is a County wide assessment process for young homeless people some have been denied access to specific projects. This indicates the projects receiving SP grant may not be providing services to some of the most vulnerable young people.

- 127 Information about services is limited. The directory of services is only available from the County Council SP website via a service known as SPOCC.net. We met service users and advocates who reported a lack of knowledge about services and how to get information. SPOCC.net is a powerful tool to interrogate the range of services available but the search engine that has to be used would be found difficult to operate by some. The directory of services is not available outside of this. Our reality checks found that staff at district council offices and at the County Council Adult Services helpdesk were not aware of SP services and were not able to help us. During one mystery shopping exercise the telephone remained unanswered at the Adult Services helpdesk. It is therefore likely that vulnerable people have difficulty accessing services in West Sussex.
- 128 Websites are under developed. To access information about housing support services on the County Council website it is necessary to appreciate this is within the social care and health section of the website. There is no direct link to housing support services from the homepage. Information on the website is limited and service users have not generally been encouraged to use it. For example there is little information for potential service users, carers or stakeholders and it is not possible to see the latest developments in the programme or what matters are under development. District council websites have no links to the SP pages of the County Council website. Therefore access to services and information on the website is limited.
- 129 Printed information is limited and does not have sufficient strap lines for other media or translation. The partnership publishes four leaflets that provide general information on the availability of SP services, service reviews and claiming subsidy for supported housing costs. The leaflet on service reviews is out of date as it refers to the previous service review regime and does not refer to the new contract performance management regime. The leaflets have reference in English at normal font size to availability in other formats including audio and in other languages. West Sussex has areas where there are significant ethnic minorities. A lack of strap lines in the most common languages means the information is not available to people whose first language is not English although a translated version of the general SP leaflet in Polish has been produced for one group of migrant workers. West Sussex is also an area with a significant elderly population who are the most common users of support services and the lack of a large print strap line and leaflet means the information may not be available to them.

- 130** Newsletters are not used as an effective means of communication. The partnership does not issue a newsletter to providers or services users about the specific West Sussex programme. Therefore providers and service users are not kept informed of progress with the programme and how this is developing. Only those providers who attend provider forums and service users who attend the inclusive forums are kept abreast of developments. The specialist consultant that works with the partnership provides a monthly newsletter that is distributed to service providers but this is a generic document produced for the consultant's customers in a number of areas in the south of the country. This provides good information on national developments in the SP programme but does not cover local issues in any depth. Therefore service users and providers are not kept well informed of local SP developments.
- 131** There is no tailored communications strategy for the SP programme. The County Council has a corporate communications strategy but this is having little impact on the SP programme. Without a strategy to address the specific issues arising from the provision of support services to a range of vulnerable people, many from minority communities or with specific communications issues, it is difficult to see how this can be improved in a structured manner.
- 132** The partnership is aware of access problems with the programme. The County Council as part of its fundamental service review has an action plan to address access to all of its services including SP services. The plan is to move to single points of access for services from April 2007.
- 133** Access to adapted property has improved. The SP programme has funded an adapted housing register that operates in three of the seven district council areas. This is a pilot scheme to be applied across the County in the future. There is a comprehensive register of housing in the social housing sector that is adapted for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities. This is used by staff at district council level to make suitable referrals or allocations of accommodation. This is helping to provide for the needs of people with disabilities that otherwise would have to wait adaptations being carried out before they could access suitable housing.

Diversity

- 134** This is an area where weaknesses outweigh strengths for the partnership. The range of diverse needs in West Sussex is not wholly understood but work to involve minority groups is underway. The gap analysis carried out to inform the strategy identified a number of groups that were excluded from SP services and not all of these have been addressed but action has been taken to address the needs of the black and minority ethnic communities. Corporately the County Council has assessed itself at level 1 of the local government equality standard and but progress has been made with effective plans to address this.

- 135 The partnership is not fully aware of the diverse needs of the community. Work has taken place to identify the needs of specific groups. For example the partnership has employed a specialist to investigate the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Crawley and some parts of Horsham. This has discovered significant unmet need among these communities and this has led to members of those communities now receiving services. However, this work is still at an early stage and is only just being extended to the whole of the County. A significant proportion of the community, 11 per cent, in Crawley are from BME communities. The partnership is therefore not aware of all needs to be met in West Sussex and are not fully in a position to shape services accordingly.
- 136 The partnership is not aware of all the cultural sensitivities with which to shape services. Because the work to involve minority groups is not complete and data is not complete or analysed the partnership is not aware of some needs to shape services around cultural needs. Because of this services currently commissioned may not be accessible or appropriate, for example, to some faith groups.
- 137 The partnership is beginning to involve potential service users and carers from hard to reach groups in the development of new services to meet gaps in provision. Work is being carried out to identify hard to reach groups and how they might be contacted and the ways to meaningfully involve them in the development of the SP programme is new. This means the partnership is working to provide equal access to services and address gaps in provision among vulnerable residents who are not receiving services.
- 138 The partnership is not effective in setting and monitoring targets in respect of diversity. The CB and SPWG only monitor access to services by comparing the proportion of people from BME communities that access services compared to the proportion of people from BME communities as part of the overall population. There has not been any analysis of the needs of diverse groups with which to set targets for service providers. This means the partnership cannot be confident it is meeting the needs of vulnerable people from BME communities.
- 139 The five year strategy identifies gaps for several groups of potential service users:
- gypsies and travellers (no current services in place through SP funding);
 - people with HIV/Aids (no current services in place through SP funding);
 - BME groups (services being provided for service users in the Crawley and Horsham area following project to identify need);
 - extra care for frail older people (two new services and a further due to come on stream shortly);
 - mental health (new services commissioned and some services re-configured);
 - floating support (an increase to 628 units from 279);
 - domestic violence (new services commissioned); and
 - physical disability (work carried out to maximise use of adapted properties).

It is also understood that additional services are required for people who misuse alcohol.

- 140** The partnership is carrying out work to gain better knowledge about needs and gaps. A specialist consultant is working with hard to reach groups across the County. A report has been provided on the needs of minority groups in Crawley and Horsham and this work has also been extended across the County. In addition phase two of the needs projects is gathering information about the needs of vulnerable people through district councils, providers and other groups and stakeholders. Information is beginning to become available from this project which will keep needs data up to date on a rolling basis. This will enable the partnership to more accurately plan for the full range of needs in West Sussex and will inform the review of the five year strategy due to take place shortly.
- 141** The County Council is raising the awareness of diversity issues through its corporate work. The Council appreciates it has been at a very low base in respect of diversity. The Chief Executive's Board has instigated an action plan to raise this to level two next year and is making good progress towards this. The plan is to mainstream diversity and to use the range of information the Council has to better plan for the range of diverse needs in West Sussex.
- 142** The awareness of diversity issues is improving. County staff now complete diversity training through the corporate induction training programme and there is a programme of mainstream training for existing staff. But Council members have not yet had this training provided for them. The position with partners is better where for example all district councils have provided diversity training for staff and council members. Awareness has been raised with some providers and training has been provided through a specialist consultant in respect of diversity issues. But the partnership lacks a comprehensive approach to increase the awareness of all those connected with the programme.

