



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

# What is Supporting People?



supporting**people**

supporting independence

# Introduction

On 1 April 2003 the *Supporting People* programme was launched. The programme is committed to providing a better quality of life for vulnerable people to live more independently and maintain their tenancies. The programme provides housing related support to prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care or homelessness and can help the smooth transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment.

The *Supporting People* programme provides housing related support services to over 1.2 million vulnerable people. The programme is delivered locally by 150 Administering Authorities, over 6,000 providers of housing related support, and an estimated 37,000 individual contracts.

## *Supporting People* Objectives

- A programme that delivers quality of life and promotes independence.
- Services that are of a high quality, strategically planned, cost effective and complement existing care services.
- The planning and development of services is needs-led.
- A working partnership of local government, probation, health, voluntary sector organisations, housing associations, support agencies and service users.

# Supporting People client groups

*Supporting People* is a wide and varied programme that reaches out to different vulnerable members of society. Client groups include:

- People who have been homeless or a rough sleeper
- Ex-offenders and people at risk of offending and imprisonment
- People with a physical or sensory disability
- People at risk of domestic violence
- People with alcohol and drug problems
- Teenage parents
- Elderly people
- Young people at risk
- People with HIV and AIDS
- People with learning difficulties
- Travellers
- Homeless families with support needs

## What is housing related support?

The primary purpose of housing related support is to develop and sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in their accommodation. Some examples of housing related support services include enabling individuals to access their correct benefit entitlement, ensuring they have the correct skills to maintain a tenancy, advising on home improvements

and accessing a community service alarm. Other services include a home visit for a short period each week or an on-site full-time support worker for a long period of time.

A range of services and activities can be tailored to an individual's specific needs.

Support services can be categorised as 'short-term' and 'long-term' in accordance to their aims and objectives. Short term schemes last for up to two years with the intention of moving an individual on to independent living or increasing the ability to live independently. Long-term services are on a continuous basis and are often characterised as open-ended.

All short-term housing related support services are free. Charges are only applicable to people in long term services who can afford to pay, following an assessment of their financial circumstance. Those who cannot afford to pay are eligible to claim a subsidy from their local authority.

## How does *Supporting People* work?

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has the main responsibility for the *Supporting People* programme. It allocates a *Supporting People* grant to Administering Authorities and monitors their performances. Administering Authorities (unitary authorities and counties in two tier areas), are responsible for implementing the programme within their local area. The Administering Authorities contract with providers and partner organisations for the provision of *Supporting People* services. A Commissioning Body (a partnership of local housing, social care, health and probation statutory services) sits above an Administering Authority and plays a key role in advising and approving a *Supporting People* strategy.

# Case Studies

Here are some examples of how the *Supporting People* programme is helping vulnerable people.

## **Moving to own tenancy**

Mr M lost his flat through drug addiction. He was later introduced to the services of a mental health project team when he was diagnosed as suffering from Schizophrenia.

Through the housing related support he has received at the project, he has developed life skills to help him consider moving into his own home. At the beginning he struggled with the idea of moving from the project because he lacked confidence.

He is now more confident and has moved into his own flat in an over 50's scheme and he is doing well.

## **Moving from an institution to own home**

Mr J has moved to supported living from a residential home for disabled people and those with learning disabilities and he thinks "it is the best thing on earth".

He can do things that he wants to do, such as going grocery shopping by bus with his girlfriend. He enjoys going shopping without staff and being able to select his own food.

He said "I make my own meals, choosing what I want and when I want to eat. I do housework, use the washing machine, pay household bills, electric, gas, water and telephone. I have a total control of my personal money, which I think is brilliant."

## **Gaining a more independent living**

Mr C lived with his family because of his physical disability.

Recently he was offered a flat by a local housing association. His support worker said, "I'll never forget the look on his face when he got the keys in his hand after signing his tenancy".

Mr C gets a comprehensive package of support. Supporting People contributes to his total funding package and without this contribution, Mr C would not be living in his own home; he would be either back at his family's home or in a registered care home.

# Independent Review

In October 2003, the Government commissioned RSM Robson Rhodes LLP to undertake an Independent Review of *Supporting People* as a result of the significant and late growth in costs by £400 million between December 2002 and April 2003.

The Independent Review was asked to consider the value for money and the variation in unit costs and services across local authorities.

The Independent Review concluded that:

“£1.8 billion is too much to pay for the legacy provision... It is important that the cost of the legacy provision is brought in line with the proper market rate for good quality strategically relevant housing services. It is also important that efficiency savings are optimised and secured as early as possible to release funds for new provision.”

A programme of work has been developed to take forward many of the recommendations. This focuses on improving how Administering Authorities, service providers and commissioning bodies manage and deliver value for money.

# The Future

## **MAINSTREAMING OF SUPPORTING PEOPLE**

The *Supporting People* programme had a long implementation period during which the ODPM provided guidance to ensure that the programme was successfully implemented by the go live date of 1 April 2003. The ODPM monitored Administering Authorities throughout the implementation period and provided assistance where an authority was seen to be struggling. Because of this intense lead in period, and the fact that the programme was new, *Supporting People* tended to sit outside the mainstream business planning of the majority of most Administering Authorities. However, now that the programme has entered into a steady state, the *Supporting People* programme should now become part of the everyday working of authorities. Officers within authorities have a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience and local *Supporting People* teams should make every effort to call on these resources to ensure that the programme links into the mainstream agendas and strategies and is delivered effectively.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

*Supporting People* encourages collaborative working between stakeholders of the programme: no single stakeholder can deliver its challenges alone. Partnership is paramount. There is a strong need for multi-agency working to develop and continue the successful delivery of the programme.

Administering Authorities should continue to consult widely with service providers and users in delivering the programme locally. It is a programme for local people, delivered through local partnerships.

The sharing of knowledge and good practice is an integral part of *Supporting People*. There are many examples of this already happening across the country. In March 2004, four local authorities were awarded Beacon status for their work in developing effective *Supporting People* local partnerships. These local authorities are Oxfordshire, Suffolk, Salford and Telford and Wrekin.

## **HUB SERVICES**

Hub services will, for the first time, provide comprehensive information about services and service providers to *Supporting People* professionals and members of the public. This information will be drawn from existing Administering Authority systems as well as making links to existing information currently held in a range of other organisations. It will provide a place to share best practice and potentially hold sufficient information to benchmark services. It will also provide a system to track clients through services as well as maintain current information about costs of services.

# How can I find out more about the *Supporting People* programme?

To order detailed guidance and publications on *Supporting People*, please contact:

ODPM Free Literature Service

PO Box 236

Whetherby

West Yorkshire

LS23 7NB

Tel: 0870 1226 236

Fax: 0870 1226 237

To find out more about the *Supporting People* programme call our help line on 020 7944 2556 or alternatively click on to [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)

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