

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2002 AT 10.30 A.M.**

**REPORT OF THE ADULT CARE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 OCTOBER 2002**

NOTE: A copy of the report mentioned below, has been sent to all members of the Adult Care Services Scrutiny Committee and other member who have requested the report. Further copies are available from Peter Hull, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford (Tel: 01992 555565).

SUPPORTING PEOPLE

1. Background

The Committee considered a report explaining the purpose of the Supporting People Programme, identifying progress in implementing the programme in Hertfordshire and outlining the key issues for the next few months.

The Supporting People Programme will provide housing support services to a wide range of vulnerable people. From April 2003 all the resources currently used for this purpose will be pooled into a single budget which will be used by a multi-agency commissioning body to secure services. Hertfordshire County Council, as the administering authority, on behalf of the commissioning body, will hold the single budget for Hertfordshire. Supporting People will be a complex system to introduce and administer but nevertheless will make a major contribution to achieving shared objectives with partner agencies and deploying resources to tackle particular social problems. It will also have a major role to play in endorsing the County wide community focused plans which seek to help and assist with issues and problems at an early stage. It will require a high degree of co-ordination and dedication from all parties and partners involved in the process if full benefit is to be derived from the programme.

The overall programme is administered by the office of the Deputy Prime Minister and monitored on a quarterly basis via 'milestones'. To date Adult Care Services have made good progress against milestones and the programme is schedule for achieving targets.

2. **Information**

Supported housing and housing related support service have grown tremendously over the last ten years and cover the following client groups: -

- elderly
- learning disabilities
- mental health
- refugees and asylum seekers
- people fleeing domestic violence
- single homeless and homeless families
- rough sleepers
- young single parents
- young people and those leaving care and
- offenders and those at risk of offending.

Supporting People will lead to a major change in how supported housing is funded. The scheme will combine five streams of funding into one grant administered by local authorities. This will be used to fund organisations which provide supported housing or housing related support services.

The following present funding allocations will be amalgamated:-

- Social Housing Management Grant - revenue grant paid to Housing Associations
- Transitional Housing Benefit - housing benefit which is paid for certain support costs and identified within an individual's accommodation charges
- specific payments made under income support and job seekers allowance - for housing support
- grants paid by the Department of Local Government and the Regions (DTLR)/Office of the Deputy of the Prime Minister (ODPM) as part of safer communities funding or from the Rough Sleepers Unit
- grants from DTLR/ODPM for Home Improvement Agencies.

Changes to the funding of supported housing are being introduced to ensure that the new development of supported housing, and housing related support services, is in line with identified needs, and that new developments contribute to other major community plans to ensure that shared objectives are achieved. It is hoped this will establish good quality supported housing by introducing a single performance standard and quality assurance programme.

A key feature of the programme is that it will be owned locally and will operate within the context of the wider community. Implementation will take place in phases, and each proposal for the regulatory framework will receive extensive consultation with key stakeholders.

Hertfordshire County Council as the administering authority will become responsible for the administration of the new combined budget and all contract arrangements from 1 April 2003.

3. Detailed Work

A team of five people has been established, funded by the Supporting People implementation grant. They report to the Assistant Director, Performance and Commissioning, Adult Care Services.

As far as accountability and governance is concerned: -

- (a) the Commissioning body is responsible for the Supporting People Strategy and its implementation, for the budget and for ensuring that the implementation grant is used in accordance with the strategy.
- (b) the Core Strategy Development Group (CSDG) was established in late 2000 as the Shadow Strategy Group.
- (c) Local Forums will be established as a means of involvement and consultation on all aspects of the Supporting People Programme. They comprise all stakeholders in the programme including service providers, service users and advocates. Six forums have been established across the County and they meet on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis.

Supply mapping commenced in mid 2001 to identify the location and number of supported housing schemes or housing related support service in Hertfordshire. This includes identifying every provider, and the nature and location of every supported housing scheme in Hertfordshire. Detailed data concerning supported housing provision in Hertfordshire is contained within the shadow strategy which must be submitted to the ODPM by 31 October, 2002.

Over the next 2-3 months work must be carried out to finalise the strategy and identification of schemes and funding resources in Hertfordshire. In addition a charging policy must be developed and agreed. The work of the Supporting People Team then needs to focus on implementation.

Guidance on charging for Supporting People services was issued in June 2002. Services which are expected to provide independent living within a two year period are exempt from charging. The commissioning body for Hertfordshire is required to formulate and implement a local policy on charging and this is expected to be consistent with the 'fairer charging' policy for home care and administered in the same way. Under the interim guidance, any service user currently entitled to housing benefit whether partial or full will also be exempt from charging. Charges will be subject to a means test, and a number of service users will require a financial assessment. Work is currently under way to develop a charging policy for Hertfordshire and to identify how it should be administered.

Hertfordshire County Council as the administering authority will have responsibility to ensure that the Supporting People grant is used in accordance with the directions

and conditions of the Secretary of State. Grant directions stipulate that the commissioning body cannot allocate funding outside the advice of the administering authority, who have ultimate responsibility for the grant. Indications are that the Supporting People budget in Hertfordshire will be approximately £12m - £15m.

Following their scrutiny of this issue, the Committee requested the Director of Adult Care Services to note the following conclusions: -

- (a) That the Supporting People initiative be welcomed and the appreciation of the work of the Supporting People Team and Groups be recorded. In particular the Committee welcomed: -
- the opportunity for better co-ordination
 - recognition of gaps in current services particularly for people with drug and alcohol problems, rural communities, serious offenders and ethnic minority community members and
 - the secure financial structure for support services linked to housing.
- (b) Concerns identified included: -
- that there appeared to be a freeze on growth for the first three years of the scheme
 - much work/guidance etc to be produced but it was not always clear when this work was completed
 - there was confusion as to how capital and revenue monies will be made available for new schemes.
- (c) Continuing issues included: -
- there was a need for effective communications with users both to minimise the fear of the transition to new arrangements and ensure that they know about the practicalities of how the new scheme will work
 - there was concern that the funding regime would not be able to provide funding for emerging issues
 - cross-organisation understanding of the issues of information technology and data sharing needed further work
 - the need for County Councillors to be informed about their local Supporting People Forums.

Roma Mills
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3 October 2002