Outcomes for service users

- 143** Strengths outweigh weaknesses with services provided through the SP programme meeting the needs of people who use them. The range and nature of services has been changed to fit the five year strategy more closely and to meet specific gaps in provision. Choice for service users is being addressed and the quality of services has improved. There is a move to more flexible floating support and the services visited are of good quality.
- 144** The partnership has more closely aligned services to priorities within the five year strategy. New services that meet the identified priorities include extra care for older people, support for teenage parents, and more flexible floating support for people with learning difficulties, young people at risk, people who misuse drugs. The flexibility of services has also been improved with the creation of a further 279 units of floating support some of which is specifically targeted at the groups identified as priorities in the strategy. The proportion of floating support has increased from 3 per cent of services funded by SP to 8 per cent. This means services are more closely aligned to needs identified in the five year strategy.

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- 145 The quality of services has improved. The review process and ongoing performance management has raised 95 per cent of services to level C or above in the QAF. Where level C is not being obtained there are action plans in place to raise standard to level C this year.
- 146 The range and number of services has been increased by the partnership with an emphasis on more flexible services. Fourteen new services have been commissioned providing a further 198 supported places. Re-commissioning has led to an extra 120 accommodation based support places and the de-commissioning of 15 services has provided additional funding of £536,000 to fund new provision. Further de-commissioning is currently taking pace in a planned manner to fund four new contracts for general floating support across all seven districts. This fits with feedback received from service users who have asked for more flexible services.
- 147 New services developed through the SP partnership have had an impact on addressing local and national targets. The new services include the development of extra care housing in two locations with another shortly to be completed. These address a priority identified in the five year SP strategy and national targets to reduce hospital admissions and bed blocking. The PCTs are positive that the SP programme is contributing to achieving other health targets. In addition there are four home improvement agency projects part funded by the SP programme that cover all seven districts in West Sussex. These projects provide support to older people and people with disabilities to help provide a safe environment and maintain them in their own homes.
- 148 There is evidence of good quality support and positive outcomes being delivered. Reality checking of service providers indicates that the programme is supporting people with a wide range of needs including those with high and complex levels of need. Service users are generally satisfied with the services they receive.
- 149 During our inspection we visited 11 services. A wide range of services were visited to provide an informed view from providers and service users. Our overall impression of the provider schemes we visited and through our discussions with service users is that the schemes are generally of high quality. In a number of cases service users indicated the schemes had a positive impact on their quality of life and their ability to live more independently.

Case studies

1. Floating support for people with mental health issues

A single parent with four children housed in temporary accommodation following the break up of her marriage. She has mental health issues and her eldest son has a genetic disorder that has caused blindness. There is concern that other children may also develop this condition. Her youngest son has severe behavioural problems and was in trouble with the police for anti-social behaviour.

The outcome of intervention has been a move into permanent accommodation and a partnership approach from a range of organisations including the police to support her. Problems with debts have been addressed and she has a steady repayment plan. The older son is now receiving the specialist support he needs and the youngest son is receiving support and assistance to tackle anti-social behaviour and problems with substance misuse. The goals in the support plan were met and support ended in June 2006.

2. Accommodation based scheme for people with learning difficulties

S moved into the scheme in January 2005 having lived in institutional care. She has both learning difficulties and some physical disabilities and the accommodation provided was designed for her needs. Since moving into the scheme S has received support enabling her to build her skills to become more independent. This includes housework and maintaining her tenancy. She accesses activities outside the scheme as well.

The outcome of support provided is a general improvement in S's health, ability to direct elements of her own life including choosing meals, shopping, maintaining her home and taking part in social events with friends. She is calmer and happier with her life. She has a good awareness of safety issues including fire safety and maintains her own health and well being.

3. Accommodation based scheme for offenders

Mr B has recently arrived at Project X having been released from prison. He had a long history of offending and drug misuse and had been disengaged from local treatment services. Mr B has previously lived independently and maintained a tenancy. Through referral to Project X and building up a good working relationship with his key worker, Mr B was able to gain support in accessing appropriate support to tackle his offending behaviour, through contact with the probation service and appropriate drug treatment services. Mr B's key worker worked closely with him to ensure he maintained his tenancy, and motivated him to comply with his Probation order and engage with the local drug treatment service. Mr B's Probation Officer made regular visits to the project and had established a productive professional relationship with both Mr B and his key worker. During the next stage of his stay, Mr B would be encouraged to explore future accommodation plans with his key worker and start working towards a move to independent living with support in the community.

- 150** Support plans are in place across services and have been developed and agreed with service users. The plans in most cases are robust, comprehensive and complementary to care plans which may be in place. Plans are focused on increasing independence for the service user and are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing needs of service users. Service users are aware of support plans and their relevance. This means that service users can see a plan to the provision of services that meet their needs and aim to achieve increased independence.
- 151** Choice is developing for service users but is currently limited. Service reviews and the move to four new floating support contract next year will add flexibility and increase choice. However, as services are currently configured there are limits on the choice of services available to people. A positive move in this respect is the development of individual budgets. This provides the payment of support costs to the service user who can choose his/her own service provider. This has been trialled with eight service users with learning difficulties who are now selecting their own service provider and the range of services most important to them. It is the policy of the partnership to increase choice in this way.

Summary

- 152** Our judgement is the partnership in West Sussex is delivering a fair, 'one-star' SP programme.
- 153** Some aspects of the service are strong. There is a high degree of political and corporate commitment to the programme across the County and governance arrangements are effective. The partnership has clear aims and objectives expressed in the SP strategy and has the resources to deliver this identified in the SP business plan. SP is mainstreamed in the County Council's adult services programme, this is providing increase capacity through joint commissioning and the SP team has appropriate skills and expertise. Overall the partnership is delivering better outcomes for service users with improved value for money from the SP grant expressed in terms of better quality services and more services at a time when the SP grant is reducing.
- 154** Some aspects of the quality of delivery of the SP programme are mixed. The needs of vulnerable young people are not adequately represented in the governance arrangements. While providers are aware of contractual arrangements the partnership has been slow to issue steady state contracts and cross authority benefits are only partially being realised. While the methodology to research needs is sound there is missing data and the new needs collection methodology has not yet taken effect.
- 155** Other aspects of the programme are weaker. Service users have not been involved in a consistent manner in developing the SP programme and access to services is inconsistent with quality varying across the County. The partnership does not at this stage wholly understand the range of diverse needs for SP services in West Sussex and corporately the County Council is coming from a low base in respect of diversity although it is making good progress.

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

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

- 156** There is a clear track record of improvements being delivered by the SP programme in West Sussex. Improvements have been implemented following an examination by consultants when a clear improvement planning process was introduced. Services have been improved and are delivering better quality at less cost, the volume of services has increased and key performance indicators (KPIs) show positive outcomes from the programme. More could have been done to involve service users and access and diversity are weak areas.
- 157** The partnership employed consultants to identify areas for improvement and have responded to this. The consultants reported in April 2006 and a number of improvements have been implemented in a short period of time. The targets times in the improvement plan are also being achieved. There were six recommendations relating to governance all of which have been acted on. For example this has led to the appointment of an assistant director in adult services as the accountable officer to raise the profile of SP. There were ten recommendations relating to delivery arrangements of which six have been completed and four are ongoing. For example the implementation of an improved and rolling system of needs collection is being developed. Four recommendations relating to service reviews have been implemented. Two recommendations relating to value for money have been implemented. There are six recommendations relating to service user involvement, access and diversity of which three have been implemented and three partially implemented. This has led to better administration and governance of the programme.
- 158** The partnership has a consistent track record of improving services for service users. Ninety five per cent of services are now at level C of the QAF and there are action plans to improve all services to level C during this year. At the time of the reviews 33 per cent of non-sheltered services and 17 per cent of sheltered services were at level D. Service users have an improved quality of service from the partnership's management of the programme.
- 159** The availability of services has increased. The number of service places available has increased by 318 over the last three during which time the grant has reduced in real terms. This has been achieved by re-commissioning services to make them more efficient by expanding the number of people they can assist while at the same time containing or reducing costs. Fourteen new services have also been commissioned. The increase in availability means that more vulnerable people can be helped.

