



***Implementing
Supporting People:***

A Guide for Support Providers



Implementing Supporting People: *A Guide for Support Providers*

Written by:

Jeremy Porteus, Ken Davies, Mike Lank and Moyra Riseborough. Edited by Moyra Riseborough on behalf of the Supporting People Advisory Network.

Based on the work of the Supporting People Preparation Projects funded by Anchor Trust and the Housing Corporation.

Published by: Anchor Trust, Fountain Court, Oxford Spires Business Park, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1NZ

Tel: 01865 854000

Fax: 01865 854005

www.anchor.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 01052183

Company NO. 3147851

First Published 2002

© Anchor Trust and the Housing Corporation 2002

Anchor Trust and the Housing Corporation have asserted their rights under the Copyright, designs and Patents Act, 1988 to be identified as the authors of this work.

This publication was funded from the Housing Corporation's Innovation and Good Practice programme. However, the contents of this Guide do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of the Housing Corporation.

ISBN 0-906178-762

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This publication can also be downloaded in Acrobat Reader format from:

www.anchor.org.uk/supp_people

Foreword	4
About the Authors	4
Acknowledgments	5
Introduction:	6
Who is the Guide for?	6
Chapter One: Supporting People - the Policy in Context & the Role of the Preparation Projects	7
The policy background	7
The work of the Preparation Projects	9
Concluding remarks	10
Chapter Two: Involvement in Decision - Making & Planning Processes	11
Two sides to the local decision - making process	11
Finding the strategic and planning side	12
What happens? Roles and functions	12
The least you should do	13
SWOT analysis example	15
Concluding remarks	15
Chapter Three: Supporting People & User Involvement	16
Why should service users get involved?	16
Adapting what you do now - examples	17
Involving service users in service delivery	17
What should be in a service user involvement strategy?	18
Concluding remarks	18
Chapter Four: Service Delivery - Prepared for a Change?	19
Knowing about a provider's service	19
Moving to a contractual arrangement	19
Preparing for interim contracts	20
What if the support provider isn't the landlord?	22
Benefiting from Transitional Housing Benefit	22
Risk analysis - THBS and opportunities	24
Implications of charging for support	25
Preparing for 'steady state' contracts	27
Cost and contract reviews	28
Concluding remarks	28
Chapter Five: A few final thoughts	29
Chapter Six: Where to go for advice and information	30
Appendix 1: Transitional Housing Benefit	33
Appendix 2: Glossary of terms used	34

FOREWORD

Supporting People must stand or fall on its ability to deliver support to people, in a manner that is appropriate, cost-effective, and which increases peoples' ability to make informed choices about the support they need to live independently. Much will depend on how the policy is practically taken forward and providers have a major role to play in the process. That's why the Guide was specifically designed for staff and Board Members in provider organisations. Its purpose is to help them get to grips with the aspects of *Supporting People* that impact on their organisations. The Guide does this by taking providers on a well signposted journey on how to prepare for *Supporting People* including the decision-making processes and major changes that will affect service delivery, such as contracts between the local authority and support providers.

Four people who helped to work out the main details of the *Supporting People* policy during the period from the Spring 2000 to October 2001 wrote the Guide. They were all involved in the Supporting People Preparation Projects. Anchor Trust, the Housing Corporation and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) jointly established the Preparation Projects in 2000. They ran up until the early months of 2002. The Preparation Projects had responsibility for preparing and writing major parts of the Supporting People Administrative Guidance published by the Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) in October 2001 and contributed to *Supporting People: Policy into Practice* (DETR: January 2001).

Three of the six Supporting People Preparation Projects were funded by Anchor Trust and the Housing Corporation, through an Innovation and Good Practice Grant (I&GP). DTLR funded the other three Projects. The three I&GP funded Preparation Projects were Brighton & Hove, Cheshire and Hartlepool. In addition to the tasks all the Preparation Projects had these three had a particular focus on outcomes that would be useful for providers. The Guide is one of their contributions.

About the Authors

Jeremy Porteus, Chief Executive's Unit, Anchor Trust

Jeremy Porteus manages the Corporate Policy Team in the Chief Executive's Unit at Anchor Trust, a national provider of housing and care services for older people. Jeremy managed the Anchor Trust/Housing Corporation grant aided work on *Supporting People*. He actively contributed to the Supporting People Administrative Guidance (DTLR 2001) particularly on older people's service arrangements.

Ken Davies, Manager, Supporting People Advisory Network

Ken Davies divides his time between three areas of work. Beside being a free-lance Management Consultant specialising in housing and social care he is also the Manager of the Supporting People Advisory Network, a national not for profit service and an Associate Consultant with Peter Fletcher Associates. Ken had lead responsibility for developing the Supporting People Guidance on cross-authority matters. He formerly worked for Anchor Trust and was seconded by Anchor to lead the Hartlepool Supporting People Preparation Project.

Michael Lank, Project Manager (*Supporting People*), Brighton & Hove Council

Michael Lank is Project Manager (*Supporting People*) in Brighton & Hove City Council and works as a consultant for the Supporting People Advisory Network. He led the Brighton and Hove Supporting People Preparation Project. Michael had responsibility for producing Supporting People Guidance on contract reviews and the role of the Core Strategy Development Group.

Moyra Riseborough, CURS, University of Birmingham,

Moyra Riseborough is a Lecturer at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies in the School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham. She also heads up Riseborough Research and Consultancy Associates (RRCA), a small consultancy business. Moyra led the Supporting People Guidance strand for DTLR, facilitated the Preparation Projects and coordinated their work. She wrote sections of the Supporting People Guidance including older people's services and the treatment of Abbeyfields. Moyra is probably better known for her research and policy work on older people's housing, care and support.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the work leading to this guide. We are particularly grateful to Jonathan Cope, Supporting People Team Leader at Lincolnshire County Council (formerly at Cheshire County Council), and Tim Mann from Cheshire County Council for their helpful comments in shaping the content and format of the publication.

We also would like to take this opportunity to thank John McLelland and Steve Ongerri at the Housing Corporation for their continued support of the Preparation Projects and for jointly funding the Guide with Anchor Trust.

We also thank Bert Provan and the DTLR Supporting People Team for their contribution to the work of the Preparation Projects.

INTRODUCTION

Since *Supporting People* is a new policy with new sets of procedures and arrangements it seems to be enormously complex. There 's certainly a lot to read. But where should you start? We suggest that providers should start here with the Guide and refer to the Supporting People Guidance directly where this is suggested.

The Guide reflects current understanding of *Supporting People*. The main details of the policy are now clear and the Guide covers them. However, at the time of writing, there are still a few areas where the full details are not clear, such as charging. Hence the Guide does not cover them.

Who is the Guide for?

It is primarily for people who are involved in implementing *Supporting People* within provider organisations. We include Board Members who need to understand the kind of changes *Supporting People* will bring. The Guide should also help Supporting People Teams who want to have more understanding of provider perspectives.

The Guide is divided into six chapters:

Chapter One: *Supporting People* - the Policy and the Role of the Preparation Projects

Provides a concise description of the *Supporting People* background and context. It also gives more detail about the role played by the Preparation Projects in *Supporting People* policy development.

Chapter Two: Involvement in the Decision-Making and Planning Processes

Explains the *Supporting People* decision-making and planning processes and how providers can and should fit into these.

Chapter Three: User Involvement in the Decision-Making Process

Supporting People is designed to involve service users. This chapter explains the structures and processes and how providers can ensure their service users are actively involved.

Chapter Four: Service Delivery - Prepared for a Change?

