

Local Government Association – Survey of Supporting People Contract Review Data

The service review process

All Supporting People (SP) services must be reviewed by the Administering Authority (AA) within the first 3 years of the programme. These are contractual reviews and focus on strategic priorities as well as quality, performance and cost of service. The service is assessed against 5 criteria:

- the service is strategically relevant
- the service meets identified current and future demand
- the service provides quality which effectively meets the needs? preference of service users and potential users
- the service performs effectively and efficiently
- the service is cost effective

ODPM guidance states that generally services should meet all the criteria to be reviewed however the review process can result in an agreed action plan that allows services to achieve improvements over a mutually agreed timescale.

Between 1st April and May 2004 Administering Authorities had undertaken reviews of 1764 contracts and the ODPM has allowed the Local Government Association access to these service review returns which show the work done by local authorities under their duty to review all Supporting People contracts.

The total of 1,764 reviews at May 2004 must be set against the overall number of contracts which totals approximately 37,955. Although representing just 4.6% of the total, the sample does give an indication of some trends in intervention by local authorities and the future direction of the SP programme. The integrity of the sample is confirmed by the comparison of the completed reviews with the total data for the entire set of Supporting People services, being an accurately representative sample. These comparisons are highlighted in each section.

Completed reviews by service type

Of the reviews undertaken in the first year to May 2004 1347 (76%) were accommodation based, 291 (16.5%) floating support service based, 67 (4%) mixed accommodation/floating support, 25 (1.5%) home improvement agencies and the remainder community alarm based or resettlement service based, 17 (1%) and 17 (1%) had no service type on return.

This data is broadly reflective of the national picture. Overall, 83% of services are accommodation based, 10% are floating support, 3% mixed accommodation and floating support, and just under 1% are home improvement agencies. Nationally, 2.2% are community or social alarm services.

Completed reviews by provider type

Of the 1764 reviews undertaken by Administering Authorities 650 (37%) were provided by RSLs; 323 (18.3%) were of charitable organisations; 233 (13%) from voluntary not for profit organisations; 152 (8.6%) from private companies; 81 (4.6%) from Social Service Departments; 34 (2%) from National Health Service Trusts; 161 (9%) from local authority housing departments; 104 (5.9%) from private individuals.

Nationally, providers of services under Supporting People break down as:

RSLs	43.4%
Charitable organisations	13%
Voluntary not for profit organisations	9%
Private companies	4.5%
Social Services departments	5.6%
Joint Housing/Social Services depts	2.3%
NHS Trusts	1.2%
Housing departments	15%
Private individuals	5.4%
Others	1.2%

This data shows that local authority housing department contracts are under-represented in the initial tranche of reviews that had been carried out by May 2004, although other providers are represented closely according to their actual proportion of services nationally. Housing departments were asked by ODPM to carry out the early reviews based on those contracts that were 'high cost', 'new' or having 'identified risk' associated with them. Where the housing department was providing a service, it is less likely to have fallen into these categories.

Overall our picture is of an accurate representation among the contracts reviewed.

Completed reviews by primary client group

Of the reviews in the data return to May 2004 389 (22%) of the completed reviews concerned people with mental health problems; 433 (24.5%) covered people with learning disabilities; 323 (18.3%) covered older people with support needs; a further 140 (8%) covered single homeless people with support needs; 116 (6.5%) covered younger people at risk while 62 (3.5%) covered women at risk of domestic violence and a further 32 (1.8%) covered people with physical or sensory disabilities while other groups had a sample size under 2.0%. The priority given to these groups does reflect the ODPM criteria for early reviews, and is therefore to be expected.

The national picture shows that 11% of all services are aimed at people with mental health problems, 44.5% at older people with support needs, 18% people with learning disabilities, 6.6% at single homeless people, 2.6% at younger people at risk, and 1.7% cover women at risk of domestic violence, and 2.4% at people with physical or sensory disabilities.

Therefore, while the number of completed reviews under-reflects older people's services, and over-represents mental health problems, it accurately reflects the other client groups. Older people's service contracts are generally considered less 'high risk' and less expensive, and therefore will not have been prioritised. Mental health service contracts would be prioritised for the same reason.

AAs are increasingly reviewing contracts by client group in order to benchmark value for money more closely.

Completed review outcomes

The most significant outcome is that 269 (15.2%) of the service reviews resulted in services being decommissioned altogether. A further 391 contracts (22%) were renewed with a mixture of amendments including capacity, unit cost, and service definition and with or without action plans.

To this can be added other major interventions, namely major changes or remodelling of a service which affected 94 (5.3%) of reviews or a temporary extension to an existing contract with an action plan which affected 270 (15.3%) of reviews and finally maintenance of a service through an alternative provider which affected 15 (0.8%) of reviews and finally a decision to renew a contract with an associated action plan applied to 164 (9.2%) of reviews.

The significant number of contracts shown as decommissioned highlights the extent to which local authorities are bringing services into line with the criteria for supporting people. Local authorities have taken the opportunity afforded by Supporting People to end their association with services that are not providing a high standard of effective support to client groups, or providing sufficient value for money. Other services are being picked up by more relevant departments such as social services where they should properly be located and funded through other streams.

Of all the service review outcomes only 288 (16%) of contracts were found to be able to have no change or service re-commissioned recommendation and were therefore capable of contract renewal. It should be noted that 243 (13.7%) contracts are described as 'outcome not stated'.

The low number of contracts being renewed with no change again demonstrates the determination of AAs to improve their service provision through quality and value for money. With 84% of contracts having either changes made, or being decommissioned altogether, it is clear that the responsibilities incumbent upon authorities are being discharged thoroughly and efficiently.

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