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- 160** Services are becoming more flexible. The proportion of floating support places had changed at March 2006 from 3 per cent of services to 8 per cent of services. The new contracts shortly to be tendered will also create four new floating support services across all seven districts. The move away from accommodation based services to floating support provides a more flexible tenure neutral service.
- 161** The partnership is delivering on most of the priorities in the five year strategy. For example it has delivered two new schemes of extra care providing 65 units of accommodation based support. It has also delivered on its objectives in respect of domestic violence with a new scheme that includes floating support for 27 vulnerable people. It has not delivered however on services for people who misuse alcohol. While some people with this issue are able to access other services including the new services commissioned for people who misuse drugs there is unmet need in the County.
- 162** Action to improve access has not been successful. The plans to create access panels in seven districts have not been successful. In three districts these arrangements are working well but the coverage of access panels is not comprehensive elsewhere. This means potential service users may experience difficulty in obtaining information and gaining access to support services.
- 163** The partnership has been late in involving service users. Service users have been involved in service reviews and have been consulted at a number of focus groups on specific topics but they are not actively involved in planning and monitoring services. Plans to address this are in place and should be delivering later this year but developments in SP services to date have not been fully informed from service user involvement.
- 164** Both key performance indicators (KPIs) and local performance indicators show a track record of improvement over the last three years⁵. 98.6 per cent of service users last year continued to live independently (KPI1a). This is a steady track record with returns showing similar performance in each of the last three years. 72.88 per cent of service users moved on in a planned way last year and this shows an improvement on the previous year of 59.7 per cent. (KPI2a). The availability of services shows improvement with 99 per cent last year compared to 95 per cent in the previous year. Utilisation, the proportion of funded units used, has improved from 92.9 per cent to 96.35 per cent over the last two years.
- 165** There is a track record of improving value for money. As set out above the quality and number of services has increased. This has been achieved while the value of the grant has reduced in real terms by more than 2 per cent in real terms.

⁵ Pis have not been audited

How does the Council manage performance?

- 166** Strengths outweigh weaknesses in the way performance is managed. The SP partnership in West Sussex is clear about its objectives and priorities, plans are of good quality and delivering those objectives and are linked to a culture of continually improving services for vulnerable people. Financial management is strong and the County Council and its partners provide strong leadership to the programme. Performance management of service providers is being developed but is not fully comprehensive or embedded at this stage.
- 167** The five year strategy updated by the business plan provides clear direction for the programme. There are strategic links to health, social care and community safety agenda. Priorities are identified and linked to other agencies. There are clear and challenging aims which are improving services for users, these have been developed in partnership and service providers and service users have been consulted. They include:
- to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people by providing housing support services that promote and maintain people's independence by;
 - prevention and lower intensity flexible services;
 - services that meet need regardless of tenure;
 - independence for service users;
 - services to meet a minimum of level C on the QAF;
 - only to commission strategically relevant and value for money services; and
 - achieve equality of access to services.
- 168** Plans are clear and comprehensive and monitored and managed by the CB and SPWG. Plans are drawn together into a two year business plan currently for the period April 2006 to March 2008. The business plan is a composite plan that draws together all the strands of delivering the SP programme and is an effective tool for the CB and SPWG to manage performance. There are eight elements to it:
- a performance report on the budget, value for money and the savings plan;
 - a summary of the key priorities for the programme;
 - the key aims and priorities from the five year strategy identifying progress on the key actions to deliver the priorities;
 - a report of progress against the improvement plan;
 - a report of risks and how these are being managed;
 - a report on governance arrangements;
 - a report on the performance management framework; and
 - a report on progress with procurement and contracting with a timetable for contracting.

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The plan enables the CB and SPWG to review performance and to hold the ALA to account for performance.

- 169** The improvement plan within the business plan is an effective tool to improve services. The plan is broken down into key elements following the Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry for SP. It is reviewed regularly and updated by the CB and SPWG and there is a traffic light system to show progress. It is informed by the audit carried out by consultants earlier this year and this has led to further service improvements over the past four months. The plan identifies milestones with which to measure progress and responsibility for each action is assigned. An explanation is given against each action that breaks it down in a clear and understandable way and completion against the targets set is tracked. Significant progress has been made since the audit, for example changes in governance, financial management, improved value for money, the plans underway to involve service users and progress with a tool to monitor outcomes for service users as part of the management of service providers' performance. Service users are benefiting from the improvement planning arrangements.
- 170** The business plan is effective in addressing weaknesses and shows awareness. The plan clearly identifies weaknesses with delivery of the SP programme. The weaknesses it addresses are generally in line with the weaknesses identified in our inspection. For example the section in respect of diversity sets out actions that are in progress to identify and involve excluded groups, to alter services to reflect the cultures of communities in West Sussex and to implement a new system to make services accessible. The partnership is therefore improving the things that matter most to service users.
- 171** There is a clear performance monitoring and management framework in place. The CB and SPWG receive regular reports of progress against the business plan, overall performance of services against both key performance indicators and local performance indicators. They also receive clear information with which to monitor progress against a medium term financial plan for the period to March 2011.
- 172** The culture within the partnership and the SP team is leading to improvements in services. The CB and SPWG use the business planning process to look for improvements in services. For example the CB has tasked the SPWG with a review of the five year strategy taking account of work to involve service users and improved needs data. It then plans a working day to review the strategy and draw this together.
- 173** The SP team is organised to encourage innovation and continuous improvement. Team members are tasked individually to take responsibility for key service development. For example one member of the team is taking the lead in developing the performance management framework for service providers and reports to the team on progress. Through the business plan progress is then reported to the CB and SPWG. The development of the performance management framework has led to improvements in the quality of services for service users as set out earlier in this report.

- 174** Performance development of staff within the SP team is linked to the SP business plan. Staff have an annual appraisal at which their targets and progress are reviewed. Monthly supervision through one to one meetings takes place at which progress is reviewed. Targets and development objectives are set to deliver the objectives within the business plan. The partnership's higher level objectives are therefore linked through to the work plans of the SP team members.
- 175** The CB and SPWG are closely managing the SP grant. They receive good quality reports on spend against budget and the medium term financial plan sets out a clear financial strategy to March 2011. The plan identifies the savings that need to be made to align spend against a reducing grant, shows improving value for money and the resources available to commission new services. This is enabling the partnership to plan its finances to maximise benefits for service users by commissioning new services and increasing the range of services at a time of a reducing grant.
- 176** The performance management framework with which to manage service providers' performance has not been fully developed. The partnership has developed a performance management policy with service providers. Service providers report against a set of key performance indicators and an increasing range of local performance indicators linked to outcomes for service users. The partnership is clear that outcomes for service users are the measure with which to measure the quality of services. At the moment there are some targets and performance indicators missing from those the providers report on. For example targets have not been developed in respect of diversity and currently only reflect the diversity of the general population. Because of this they are not sophisticated and do not reflect the need for services according to diversity. Closer management of performance will lead to further improvements in services.
- 177** The CB and SPWG are not receiving good information with which to judge service providers' performance. Reports are limited to an overview of all service providers' performance against the key performance indicators. At the moment the partnership has not thought through the range and quality of information it needs with which to judge the quality of service it funds from SP grant. This means that under in some with services against the five year strategy cannot be tracked or addressed by the CB and SPWG.
- 178** Providers are supportive of contract monitoring arrangements and are engaged in the process. Providers we met are keen to improve performance and welcome the analysis of and comparisons with other service providers. They see this as a way to learn how to improve services for service users.
- 179** Members are actively involved in monitoring progress with the SP programme. The chair of the CB is the cabinet member for Adult Services and receives regular reports on progress against plans. SP has also been subject to scrutiny with the Adults Services Select Committee receiving a report in June 2006 on the outcomes of the SP programme. The Select Committee reviewed progress against the five year strategy, outcomes for service users and how risks associated with the programme were being managed by the partnership.