Chapter four takes providers through changes that will impact on service delivery. It covers supply mapping, interim contracts, service reviews, managing agents, preparing for 'steady state' contract reviews and cross-authority arrangements. It also focuses on Transitional Housing Benefit, the service and housing cost split, where to place the burden of costs, opportunities for new provision and doing risk analysis so providers can plan the future. Finally it considers charges for support services and how to use contract reviews as a constructive opportunity.

Chapter Five: A Few Final Thoughts

Chapter five speculates on a few matters that have not been considered so far.

Chapter Six: Where to go for Advice and Information

Provides some useful contacts and access to further sources of information.

There are two appendices. Appendix 1 gives further information on 'Transitional Housing Benefit'.

Appendix 2 contains an abridged glossary of terms used in *Supporting People*.

CHAPTER ONE

Supporting People - the Policy in Context and the Role of the Preparation Projects



What is the rationale for a radical shake-up of support?

What are the main proposals?

What services are affected?

What was the role of the Preparation Projects in developing the policy?

The Policy Background: What is Supporting People?

Supporting People radically overhauls the way housing-related support is strategically planned and funded. Local authorities will receive a single, cash limited grant for funding support services in their area. The *Supporting People* Grant will replace several funding mechanisms including:

- *Housing Benefit (HB) paid to claimants for tenancy related support services*
- *Income Support paid by the Department of Work and Pensions on support services provided to leaseholders*
- *Probation Accommodation Grants, Home Office funding for local probation offices, to pay for accommodation and support*
- *Home Improvement Agency (HIA) grant from the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and LA contributions to HIAs*
- *Supported Housing Management Grant (SHMG) administered by the Housing Corporation and paid to Housing Associations (Registered Social Landlords) for support services*
- *Housing Revenue Account local authority funding for council tenants, which can be used to provide housing-related support*

Supporting People's main aims are to:

- *Replace unrelated, overlapping revenue streams with a single budget*
- *Enable local authorities to strategically commission support services*
- *Allocate resources according to a needs-based assessment*
- *Encourage coherent, cost-effective and transparent planning, funding and accountability arrangements*
- *Integrate support provision with care provision and other strategic initiatives, such as community safety*
- *Ensure an effective response to the support needs of a wide range of vulnerable people*
- *Break the link that existed between funding for support and housing tenure. For example SHMG is only available for housing association tenants and HB is only available for tenants, not owner-occupiers*

Supporting People is designed to complement broader Government policies, such as:

- *Tackling social exclusion and helping vulnerable people, including people with mental health problems, and learning disabilities to live independently*
- *Preventing people becoming homeless*
- *Improving services for older people*
- *Helping vulnerable young people make the transition to adult life*
- *Assisting women and children experiencing domestic violence*
- *Promoting community safety and taking a risk management approach for people at risk of re-offending*
- *Complementing policies to support people who misuse drugs and/or alcohol*

Supporting People funding can be used only for 'housing-related support', it cannot be used to fund housing management or personal or health care for which other sources of funding are available. *Supporting People* will affect arrangements for support services that are related to a variety of accommodation types. Currently these types can be described as:

- *Ordinary or 'independent' housing with floating, resettlement support, or Home Improvement Agency Services*
- *Shared or self contained supported housing*
- *Sheltered housing for rent or leasehold*
- *Homeless hostels (direct access, bed & breakfast and other temporary accommodation)*
- *Women's refuges*
- *Adult placement/lodgings, where there is a tenancy*
- *Residential and/or nursing homes which receive SHMG from the Housing Corporation will receive Supporting People funding for a transitional period, and*
- *Foyers for young people*

The Work of the Preparation Projects

In January 2000 the Housing Corporation approved Anchor Trust's grant application to fund three local authorities for two years from April 2000, to be Preparation Projects for *Supporting People*.

The three Projects were Brighton & Hove City Council, Cheshire County Council and Hartlepool Borough Council. The authorities were selected to reflect County, District and Unitary types of authorities, urban and rural dimensions and regional variations. The DETR match funded a further three Preparation Projects: the London Borough of Camden, The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, and the Metropolitan Borough Council of Sandwell.

The aims and objectives were to:

- *Test needs assessment mechanisms for Supporting People*
- *Map need and demand for existing and future services covered by Supporting People*
- *Assess the future preferences of support users*
- *Develop a framework for comparing costs and, where possible to consider the cost benefit/social gain of support services*
- *Develop a framework for local authorities to plan and commission services within their area*
- *Monitor the effectiveness of transitional housing benefit arrangements*
- *Assist the Government to formulate good practice, regulations and guidance for Supporting People*
- *Establish appropriate mechanisms for consumer/stakeholder involvement, and*
- *Disseminate the lessons from the Preparation Projects work to a wider audience*

From September 2000 academic staff from the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham worked with Preparation Projects to help them achieve the programme. This involved co-ordinating their outputs and providing technical information, advice and encouragement.

Outputs and outcomes against objectives

The Preparation Projects met most of the objectives set for them but they also took on unexpected work because the responsibilities assigned to those working on different parts of the *Supporting People* Programme shifted and developed during the early months of 2001. For the Preparation Projects these developments meant they were brought into commenting on work done by various contractors for *Supporting People* particularly on needs and supply analysis. They were given a bigger role, which included commenting on and feeding back information from a local level to DETR (subsequently DTLR) on consultation papers issued in 2000 and 2001. They were involved in drafting the definitive policy document, '*Supporting People: Policy into Practice*' (published by the DETR in January 2001) and wrote substantial sections of the Administrative Guidance (published by the DTLR in October 2001). They also became involved in something quite unusual, simulating situations in order to create useful guidance.

The 'what if' scenarios

Preparation Projects were often at the centre of 'what if' discussions. For example:

- Working out how to establish an Inclusive Forum of stakeholders and, how a *Supporting People* strategy or plan could fit planning cycles used by local authorities
- Speculating on new methods of funding *Supporting People* services and working out how they could be planned, co-ordinated, commissioned and delivered in a local area

- Exploring what would work at a practical level both locally and nationally, and analysing what tools, skills and learning approaches would be needed
- Talking through ideas, drafts of guidance and other outputs with DTLR *Supporting People* Team colleagues and consultants, the Housing Corporation, local authorities, housing associations and other stakeholders, including home improvement agencies
- Participating in national, regional and local events to disseminate the Supporting People policy and, the *Supporting People* Administrative Guidance. Also helping to develop the 'interim' Supporting People Guidance that runs up until April 2003

Concluding remarks

The initial *Supporting People* policy was launched as a framework in 1998. It was subsequently worked up in detail. The Preparation Projects played a particular role in the detailed work. They had a responsibility for leading on some aspects of the programme designed by DETR and later DTLR to meet the policy and implementation timetables. The Preparation Projects were closely involved in simulating scenarios in order to inform and write substantial parts of the *Supporting People* Administrative Guidance. This Guidance is referred to as the 'steady state' Guidance since it provides over arching directions that will apply after April 2003. In addition the Preparation Projects helped to develop the 'interim' Guidance, which sets up processes and procedures to lead into the full changeover to *Supporting People*.

Chapter Two:

Involvement in decision-making and planning processes



Who decides whether a service is a priority?

How can we position ourselves so that our service is not neglected?

How much effort should we put into influencing the decision-making process?

What about small provider organisations?

Introduction

The decision-making processes were first set out in *Supporting People: Policy into Practice* (DTLR: 2001). They are described in more detail in the Supporting People Administrative Guidance including the composition and roles of the bodies involved. In this chapter we concentrate on the essential elements that providers need to know.