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- 180** The County Council is providing a lead with the SP programme. Senior councillors and officers show an effective understanding of SP and its potential and how it links to other plans and objectives. They are knowledgeable about its aims and objectives, clear about the challenges for West Sussex in effectively managing the programme in the future and receive and act on information about the programme. As part of the fundamental review of the County Council plans are in place to improve access to services and these are being driven at high level within the Council.
- 181** The Cabinet Member who has the programme within her portfolio and chairs the CB was able to articulate a clear vision for the programme. She showed an understanding of how SP is building on partnerships and is developing a range of services that compliment others being delivered by statutory and voluntary agencies. The Cabinet Member was clear about the strategic direction of the SP programme and the work to improve flexibility of services through the new floating support contracts.
- 182** The partnership is providing an effective lead to the SP programme. The partners work well together reaching consensus in the way the programme is managed and are supportive of each other. The CB has taken a number of difficult decisions. For example it has agreed to de-commission a number of services that are well managed but are not aligned with its priority to increase the flexibility of services. Funding from the de-commissioned services is to be used to fund new floating support services. Partners have a joint objective to improve access to housing for offenders and work has commenced to take this forward. The SPWG is effective in developing the programme. It has a track record of responding well to tasks set by the CB. For example a sub group has been effective in defining and improving value for money.
- 183** There is a learning culture within the SP partnership and learning takes place within and outside the partnership. It is a member of the south east group of SP administering authorities and this has set an annual work plan. West Sussex has taken the lead in developing a performance management framework based on outcomes for service users and is sharing information with four other ALAs to develop a cross authority framework. It is also working with three other ALAs to develop joint commissioning in the south east. It has also used the Essex value improvement programme to inform the new model of floating support which is currently being tendered. The use of advocates in an earlier de-commissioning process was put to use to increase support for service users in a later de-commissioning exercise. Learning is also being achieved in work with consultants who have brought their experience of developing the involvement of service users from Hampshire in the work they are carrying out in West Sussex.

Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

- 184** The SP partnership demonstrates capacity to improve services. There is evidence of a strong commitment from the County Council and its partners. Partnership working is developing well, financial planning is good and ICT is effective although not fully exploited. A skilled and committed team is in place which has access to development and training.
- 185** There is strong commitment to the development of the SP programme from the County Council and its partners. For example the partnership has followed through changes in governance arrangements and the new AO is a senior officer within the County Adult Services Department. SP is integrated into the Adult Services Department and is managed as one of the County Council's mainstream services. Attendance at the CB and SPWG is strong with above 80 per cent attendance from representatives and the partnership has been effective in improving and increasing services for service users. The new PCT wishes to appoint an assistant director to the CB and sees SP as an important part to achieving health targets. Similarly probation see SP as helping it achieve better services for offenders and assist with public protection. This shows that partners are committed to the success of the SP programme in providing for vulnerable people.
- 186** The CB has increased its capacity through planning events. The CB has held two annual planning events that have been used to review strategy and develop the knowledge of members of the CB. The chair of the CB and the AO plan to hold further planning events to ensure that members of the CB have the necessary knowledge to effectively supervise the SP programme.
- 187** The profile of SP is high in West Sussex and there are plans to extend this. SP is viewed as a mainstream service within the County Council and SP is aligned with the LAA. The County Council as the ALA plan to extend the role of the SP team. The role of the SP lead officer is being developed to a wider accommodation planning role to maximise the County Council's role in providing affordable and supported accommodation in West Sussex. The team will also increase in size as some existing posts within the County Council structure will report to the new lead officer post. This will provide further resources with which to develop the effectiveness of SP within West Sussex.
- 188** The SP team is effective. It is well established, enthusiastic and fully resourced supported by strong leadership from the assistant director of adult services. The team has an appropriate range of skills and expertise to deliver the SP programme and has been provided with a broad range of training and some specialist training to enable it to operate ICT effectively and to manage and develop contracts with providers. It has adopted a structure where individual members of the team take a lead in specific elements of service development. For example the lead for young peoples' services in the team has given this a higher profile and this is taking forward issues highlighted in the recent joint assessment report of the County Council.

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

- 189** Prudent financial management has given the partnership the opportunity to move the programme forward. The partnership has capacity to increase services for vulnerable people in both this year and the following year. It has a development fund this year of £176,000 and has successfully managed the reduction in grant each year. Grant settlement next year is a reduction in real terms of 0.24 per cent but plans assumed a reduction of 5 per cent. Through the commissioning and service review process the quality and number of services has been increased. This is enabling the CB in November 2006 to consider commissioning further services after an analysis of the resources available by the SPWG.
- 190** Consultants have been used to build capacity. Consultants were appointed to carry out a review of the SP programme and reported in April 2006. This was used as a basis by the CB to develop its improvement plan as part of the business plan. Specialist consultants are employed to compliment the skills of the SP team. They are helping with the development and management of the provider forum and are working with service users to improve the ways service users can be involved in developing the SP programme. Consultants have also been employed to bring specialist skills to contact hard to reach groups and establish how best to provide services for those people.
- 191** ICT systems and capacity are effective but underdeveloped. The County Council has a specialist suite of software that holds performance information from providers with which to manage the programme. This enables it to make returns to the DCLG within the timescales laid down. It is a powerful tool with which to manage the performance of providers but it is not being used effectively. Good quality information is available to the partnership with which to manage performance but this is not being exploited at the moment. This means that the investment in ICT is not being fully exploited.
- 192** The partnership is benefiting from the County Council's procurement strategy. The County Council has a corporate procurement unit which is advising the partnership on the procurement of new services. The County's procurement strategy sets out how stimulation of the market can help to achieve improved value for money. The partnership is providing support to providers to gain the skills to tender for new services. For example providers are being encouraged to form consortia to tender for the new floating support services shortly to be tendered. The partnership is aware of the importance to get procurement right to achieve sustainable services for service users.
- 193** The capacity of the service is enhanced by successful bidding for external resources. £3.9 million of capital funding has been obtained from the Department of Health to part fund the construction of extra care housing for older people with a housing association. This has resulted in 90 units of accommodation linked to support services funded by SP grant and fits with the priorities of the five year strategy for SP.

- 194** The capacity of the service has also been increased with the use of other resources. For example as part of the redevelopment of County facilities in Worthing an additional 55 units of extra care housing has been provided in partnership with a housing association. The coastal area of West Sussex is identified in the partnership as greatest priority for additional extra care housing.

Summary

- 195** Our judgement is the partnership in West Sussex has promising prospects for improvement. A good track record of improving services for service users has been established and the partnership has shared goals and objectives. Plans for SP address the key weaknesses of the programme and address further improvements in service for service users. The partnership is robustly managing financial performance, has achieved improved value for money and the performance management framework is agreed with providers.
- 196** Leadership from the partnership and within the County Council is strong. The SP team is effective and committed to delivering a good and improving service and is supported by good ICT facilities and has the finances to deliver further service improvements. The partnership has also been successful in attracting additional funding to compliment the aims and objectives of the SP strategy.
- 197** There are some aspects that do need to improve. Track record with access to services and understanding diversity with which to shape services is poor. The performance management framework for service providers is still not fully developed and being used to report performance through the governance structure. The investment in ICT is not fully exploited to help in this process.

Appendix 1 – Performance indicators

Demographic information

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

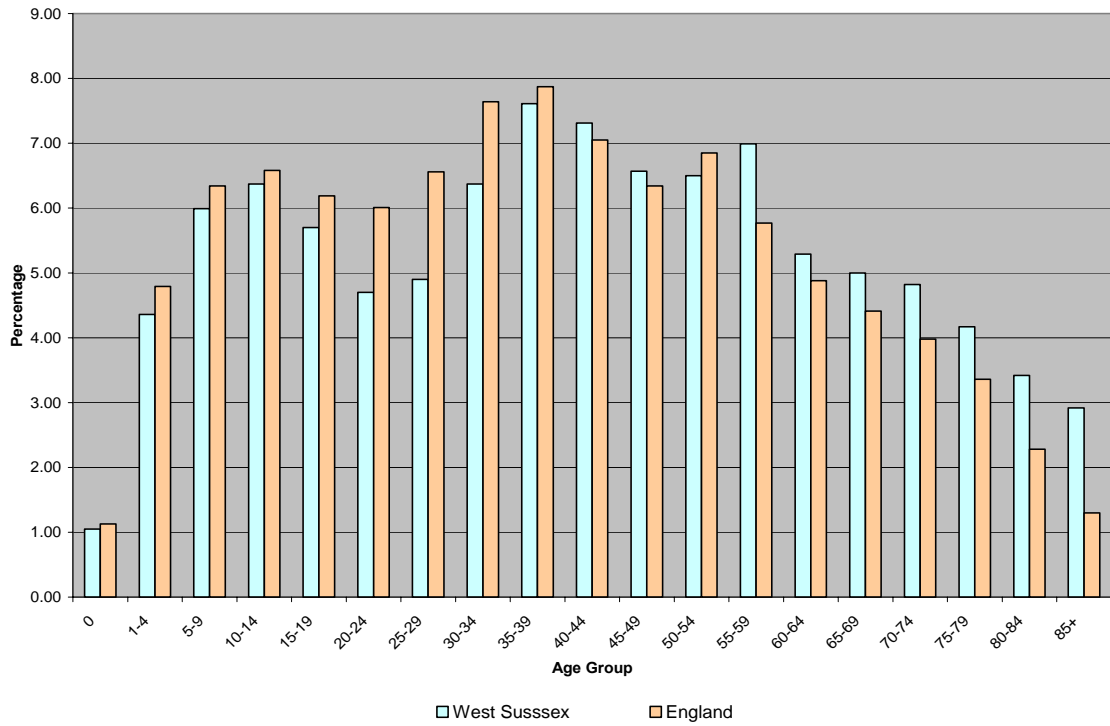
Measure	West Sussex	England
Population (mid-2004) ⁶	761,900	57,851,100
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2004)	23.1	18.5
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2004)	3.4	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) ⁷	57.9	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ⁸	345	-

⁶ Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

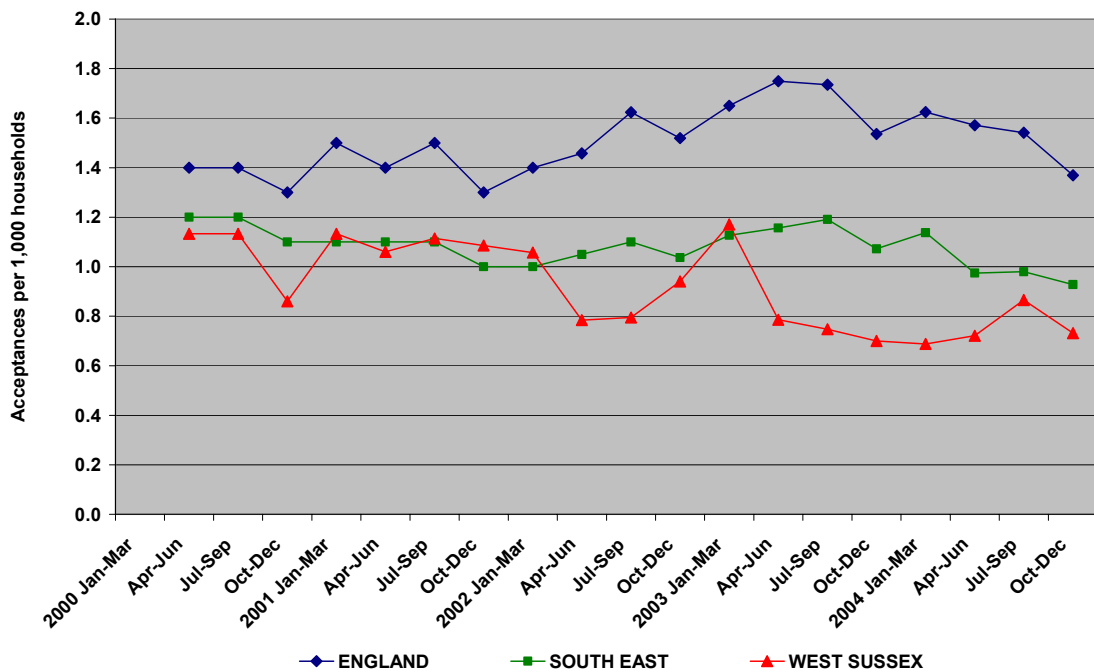
⁷ Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (September 2006)

⁸ Source: deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

Percentage of the population⁹ in each age group compared with England



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



⁹ Source: midyear population estimates (2004)