Two sides to the local decision-making process

Strategic and planning

Covering

The Inclusive Forum

The Core Strategy Development Group

The Commissioning Body

Various planning/exploratory meetings to consider future service needs

Cross-Authority Groups

Service review & adequacy of delivery

Covering

Supporting People Service Reviews including contract reviews & links with Best Value reviews

Monitoring arrangements

The two sides cross over because contract, service and Best Value reviews may inform the strategic planning process. For example, as a result of a strategic review that changes the fundamental direction of services, a decision may be taken to re-provide a service at the contract review stage.

Providers can be directly involved in decision-making through five main avenues:

- *The Inclusive Forum*
- *Possible involvement in the Core Strategy Development Group*
- *Supporting People Service (& wider Best Value) Reviews*
- *Planning for Supporting People & related strategies*
- *Cross-Authority Groups (CAGs)*

Finding the strategic and planning side

In some authorities the Inclusive Forum, the Core Strategy Development Group and the Commissioning Body may be identifiable as committees or structures. Accordingly there will be a Supporting People Commissioning Body that exists as a separate group from other commissioning bodies and which takes responsibility for Supporting People strategic commissioning. In other authorities the Supporting People Commissioning Body might be called by a different name or it might form part of a larger commissioning structure. Whatever structure or name is used they will carry out the same functions.

The flexibility to choose types of structure exists because *Supporting People* strategic decision-making processes are founded on a partnership between housing, social care, health and probation services, with input from providers and users. These partners often meet together to take strategic service decisions on complementary matters, such as deciding which services should be commissioned in line with the Joint Investment Plan for older people. For this reason it makes sense to adapt local structures where possible. However, the roles that partners should play are prescribed under *Supporting People*. Most importantly when partners are acting in the *Supporting People* decision-making process they are expected to focus on support services and not other kinds of services.

What happens and who is responsible?

Roles and Functions

- Supporting People Team - drives the whole decision-making process
- Inclusive Forum - is consulted on draft plans including the local Supporting People strategy
- Core Strategy Development Group - proposes the draft strategy to the Commissioning Body, oversees the work of the Supporting People Team
- Cross Authority Group - proposes the Cross Authority Statement to the Core Strategy Development Group
- Commissioning Body - agrees the draft strategy and proposes it to Elected Members
- Elected Members - sign-off the strategy
- The Supporting People Team - delivers the local programme outlined in the strategy, overseen by the Core Strategy Development Group

The Supporting People Strategy

The *Supporting People* local strategy aims to set out commissioning priorities and intended changes in the next few years. The local strategy should be the outcome of work done beforehand including needs for services compared to the adequacy of existing services, the soundings taken from stakeholders through the Inclusive Forum and other opportunities where providers have expressed views on the kind of services that are required.

Supporting People Teams are completing a 'supply mapping' exercise to create a database of all support providers including public sector, voluntary and private. The initial 'shadow' strategy will outline how Supporting People Teams will involve providers and service users. Through the Inclusive Forum, all stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on the strategy, and the mechanisms for involving providers. Providers will also have the opportunity to comment on how the initial programme for contract reviews is drawn up.

Is it a choice to get involved or not?

The short answer is no. Providers should realise that if they deliver a service that will be funded from *Supporting People* some involvement in decision-making processes has to take place. The contract for service delivery will be reviewed and providers are expected to engage in the review process. Even at a scheme (project) level decisions will have to be made such as, agreeing the timetable for the review, the processes that will be used for the review and the means by which service users will be involved.

Regional and national providers

Regional and national providers may not want to sustain the same level of involvement in all the local areas they provide services in. As in the example overleaf, they could decide to concentrate their attention on specific local areas.



Example 1: When it makes business sense to have high involvement

A national provider has identified the local areas where they have a significant presence and have asked staff to take on new responsibilities for actively engaging with the Supporting People Teams. By doing this they hope to understand how future plans will develop and be ready for these changes. They are also collecting information from each local area and they intend to collate it in order to build a national picture of the potential impact of Supporting People on the organisation.

Small providers

For small providers, *Supporting People* funding could be their largest source of revenue. Smaller providers may simply not have the resources to maintain regular involvement. The Supporting People Team can help but only if they know help is needed. In our experience Supporting People Teams are too busy to be aware of providers' needs unless someone tells them.

The least you should do

If you decide to have the minimum level of involvement you should at least:

- *Explain to the Supporting People Team the reasons why you are not going to be more actively engaged*
- *Ensure your organisation is receiving information about local Supporting People plans, especially the Supporting People draft and final Strategies*
- *Agree to maintain a minimum level of contact with the Supporting People Team beyond the routine supply of monitoring information*

All change - Supporting People is only one of them

As providers are only too well aware, *Supporting People* is one of a number of changes that impacts on their organisation's business. Changes such as:

- *The Care Standards Act 2000*
- *Rent restructuring*
- *Neighbourhood renewal and regeneration and the impact on new development and support business opportunities*
- *Best Value, particularly thematic and broad service reviews*
- *Changes in demand for service types*
- *Local private sector housing renewal plans centred on particular localities*
- *Changing expectations of diverse service users*
- *The appropriateness of services for Black and Minority Ethnic groups*
- *Stock condition and investment challenges*
- *National Service Frameworks, e.g. for Older People*

Putting changes together - thinking in the round

Supporting People changes sometime need to be considered in the round because they can be part of a more complex set of changes. The next example illustrates when a rounded view is needed.



Example 2: When a rounded view is needed

As a result of changes signalled by the introduction of the Care Standards Act, one local authority has concluded that much of its residential care provision will not meet the required standards. They responded by starting to develop a strategy for a range of alternative accommodation, care and support services that include making better use of the existing sheltered housing. To do this the local authority needs to consider the condition, location and current services of the schemes and future plans for them. This will link to regeneration and neighbourhood plans. They will also need to consider how far future service plans will be driven by the National Service Framework for Older People and what role Supporting People can play in all of this. Although the local authority is still working out the details of its strategy the Supporting People Team has already been asked to include some new support services for older people in its Shadow Strategy.

Advantages of involvement?

There are advantages for providers who choose to get involved in all of the routes we have talked about. They can be summed as opportunities to:

- *Influence the overall strategy*
- *Influence the way that services are planned*
- *Help to improve quality of planning and decision-making*
- *Gather intelligence for own business*
- *Networking opportunities*
- *Understand local risks and development opportunities*
- *Ensure that service users interest are considered*

However, we suggest that it makes sense to weigh the pros and cons up carefully before making a decision.



Action points

- ✓ *Evaluate the local risks and opportunities of Supporting People*
- ✓ *Consider what the appropriate level of involvement should be*
- ✓ *Consider the resource implications*
- ✓ *Consider what outcomes you desire from involvement*
- ✓ *Discuss with the Supporting People Team how you intend to engage*
- ✓ *Ensure that communication mechanisms are agreed with the Supporting People Team*
- ✓ *Carry out Risk Assessment*
- ✓ *Carry out SWOT*
- ✓ *Map strategic influences and monitor changes*

What to get involved in? A SWOT Analysis Example

Providers have to decide how involved they intend to become. To do this they need a clear sense of the position of their services in each local authority area. Doing a SWOT analysis could help clarify matters.



Example: SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Strong vision of the future

Well trained and committed workforce

Good development programme

Healthy financial position

High levels of customer satisfaction

Good relationships with local partners

Opportunities

Recognition of value of low level support = increased development opportunities

Planning for support introduces direction and certainty

Supporting People integrates into other strategies and plans, aiding access to other funding

Contracting establishes clear standards and long-term security for staff

Service reviews and scheme reviews create opportunities to influence local strategic direction, develop services and deal with problems

Weaknesses

Some of the housing stock in need of refurbishment

Services have not been reviewed for some years

Increasing resources being deployed to deal with monitoring and information requirements

Unable to properly participate in some local areas because of the demands on staff time

Threats

Support seen as separate service = increases administration and fragments comprehensive service

Planning of services introduce new complexities and uncertainty

Supporting People is a comparatively small element of funding that has little influence over other plans

Contracting reduces planning to 3 year cycles with few objectives and little clarity for the service user about what to expect from the service

Review mechanisms introduce further uncertainty, place additional pressure on staff and resources.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has briefly described the *Supporting People* decision-making process and the routes available to service providers for getting involved. There are choices to be made over the level of involvement providers want to have. Decisions are dependent on a variety of things including other commitments that provider organisations have and their capacity to respond. Some level of involvement has to occur and the chapter advises provider organisations how to ensure they at least have a minimum level of involvement. Beyond this minimum level SWOT analysis might help service providers decide why and how they should get involved in other aspects of the *Supporting People* decision-making process.

Chapter Three

Supporting People and User Involvement

Introduction

Supporting People aims to involve service users in decision-making and planning arrangements and monitoring service delivery. There are some obligations placed on service providers. They vary from informing service users about ways they can get involved in the bigger *Supporting People* arrangements to ensuring that there is a service user involvement strategy in place in their organisations. This chapter briefly explains the rationale on service user involvement and draws providers' attention to the actions they need to take.

Why should service users get involved in *Supporting People*?

Two main reasons why service users might want to get involved are:

- *They can directly have their say on the support services they think are needed in the local area. This gives them the opportunity to say what they think instead of someone else saying it for them. We are talking here about the bigger picture for Supporting People that includes planning and decision making for the whole locality*
- *They can come up with practical ideas on how to improve the way services are provided for others as well as themselves based on their experience and common sense. Here it is useful to think about the lessons that service users can pass on about how a particular service can be improved*

Getting involved in the bigger picture: The Inclusive Forum

The Inclusive Forum, the Core Strategy Development Group and the Commissioning Body are the three main elements in the *Supporting People* decision-making process. For service users the key consultation mechanism is the Inclusive Forum.

The Inclusive Forum is an umbrella for a variety of stakeholder groups to make their views known. The Inclusive Forum may in fact not be a single forum, but the result of aggregating the responses from lots of events and meetings with different groups. Together these make up the Inclusive Forum. They might be very different kinds of groups. For example, existing tenant and service user groups can feed into the Forum in ways that they choose

The different groups all have to work within the *Supporting People* timetable for developing the strategy. For example, stakeholders should be consulted on an early version of the draft strategy plan and what should go in it. They are later asked to comment on the final draft before it goes to Elected Members for formal approval. The Supporting People Team are responsible for co-ordinating the development of the Supporting People Strategy and ensuring that stakeholders are appropriately consulted. Most Supporting People Teams welcome ideas from provider organisations on how they can involve service users.

What providers can do

Almost all service providers already talk to their service users on a regular basis. The methods they use could be adapted for *Supporting People*. Alternatively providers or organised service user groups could organise a couple of special events to co-ordinate responses/views and pass these on to the Inclusive Forum.

Adapting what you do now: some examples

Newsletter

Add a regular feature on Supporting People

Give contact names of staff or service users for more information including the local authority Supporting People Team.

Tenant / service user panel: information sharing

Provide an introduction to Supporting People - Your local Supporting People Team might be able to help. The presentation should provide people with basic information on how their service user group could link into the Inclusive Forum.

Support providers: meetings with tenants / service users

Do the same as above but ask the provider to consider making Supporting People a regular agenda item. This would make sure that the group focuses on support matters on a regular basis.

Surveys

Integrate aspects of Supporting People into regular or ad-hoc surveys. For example, ask service users about the support services that they would like to see provided. You could also insert some questions into the survey based on the draft Supporting People strategy and feed the results back to the Inclusive Forum.

You could also list all of the different types of methods you use now and ask different groups of support service users which method they would prefer for being involved.



Actions on service user involvement

- ✓ *List the service user involvement mechanisms that exist in your organisation. Check out how easily these can be adapted for Supporting People now*
- ✓ *Assess the suitability of your current service user involvement mechanisms for Supporting People in the long term, and review them regularly*
- ✓ *Check the Supporting People timetable and compare key dates to those of tenant or service user group meetings, when results will come available from surveys you intend to do and so on. You particularly want to make sure that service users have sufficient time for consultation before a response is required. For example, to respond to the draft and final Supporting People strategies*
- ✓ *Think about the benefits for the organisation and for service users from participating in Supporting People and list them*
- ✓ *Based on the above, develop a proposal for engaging with service users to influence Supporting People*

Involving service users in Supporting People service delivery

Service providers are expected to involve service users in service delivery and service review process. The initial obligations that service providers have to be aware of before 2003 are covered in the interim contracting arrangements. In general they are asked to provide evidence that service users are consulted and involved at a scheme or project level. (See section 2(b) of the Supporting People Administrative Guidance for more details.)

After 2003, and up to the first service review, providers need to consider how they will demonstrate the suitability of their service user involvement strategy and identify targets for improvement. *Supporting People* places a particular emphasis on involving the consumer in order to drive up the quality of services. Providers should indicate what steps they are taking or intend to take to improve options for involving service users in general - at an organisational level and more specifically - at the scheme or project level where particular groups of service users are concerned. There is no right or wrong strategy but providers should be aware that over time *Supporting People* will develop good practice examples that are tailored for certain support services and for diverse service user groups. Providers will have to prepare for these changes. One way to do this is to consider and reflect on:

- *Good practice examples and lessons from health and social care*
- *The appropriateness and effectiveness of the organisation's current involvement approach for different service user groups including people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups and people from different faith communities*
- *The standards that could be set for a service user involvement strategy*
- *The most effective methods for achieving standards*

What should be in a service user involvement strategy?

It should:

- *State the purpose of service user involvement in the organisation*
- *Indicate what the benefits are for service users and the provider*
- *Identify all the mechanisms used by the organisation to involve service users*
- *Indicate how inclusive the service user mechanisms adopted by the provider organisation are for all service users*
- *Indicate that the strategy reflects good practice for particular service users e.g. if service users include people with learning disabilities the strategy should reflect good practice on involvement methods that work well with this user group*
- *Indicate what performance standards have been set, state the areas for improvement, what is being done to work towards achieving improvements and dates when key targets are expected to have been achieved*
- *Indicate how service user views are taken into account by the service provider when planning changes to the service*
- *Refer to links with customer complaint mechanisms and quality assurance objectives*

The Supporting People Team will advise and assist small providers to work towards good practice on service user involvement if their procedures are not up to standard. The ultimate aim is for all providers to demonstrate that they are continuously listening to and being influenced by the views of service users and that service users have genuine opportunities to express their views and have them listened to.

For more detailed information, see Section 3 of the Supporting People Administrative Guidance. (DTLR, 2001)

Concluding remarks

This chapter has described the *Supporting People* approach to service user involvement. It reflects current good practice and up-to-date thinking on how to involve service users effectively and inclusively. The approach draws on practice in housing, social care and health. However, there is very little that specifically refers to good practice for support service users. The only guide that will address this gap should be available soon from DTLR and details of the publication will appear on the *Supporting People* website.

Chapter Four

Service delivery - Prepared for a change?

Introduction

Chapter Four considers the service delivery challenges facing providers and makes suggestions on how to be ready for them. The key challenges include:



- How will Supporting People commissioners know about a provider's service?*
- What are the implications of moving to a contractual arrangement?*
- How can providers prepare for interim contracts?*
- How can providers benefit from Transitional Housing Benefit (THB)?*
- What are the implications of the new charging arrangements for providers?*
- How can providers prepare for 'steady state' contract reviews?*

The chapter is divided into sections that deal with these challenges. The chapter covers some of the important actions to take in the interim period up until the first contract review as well as preparations that need to be made for afterwards.