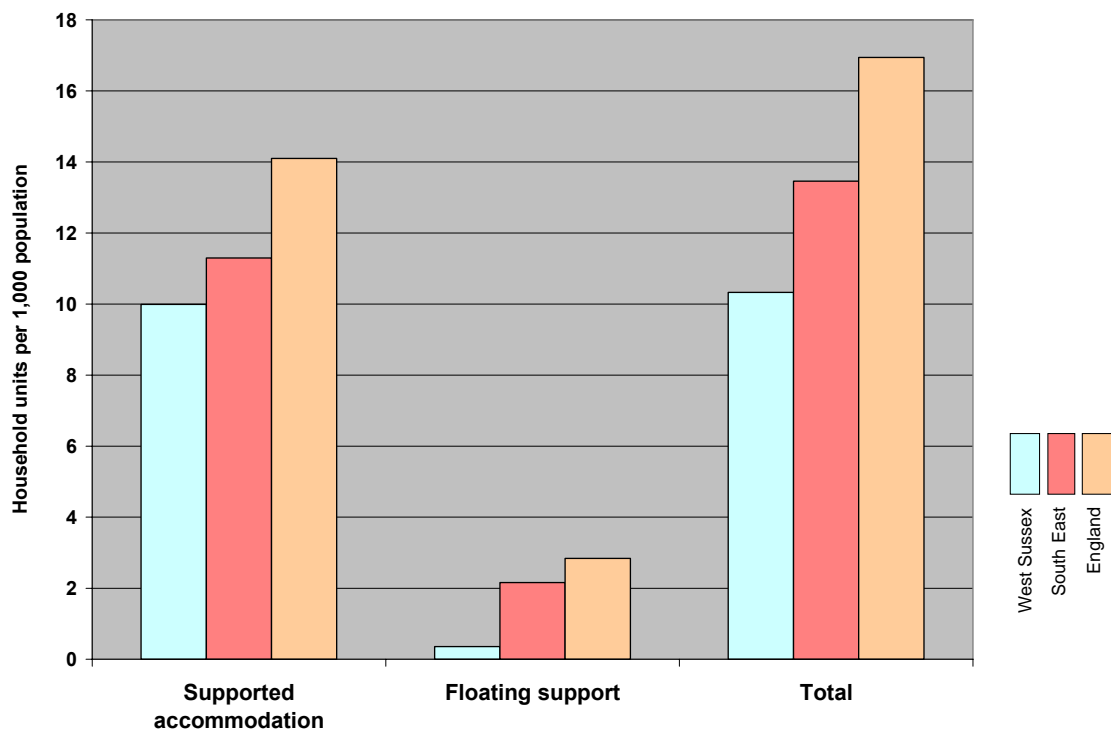
Performance information

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.

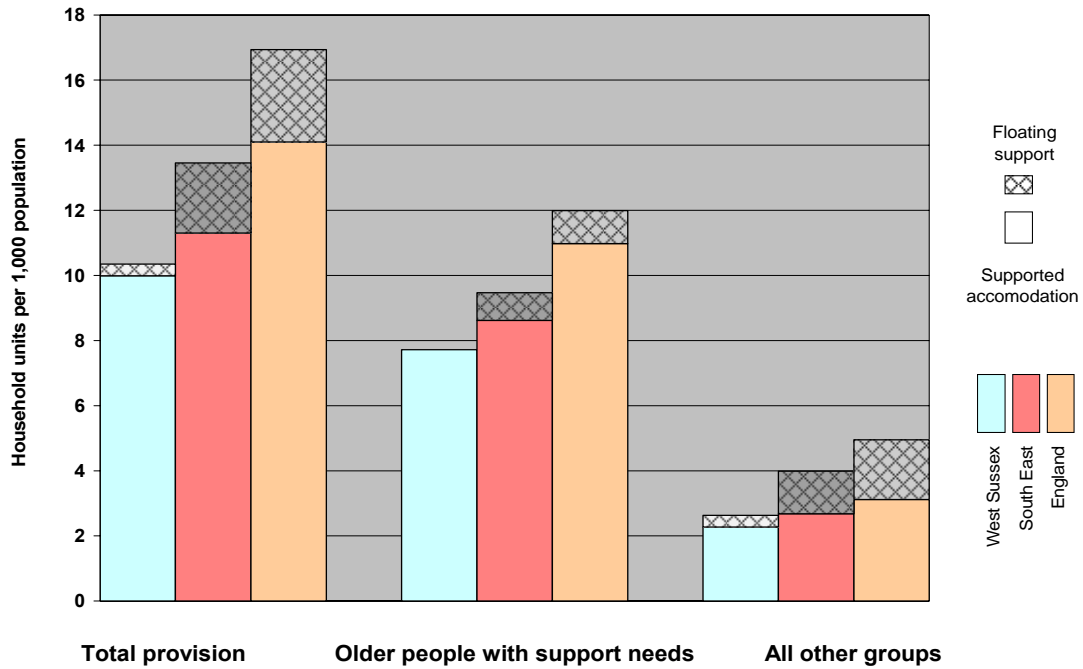
Supporting People data

Total service provision funded through Supporting People¹⁰

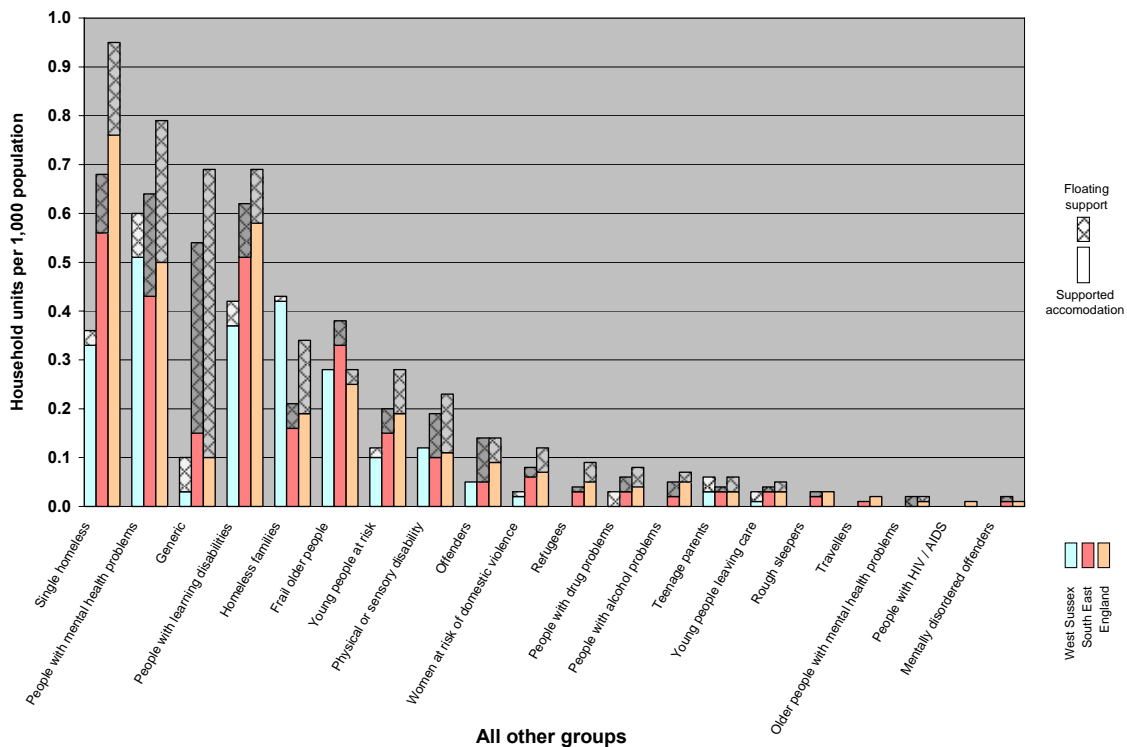


¹⁰ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England¹¹



Services for other groups compared with the region and England¹²



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

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

Funding for Supporting People¹³

West Sussex	2003/04 £000,s	2004/05 £000,s	2005/06 £000,s
Final Supporting People grant	£ 15,748	£ 16,238	£ 15,374
Pipeline allocation	£ 670	£ 1,496	
Administration grant	£ 535	£ 552	£ 497

Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2003/04 (£ per week)¹⁴

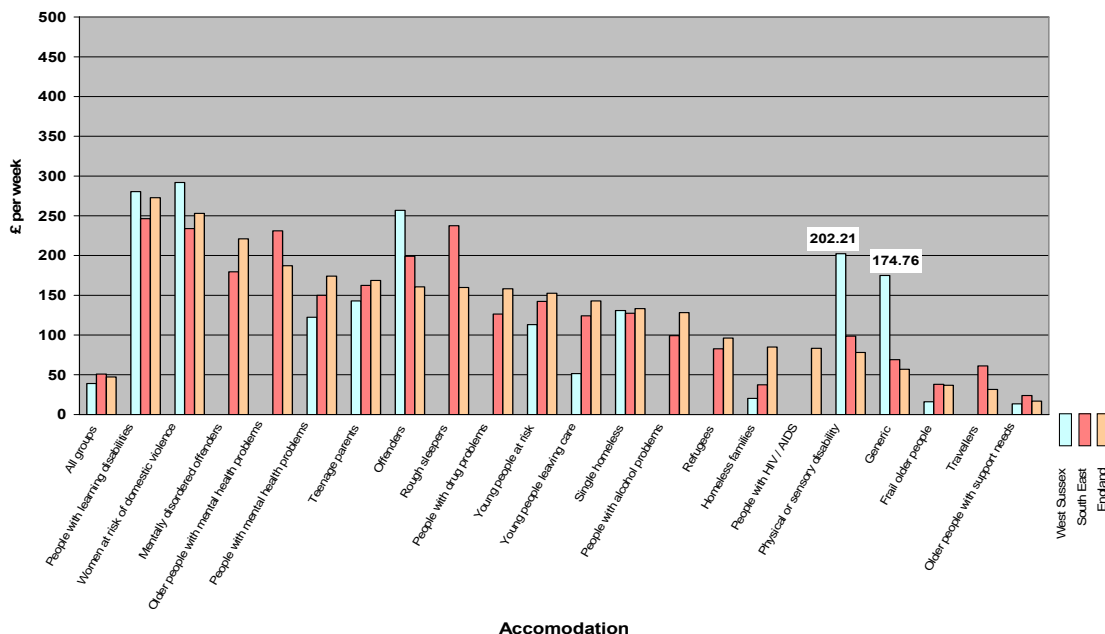
	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
West Sussex	£ 0.40	£ 24.92	£ 29.51	£ 78.08
South East	£ 0.52	£ 24.94	£ 32.26	£ 71.78
England	£ 0.70	£ 28.30	£ 34.71	£ 76.37

'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.'

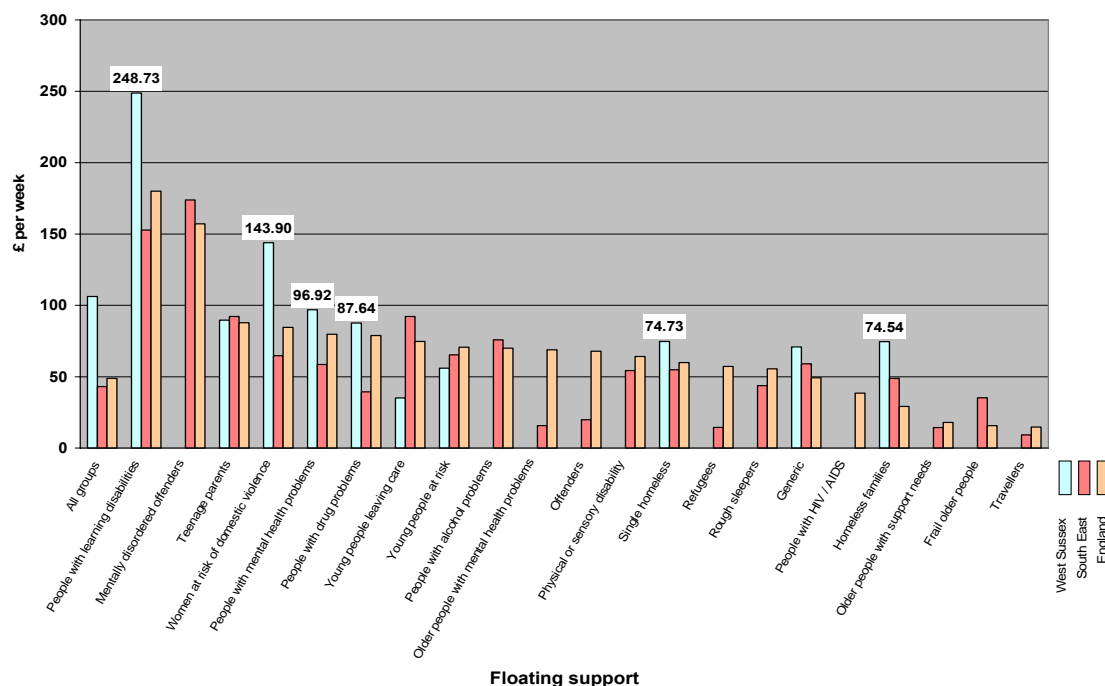
¹³ Source: Grant allocations, ODPM.

¹⁴ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003

Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹⁵



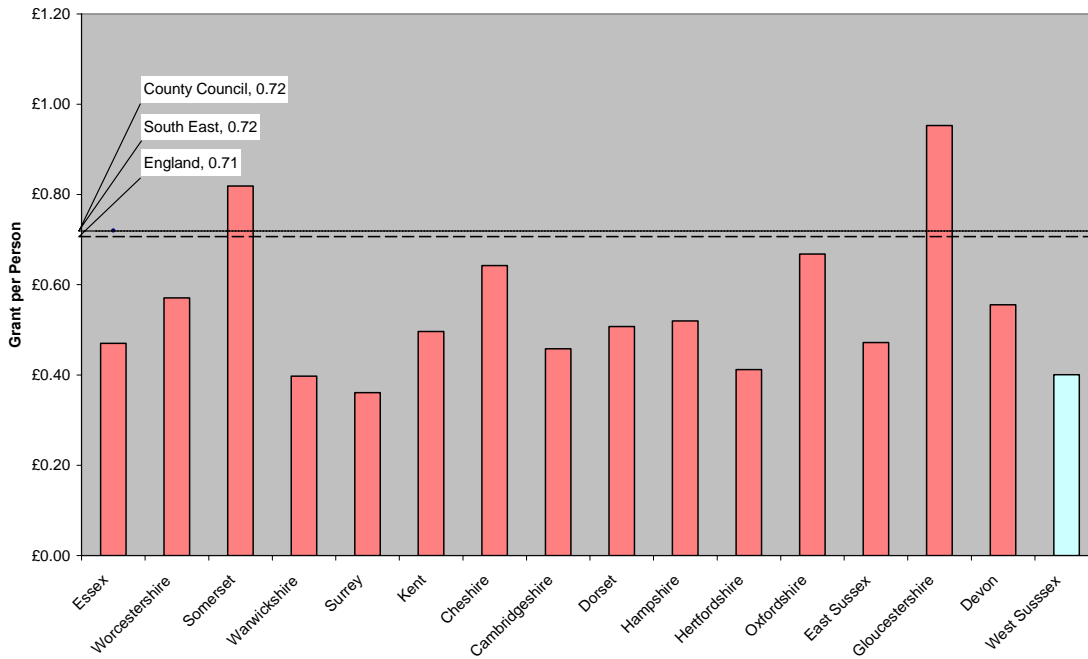
Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)¹⁶