Knowing about a provider's service: supply mapping

Supporting People commissioners will get their information about services in a local area from the supply database. The database holds information on what exists and where. It will be used to inform strategic planning and to issue Supporting People contracts.

DTLR issued a database and pro formas to local authorities for collating information about service provision. The most recent version, 'SP3' gathers information about the provider, the service provided and crucially, information on the cost of provision. This is the information that will form the basis of the interim contract. The information will determine:

- *The number of units that are contracted for*
- *The value of the contract*
- *Whether service users in that service are exempt from charging*
- *How charges will be collected, where applicable*
- *The payment schedule*



Action points

- ✓ *Ensure that SP3 form has been submitted to LA*
- ✓ *Ensure that information on costs are correct*

Moving to a contractual arrangement

Supporting People will introduce formal, legally enforceable contracts for all services purchased using the Supporting People grant. The only exception will be where the provider is the local authority, since the purchaser and provider will be the same corporate body, and cannot therefore contract with itself. In such cases the 'contract' will take the form of an internal service level agreement.

The interim contract will start from April 2003 and will continue until the contract is reviewed, which will be no later than April 2006.

In general one contract will be issued for each 'service'. It is unlikely that a single contract will be issued for all of a provider's stock or services in a given geographical area unless the stock or the services can be said to constitute one 'service'.

Supporting People contracts will normally be for the block purchase of a service, and spot contracts will be the exception. Although the contract is a formal document stating the expectations of both purchaser and provider the contracting style is partnership as opposed to 'distant' contracting, with both parties working together to improve service delivery.

What's a service?

A service can be described as a form of support that is linked to living in a particular setting or building, or 'floating' because it doesn't matter where one lives. Unlike specialist supported housing which is usually social rented, and sometimes leasehold, floating support can be made available to people regardless of the tenure type they live in. In the past it has been difficult to find suitable funding arrangements to provide floating support services. *Supporting People* introduces new possibilities.

There are some highly innovative floating support projects including those being funded and just approved for funding by the Housing Corporation through Supported Housing Management Grant and Innovation and Good Practice grants. To see some examples it is worth visiting the Housing Corporation website.

Preparing for interim contracts

For some providers it will be the first time they have formally contracted to provide housing-related support services. We suggest some basic steps providers might like to follow to get ready for contracting.

Step one: liaise with the Supporting People Team

Providers who have not already established a working relationship with the Supporting People Team should make an effort to do so. They should use the relationship to promote their service and also establish where it fits in the Supporting People Strategy for that area. (See Chapter Two for more detail on opportunities available to providers to get involved in decision - making and planning).

Most importantly there is every chance that having an early dialogue will help to promote partnership working. It is also more likely to lead to early discussions between the authority and the provider on changes that the authority may be expecting when renewing the contract.

Step two: think about benchmarking

Contract reviews will consider amongst other things, the performance and cost of the service compared to other similar services.

Providers may form benchmarking 'clubs' with other providers with whom they are prepared to share information. Sharing information in this way will allow providers to compare their performance and cost information, so that providers can see the areas in which they are good performers and areas where there is room for improvement. These 'clubs' can also be a forum for sharing good practice. To find suitable members try posting a message on the Supporting People website.

Step three: get the hang of the performance indicators

At the time of writing, performance will be measured against just three indicators in the interim contract:

- 1. Utilisation levels - a measure of the take up (demand) for a service.*
- 2. Staffing Levels - a measure of actual staffing levels, as a proportion of the number of staff contracted for the service. A service needs to be fully staffed. The output is intended to reveal potential staffing problems.*

3. *Service availability - A measure of the availability of the service against the capacity contracted for. Providers should immediately start monitoring their performance against these three Performance Indicators so that any elements of poor performance can be quickly identified and action can be taken to improve performance prior to the contract review.*

Step four: understand payments

Providers will be paid monthly in arrears. The contract price will be based on the amount of funding that a provider receives from the Supporting People grant, which will then be subjected to a DTLR formula. Services that are subject to the charging regime may in turn become subjected to variable payment schedules. These are dependent on the number of service users from whom the provider is expected to collect charges.

Step five: don't forget service user involvement

Providers should review how users are involved in shaping the service that they receive. They should make sure that the methods match the purpose of service user involvement and they should be appropriate for service users. See Chapter Three for more information.

Step six: make sure you are accredited

In the interim contract period all providers will be accredited. After the service/contract review every provider contracted to provide services funded from the Supporting People grant needs to meet the accreditation criteria. A large number of providers will automatically be 'passport' on all or some of the accreditation criteria. This is because accreditation by another recognised body will count towards accreditation for Supporting People. For example all registered housing associations will be automatically accredited because they are subject to Housing Corporation regulation.

A provider who has Investors in People (IIP) or Charter Mark status may be considered to have accreditation for the personnel section of the Supporting People accreditation process. Home improvement agencies fall into this category. A provider that has been accredited by one administering authority will, for Supporting People purposes, have automatic accreditation for all other administering authorities.



Accreditation action points

- ✓ *Make sure you are accredited*
- ✓ *Familiarise yourself with the accreditation criteria for the period after April 2003 - see Section Three of the Supporting People Administrative Guidance for full details*
- ✓ *If you would not meet any of the criteria prepare a plan to take corrective action, and if necessary discuss your reasoning with the Supporting People Team at an early stage*

What if the support provider isn't the landlord?

Many providers contract with a managing agent to provide housing management and/or housing related support services. Typically contracts are made between registered housing associations or other landlords and separate organisations, which provide the support service. In these cases the association and support provider will need to decide which one of them should be party to the interim Supporting People contract. After the contract review, and the issue of a more detailed contract, the Supporting People contract will normally be with the support provider.

Where there is a managing agent arrangement the landlord and provider will need to discuss their future working relationship under *Supporting People*, and agree the most effective way of delivering services. There will need to be agreement as to who will contract with the administering authority in the interim contract. It should be noted that if no agreement is reached then the Supporting People Team will decide who will be party to the contract.

DTLR established a Finance and Legal Advisory Panel (FLAP2) who have produced a 'Protocol between RSLs (Registered Social Landlords), Voluntary Agency and *Supporting People* Commissioning Team.' (November 2001), this can be downloaded from <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/WhatsHappening/2.1News.asp>



Action points for managing agent arrangements

- ✓ Landlords, managing agents and support providers need to have discussions at an early stage to agree who will take the *Supporting People* contract
- ✓ If agreement is proving hard to reach it is important to inform the *Supporting People* Team

Benefiting from Transitional Housing Benefit

We begin this section with an overview of the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme (THBS). Next we give practical advice on how to use the scheme.

Following a court ruling that held that Housing Benefit could not be used to pay for any support or welfare provision included in the rent, the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme (THBS) was introduced in April 2000. The scheme permitted Housing Benefit to be paid for 'general counselling and support', as defined in the regulations. The scheme will be in place only until April 2003 when services funded by THBS will transfer to *Supporting People* funding. From then on Housing Benefit will no longer be able to fund support services.

Overview of the THBS

THBS is an element of housing benefit and the same eligibility rules apply. It is, therefore, a means-tested benefit for residential occupiers who are liable to pay a rent/licence fee. THBS can only be paid in respect of 'general counselling and support' as defined in the regulations. See Appendix 1 for a list of items which are eligible.

THBS can be claimed by tenants in most tenures (but not private sector leaseholders/owners) and applies equally to sheltered housing and other accommodation. Private sector tenants (paying rent/licenses rather than mortgage costs) require a valid (short form) Community Care Assessment, stating that the intended recipient needs the support and that the landlord (or their agent) is capable of providing that support.

There is no ceiling to the amount for a claim for THBS, however the amount claimed must be 'reasonable, justifiable and realistic'.

THBS allows providers to review services as frequently as required, to respond to the changing needs of an individual tenant, groups of tenants, or to adapt after a scheme has been remodelled. Providers may re-apportion the split between rent and support, for example if they refine their methodology for breaking down the costs. THBS can be used to fund new support services until 1 April 2003.

Assessing the 'general counselling and support charges'

It is important that all elements of the total 'rent' charge that are attributable to general counselling and support are apportioned to THBS, as housing benefit will not be able to pay for these services after 1 April 2003. There is no prescribed or single correct way of assessing the cost of 'general counselling and support'. We strongly advise providers to use a methodology that is clear, easy to administer and can be underpinned with evidence.

The National Housing Federation has offered some advice on splitting rent and the elements eligible for THBS. The NHF advises providers to:

- Find out what proportion of staff time is actually spent on support provision
- Liaise with other local providers to find out how they are approaching the task.



Tips

Cambridgeshire County Council has developed a spreadsheet to assist with calculating the total expenditure on 'general counselling and support' which is available on the Internet at:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/search/search_docdisplay.asp?doc_id=5686

Suffolk's SP Team have also produced a spreadsheet for THB calculation:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=EA&LA_ID=10&Doc_ID=5108

Housing Benefit officers may require evidence to demonstrate that the costs apportioned to 'general counselling and support' are reasonable, justifiable and realistic. Acceptable proof may include accounts showing actual costs for providing the service; timesheets showing how the time spent on general counselling and support was calculated. What constitutes acceptable proof should be discussed with the Housing Benefit office in the local area.

Rent or Support - where do I place the costs?

There has been some debate on the merits of apportioning costs so that more is attributed to support/THBS and therefore effectively decreasing the rent element, or vice versa. There are arguments in favour of and against both. In most cases the correct answer will be to apportion the rent/support in proportion to their actual cost. There are however likely to be some 'grey' areas, where services around intensive housing management support could legitimately be apportioned either as part of housing management or as general counselling and support.

Some people have suggested that by apportioning a greater proportion to general counselling and support, housing association providers will be able to reduce core rents, and thus be able to achieve Housing Corporation target rents in a shorter timescale. There is however a risk that the support charges may subsequently be deemed too high when subject to Supporting People review after 2003.

Aware of this risk other providers have sought to apportion only a small amount to THBS, keeping their rent high. This strategy also has a risk since core rent levels that appear high after April 2003 may be subject to close Housing Benefit scrutiny to check that no support is included in the core rent. The Housing Benefit office may refer such rents to the Rent Officer. It is possible that rent levels could be reduced in such situations and we speculate that if the landlord decided to opt not to apportion more to THBS it would be difficult to switch course and subsequently argue for additional *Supporting People* funding.

A support provider that receives grants covering all or most of the support costs will apportion little or nothing to THB. However it may be possible to divert revenue from grants to other purposes and use THB to make up the difference in the budget.



Action points on rent and support costs

- ✓ Decide on a methodology for apportioning between rent and support
- ✓ Ensure staff understand what is expected of them
- ✓ Work with Housing Benefit officers and the Supporting People Team to ensure that they are happy with your methodology and the evidence you intend to use to underpin the apportionment
- ✓ Consider reviewing your apportionment if your initial assessment is incorrect.

Opportunities for new provision

Some providers have exploited the THBS scheme to provide new or to enhance existing support provision. Others have used THB to generate an income to pay previously unpaid volunteers. The opportunities that providers have used arise because although THBS will only continue until April 2003, funding for any schemes funded through THBS is guaranteed at least until the first contract review.



Example 1

One housing association has established a 'floating support' scheme, funding support workers entirely through THBS. The scheme provides support to tenants in all tenures - housing association, council and private sector. The housing association also runs a housing advice and accommodation service, and has used THBS to place vulnerable tenants in the private sector. Landlords who would not have accepted vulnerable tenants have been persuaded to do so because the housing association is able to provide support to these tenants.

Example 2

A voluntary sector support provider is receiving Community Care funding to provide support to people with mental health problems. The provider is using THBS to provide 'floating support' to an increased number of people.

Example 3

A housing association is providing care and support for people with learning disabilities. The care and support are currently funded from Community Care funds. The housing association has agreed to transfer the cost of the housing related support to the rent, so that it can be claimed through THBS. This will bring savings for the local authority and also increase the size of the Supporting People pot locally.

Risk Analysis - Transitional Housing Benefit and opportunities

THBS presents a unique, limited opportunity to increase funding for support provision, and should be welcomed. However there are risks. They are:

Overpayment. A Housing Benefit overpayment typically occurs when a tenant ceases to be eligible for Housing Benefit (for example starting work), but fails to notify the Housing Benefit section. Housing Benefit continues to be paid until the Department of Work and Pensions notifies Housing Benefit, and as a result there is an overpayment. There is an obvious risk that in these circumstances the support provider may continue to provide a service and receive payment, direct from Housing Benefit, unaware that there has been an overpayment, until Housing Benefit reclaims it. A support worker informing the Department of Work and Pensions and the Housing Benefit office of changes in the claimant's circumstances can mitigate the risk.

Where the landlord and support provider are not the same body there will need to be prior agreement between the parties on how to deal with overpayments including how the parties will apportion the loss of income from the time that benefit payments stopped.

Restrictions on the amount of THBS. The amount of THBS paid may be restricted if the amount is unreasonable, unjustifiable or unrealistic. Prevention is better than cure. Providers should seek advice from their local Supporting People Team and Housing Benefit Officers before submitting a claim.

Claimants on partial HB. Some tenants, on a low income will be entitled to Housing Benefit that covers some, but not all of the rent. The addition of THB to the rent will increase the amount the claimant has to pay. The extra tenants have to pay poses risks of arrears. A tenant in this position needs to have good advice at the start as well as at regular intervals since a slight change in her or his circumstances could cause knock-on problems. Ongoing financial advice could come under the provisions for 'general counselling and support' and it is worth remembering that this could be funded by THBS.



THBS Action points

- ✓ *Get an accurate reading of current support activity*
- ✓ *Dis-aggregate costs*
- ✓ *Assess the risks of greater or lesser involvement in Supporting People*
- ✓ *Consider the impact of the choices you might make on service users*
- ✓ *Consider the impact of the choices you might make on other stakeholders*
- ✓ *Consider the choice for fitness against your wider organisational/business strategy*
- ✓ *Agree the way you will do the split with any partners including agents.*

A list of useful sources of information on Transitional Housing Benefit can be found at page 33. An appendix to this Guide also provides more information and advice on general counselling and support.

Implications of charging for support services

At the time of writing, DTLR had not reached firm decisions on the final policy. However, some matters are clear. They are:

Principle: The overarching principle is that people should pay for services where it is economical to administer the process and the service user can pay.

Some discretion: Administering authorities have some residual discretion as to how they will implement charging within their authority.

Some exemptions: Under the proposed charging policy certain types of schemes will be exempt from the charging regime. In schemes that are subject to charging, users in receipt of housing benefit will not be charged.

Schemes that will be exempt include:

- *Temporary hostels for homeless people*
- *Women's refuges*

Intention to distinguish short and long-term support: The charging policy discriminates between short-term support provision, which is exempt from charging and long-term support provision, where service users may be subject to charging. At the time of writing the distinction between the two categories has yet to be defined.