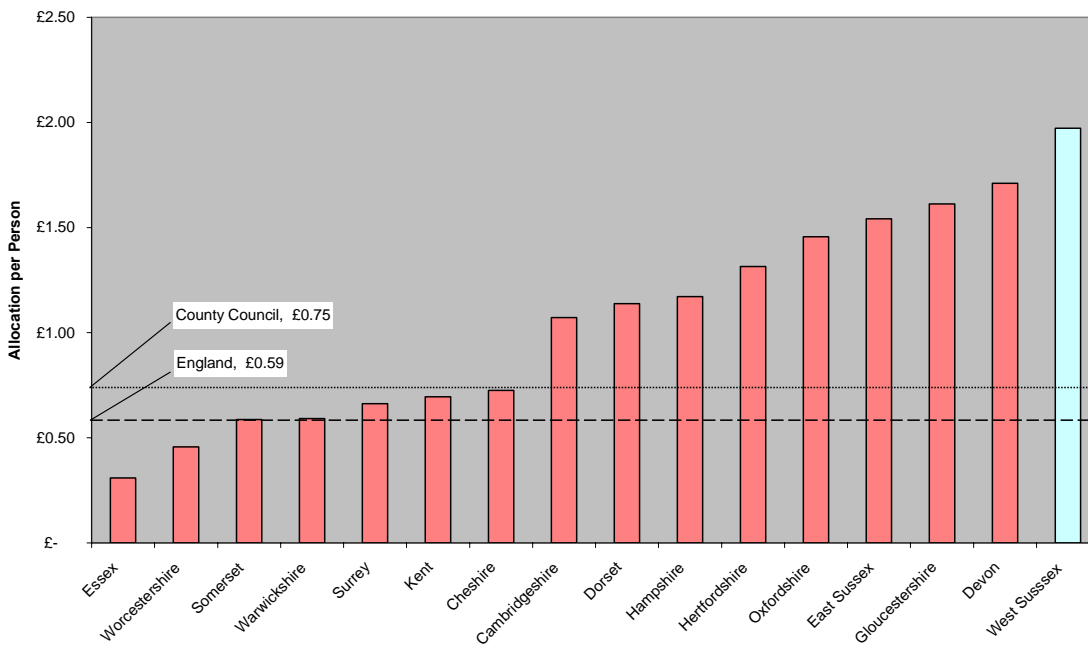
¹⁵ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

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

Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours¹⁷, all county councils and all English councils (2004/05)



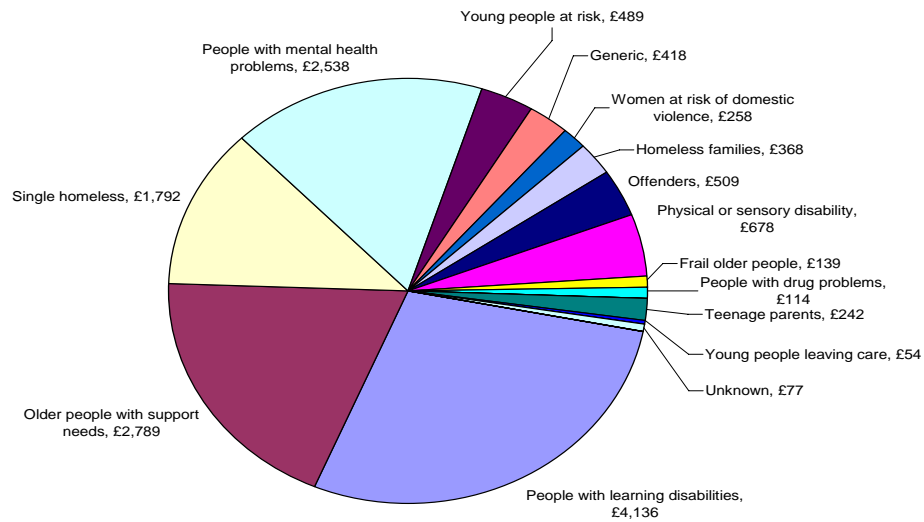
Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours¹⁸, all county councils and all English councils



¹⁷ A comparator group of similar councils.

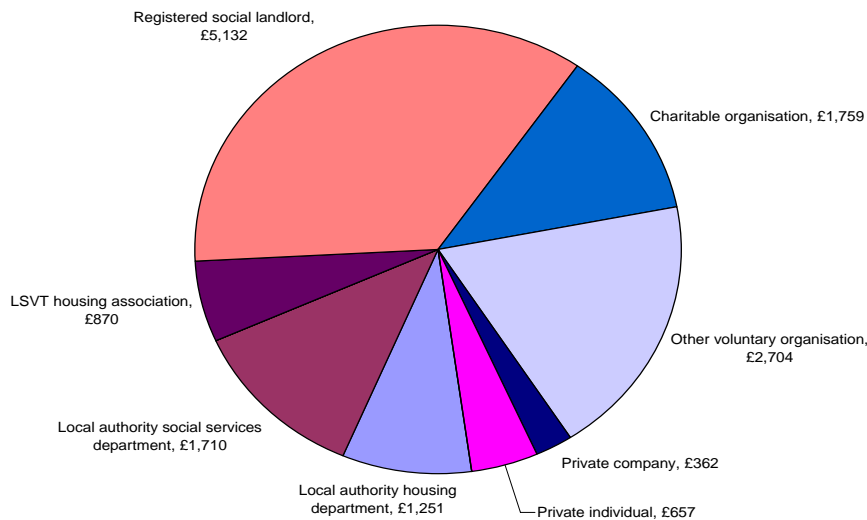
¹⁸ A comparator group of similar councils.

Share of spending between user groups (£000s)¹⁹



West Sussex
Funding by user group

Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)²⁰



West Sussex
Funding by provider type

¹⁹ Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

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

Social Services star ratings November 2004

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

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?	Performance rating (CPA equivalent)
Adults' Services	Some	Uncertain	★ (1)
Children's Services	Most	Promising	

Social services performance indicators

Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

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

West Sussex	
Significantly above average (●●●●)	<p>Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31)</p> <p>Admissions of older people to residential/nursing care (C26)</p> <p>Admissions of supported residents aged 18-64 to residential/nursing care (C27)</p> <p>Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30)</p>
Above average (●●●)	<p>Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that their opinions and preferences were always taken into account (D57)</p> <p>Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that they can contact social services easily (D58)</p>
Average (●●)	<p>Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6)</p> <p>Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29)</p> <p>Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51)</p> <p>Delayed transfers of care (D41)</p> <p>Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4)</p>

West Sussex	
Below average (**)	Percentage change on previous year in total emergency admissions to hospital (A5) Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40) Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39) Older people helped to live at home (C32) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54)
Significantly below average (•)	

Best value performance indicators

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

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

West Sussex	
Within the best 25 per cent	
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	

District council performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04

The tables below shows how district councils in West Sussex performed on best value performance indicators relevant to Supporting People, compared with all district councils.

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

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

Mid Sussex	
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Domestic violence refuge places (BV176)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b) Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
Worthing	
Within the best 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2)
Within the worst 25 per cent	Domestic violence refuge places (BV176) Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a) Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)

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:
 - focus groups of staff, partners, commissioners and providers;
 - visits to 11 services;
 - mystery shopping in each of the districts;
 - checks on the quality of the County Council website, SPKweb pages for West Sussex and other documents relating to access; and
 - observation of the Supporting People Working Group.

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)*

Individual budgets for service users

- 1 West Sussex is a pilot local authority for the development of individual budgets payments for people entitled to assistance with social services. This has been extended to the Supporting People programme and a number of people, some with learning difficulties, now have individual budgets of Supporting People grant. This has enabled them to exercise choice in the selection of service provider and to choose which services are of most importance to them.