Schemes that will be within the charging regime are those where the support is likely to be longer-term, for example sheltered housing.

Proposed models for administering charges

Model 1 - Collection and enforcement by administering authority

In Model 1 it is proposed that the administering authority (sometimes referred to as the charging authority) should:

- Be responsible for the schedule of charges
- Be responsible for raising individual new invoices for every tenant liable to pay any element of the charge
- Be responsible for making arrangements to collect and enforce collection on the invoices. Collection and enforcement would be separate from the rent collection and enforcement mechanisms. Authorities may contract providers to collect the charges on their behalf, and make payments net of assumed collected charges

Model 2 - Collection and enforcement by provider

In Model 2 the provider would be responsible for collecting the Supporting People charges from service users, in the same way that landlords currently collect a range of charges such as heating charges, and in some cases care charges.

This model would apply in sheltered schemes where receipt of the service is a condition of tenancy. Tenants would agree to receive and pay for support on entering the scheme. The landlord would collect and enforce all rent, service, and support charges due.

Tenants receiving Housing Benefit are exempt from charging. Tenants who don't receive Housing Benefit would be entitled to have a means-tested assessment of their ability to pay and may receive rebate.

The local authority's charging unit will prepare a schedule of tenants who are not liable to pay charges, and payment of the Supporting People grant to the provider would be based on this schedule.

So, in summary the obligations of the parties are:

- The landlord (service provider) would make all tenants liable for support charges. They would work with tenants to help them claim benefits due, then inform them of the actual amounts to be paid as part of the rent/services payment to the landlord. They would also have a combined enforcement process for arrears of rent and other charges
- The tenants would be liable to pay support charges unless they were entitled to Housing Benefit, or if not eligible had made applications to the charging authority and had been assessed as eligible for a rebate on those charges
- The charging authority (in conjunction with the Housing Benefit section) would assess individual liability for charges in line with local charging policy. It would notify individuals of their liability for charges and notify the Supporting People Team of the periods of rebated charges for each individual
- The administering authority (Supporting People Team) would prepare a schedule of subsidy due to the landlord/service provider on a regular basis, and make these payments. It would reconcile payments to forecasted collection amounts as part of the overall financial management of Supporting People



Charging Action Points

- ✓ Providers need to contact Supporting People Teams to ensure that services are correctly described as exempt or not exempt from charging
- ✓ Where a scheme falls within Model 2, providers will need to ensure they have appropriate processes and accounting procedures for collection of support charges
- ✓ Providers will have a role in informing tenants of the changes and how they may be affected

Preparing for 'steady state' contract/service reviews

Every Supporting People contract will be subject to review within three years of 1st April 2003, or three years from the start date of the contract, for schemes coming on-stream after April 2003. Every Supporting People administering authority will publish a programme of initial review dates for services within their area.

The purpose of the contract review is to determine whether the contract for a service should be renewed, and if so to review the performance and strategic relevance of the service, with a view to amending the terms and conditions of the contract.

All Supporting People contracts are fixed-term contracts, normally for three year. Full details of the contract review methodology are contained in the Supporting People Administrative Guidance (DTLR, 2001), section three.

Contract Reviews - threat or opportunity?

The contract review tests the service on a number of criteria. They are:

1. *Strategic relevance*
2. *Demand for the service*
3. *Quality and effectiveness*
4. *Cost of the service; and*
5. *Accreditation*

The reviews for most schemes are based on a three-stage process - all services are subject to a first stage, desktop review. Only those services that do not meet the required standards at stage one are subjected to the second stage. The second stage involves a more detailed examination of aspects that need improvement and this is done with the provider.

The third stage applies to services that have not met the standards at stage two, and where the provider cannot or will not make changes to reach the standard. The third stage may lead to a decision not to renew the Supporting People contract, or to remodel a service.

There are distinct review processes for older people's services. These include sheltered housing, home improvement agencies, community alarm services, Abbeyfields and almshouses. Details of the different processes can be found in the Supporting People Administrative Guidance (DTLR, 2001)

Be prepared!

Providers can minimise the risk of being adversely affected by contract reviews. A crucial factor is ensuring that there is good communication with the Supporting People Team. Provided there is good communication and partnership working, the Supporting People Team will be able to raise possible problems with providers. This will give them time to plan and make changes to improve the service before the actual review.

Providers may also benefit from self-assessment, sometimes done as part of an internal Best Value Review. A self-assessment can be done in a totally open way, since there are no consequences of revealing areas requiring improvement. The self-assessment can be the starting point for an action plan to improve the service.

Improvement should be a continuous process. Providers who have good processes for reviewing and improving services will be well placed when the time comes for a contract review. A contract review can then be seen as a step in the improvement cycle and not a threat.



Action points on being prepared for contract/service reviews

- ✓ *Familiarise yourself with the contract/service review methodology*
- ✓ *Do a self-assessment prior to the formal contract review - this will encourage you to take early action to remedy any areas of weakness*

Cost and Contract Reviews

The cost of the service will be scrutinised in the contract review. The Supporting People Team will not seek to reduce the cost, unless the costs are unreasonable compared to other similar services.

Providers can benchmark the cost of their service against other similar services. If, as a result, the service is relatively expensive the provider can identify the reasons and possibly find solutions. For example, it might be found that the level of support is higher than in most comparable services with lower costs. Alternatively, the level of support is the same as comparable services so savings could be made.

If the benchmarking shows that the costs are reasonable the provider can use this as evidence when reviewed.



Action points on costs

- ✓ *Get familiar with the contract review process*
- ✓ *Do a self assessment to determine areas that need improvement*
- ✓ *Work with the Supporting People Team on contract reviews*
- ✓ *Do some benchmarking to work out comparative costs for service provision with similar providers*

Concluding remarks

The chapter has considered key processes and procedures that will affect service providers. The issues that have been raised by some providers including charging are beyond the scope of this Guide. As a start, we have provided a list of helpful sources for more information in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

A few final thoughts

Supporting People is the most comprehensive and radical overhaul of housing-related support services. Such a major change inevitably brings challenges and uncertainty.

We acknowledge that support service providers have to respond to an ever-increasing number of changes. *Supporting People* is only one of these changes and the requirements it places on providers will impact on their organisations in the long term.

However, there are opportunities too for changes that will benefit service users. Most importantly, for the first time in many cases, the cost, quality and quantity of support provided will be transparent and service provision will be subject to external scrutiny. We believe that most providers will want to rise to the challenges.

All providers need to understand the decision-making processes involved in *Supporting People* and effectively engage with the process. The least they need to do is to keep themselves and *Supporting People Teams* informed. If they wish they can go further and influence the strategic direction of *Supporting People* at a local level. Providers can, therefore, play a significant role in shaping the future and their expertise would benefit many service users.

Contracts may be seen as a threat but they may also lead providers to review their services and ensure that service users are involved in developing services, if they are not already involved. This has to be a step in the right direction.

Finally, although *Supporting People* is moving to a contractual arrangement, this does not mean that the relationship between providers and local authorities has to be adversarial. The intended outcome is partnership not cold contracting. For these reasons we think that communication skills and behavioural flexibility are likely to be some of the most prized staff skills for provider organisations keen to benefit from the changes.

Chapter Six

Where to go for advice and information

SUPPORTING PEOPLE ONLINE/USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Anchor Trust

<http://www.anchor.org.uk/>

The Housing Corporation

<http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/>

The DTLR Supporting People Kweb:

<http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

The Supporting People Advisory Network

<http://www.supporting-people.org.uk>

The National Housing Federation

<http://www.housing.org.uk/>

Chartered Institute of Housing

<http://www.cih.org/index.html>

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING BENEFIT - USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Regulations

THB regulations are found in S.I. 1999/2734. See the link below. However, to understand them reference needs to be made to the Housing Benefit Regulations 1987.

<http://www.hmso.gov.uk/si/si1999/19992734.htm>

Housing Benefit Circulars

Housing Benefit (HB) circulars are produced by the Department of Work and Pensions. They provide guidance to HB officers.

There are a number of circulars relating to Transitional Housing Benefit (THB)

HB/CTB A47/99 Service Charges in Supported Accommodation -

<http://www.dss.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/1999/a4799.pdf>

HB/CTB A3/2000

Rent Officer Referrals net of support charges

<http://www.dss.gov.uk/hbctb/2000/>

HB/CTB A8/2000

Guidance on Community Care Assessments

<http://www.dss.gov.uk/hbctb/2000/>

HB/CTB A10/2000

Frequently Asked Questions

<http://www.dss.gov.uk/hbctb/2000/>

HB/CTB A10/2001

Service Charges in Supported Accommodation

<http://www.dss.gov.uk/hbctb/2001/>

HB/CTB A47/2001 The Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme

<http://www.spkweb.org.uk/Evolution/5.1EmergingPolicyDocuments.asp>

A10/2001 is a good starting point, summarising previous circulars and giving useful guidance.

HB Circulars on subsidy arrangement for THB

S8/1999

S1/2001

OTHER USEFUL SOURCES

The following THBS Guidance manuals can be downloaded free of charge from the Supporting People K-web:

<http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

Towards Supporting People - The Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme; The Housing Corporation, SITRA, LB of Camden, National

THB GUIDES

The Housing Corporation, the London Borough of Camden, SITRA and NHF has jointly produced 'Towards Supporting People, The Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme'.

Leeds City Council has produced a very useful Financial Audit Tool Kit

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=YH&LA_ID=143&Doc_ID=4880

They have also produced an accompanying 'case study' using a hypothetical example:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=YH&LA_ID=143&Doc_ID=4881

Surrey County Council's guide can be downloaded from:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/search/search_docdisplay.asp?doc_id=3982

Cambridgeshire County Council produced a spreadsheet to assist with apportionment:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/search/search_docdisplay.asp?doc_id=5686

Suffolk's Supporting People Team have also produced a spreadsheet for THB calculation:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=EA&LA_ID=10&Doc_ID=5108

And guidance notes:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=EA&LA_ID=10&Doc_ID=5109

Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council has produced a THB calculator

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=NE&LA_ID=59&Doc_ID=5883

Leeds City Council's financial toolkit, mentioned earlier, also considers apportionment:

http://www.spkweb.org.uk/YourLocalArea/1.1.1.2.1PolicyDocumentDetail.asp?Region_ID=YH&LA_ID=143&Doc_ID=4880

The Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme - A Three Way Process

Research undertaken for the Department of Social Security in Spring 2001. Focuses on good practice lessons for implementing Supporting People. It is aimed at Local Authorities and providers. The full document can be downloaded from: www.dss.gov.uk/asd/asd5/IH86.pdf

A four-page summary of the full report is also available from the Department of Work and Pensions.

Residential Care, housing, care and support schemes and Supporting People A Consultation Paper
<http://www.doh.gov.uk/housingcareconsultation/>

Supporting People: Charging - Administrative Arrangements
http://www.spkweb.org.uk/search/search_docdisplay.asp?doc_id=5460

APPENDIX 1 Transitional Housing Benefit

Examples of eligible services

Source: Surrey Welfare Rights Unit

1. GENERAL COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT				2. CLEANING OF ROOMS AND WINDOWS	3. EMERGENCY ALARM SYSTEMS
A. Assisting claimant with maintaining security of dwelling	B. Assisting claimant with maintaining safety of dwelling	C. Helping claimant comply with terms of tenancy agreement in respect of:	D. Other Charges		
<p>Assistance for tenants in ensuring security of dwelling</p> <p>Controlling access</p> <p>More than normal 'concierge' type duties eg where extra security is required to monitor or restrict access to certain individuals: where health/safety requires more than one member of staff to be available due to nature of tenant group and possibility of serious disputes may put staff at risk: where user needs to be reminded to lock up</p> <p>Eligible Groups</p> <p>Women's refuges; Homeless; care leavers; people with mental health problems, learning difficulties etc</p>	<p>Arranging servicing of tenants' appliances</p> <p>Assisting tenant in arranging for plumbers, builders etc</p> <p>Arranging for adaptations to cope with disability</p> <p>Advice on using cooker/ iron etc. safely.</p> <p>Ensuring fire safety. Controlling access to tenants' rooms</p>	<p>Nuisance: dealing with neighbour disputes</p> <p>Rental liability: help with budgeting/debt counselling, claiming benefit</p> <p>Interior maintenance: e.g. helping with minor repairs (unblocking sink); life skills training in areas such as kitchen hygiene (food preparation, storage etc)</p> <p>Period of tenancy: e.g. resettlement activities necessary to enable claimant to eventually move on to more independent accommodation.</p> <p>Could include floating or move-on support and support provided for a limited period</p>	<p>The following are eligible where tenant lives in accommodation where dwelling is one of a group of dwellings which landlord normally lets to people in need of counselling/support and support is provided by resident warden or non-resident warden with a system for calling her/him.</p> <p>Shopping/running errands e.g. fetching prescriptions.</p> <p>Chatting with residents and guests.</p> <p>'Good neighbour' tasks such as welfare checks.</p>	<p>Where tenant or anyone in household is unable to do cleaning themselves</p> <p>NB Charges for cleaning rooms and windows in communal areas and cleaning of external windows where tenant is not in 'supported accommodation' and neither s/he nor member of household is able to do, are eligible under normal HB service charges</p>	<p>Where tenants are sick, elderly or disabled and, apart from alarm system, the accommodation is specially adapted or designed for them</p> <p>Could apply to lease holders as well as those in sheltered accommodation</p>

APPENDIX 2 Glossary of Terms

(Reproduced from DTLR (2001) *The Supporting People Administrative Guidance*. London: DTLR, page 503).

Accreditation	The process by which a Commissioning Body will determine whether a provider of housing related support services may tender for <i>Supporting People</i> services in England.
Accreditation Questionnaire	A questionnaire to obtain basic information from a provider organisation to determine whether it may be accredited. The questionnaire addresses financial and organisational status and informs the decision as to whether to accredit the provider.
Best Value	A duty on local authorities to review the service they provide for local people and improve them by the best means available. This must be done in consultation with the people who use the services and the wider local community whose views are sought several times a year.
Commissioning Body	The Commissioning Body is a partnership of local authorities, health and probation services. The Commissioning Body may not be formally constituted but will have terms of reference, which define its role and responsibilities.
Community alarm services	Community alarm services include dispersed and 'hard wired' services that are usually provided in sheltered and purpose built disabled person's accommodation. Basic community alarm services enable people to call for assistance. Local authorities provide the majority of community alarm services but RSLs and private sector firms also provide them.
Core Strategy Development Group (CSDG)	A partnership grouping, usually comprising representatives from Housing, Social Care, Health, and Probation. This body oversees the development of the <i>Supporting People</i> strategy and proposes the strategy to the Commissioning Body.
Cross-authority issues	Matters related to services that cross local authority boundaries including assessing needs and supply for services, strategic planning, funding, monitoring, reviewing and decision-making. These are addressed in the formal relationship between the Cross-Authority Group (the CAG) and the local Commissioning Bodies.
Home Improvement Agency (HIA)	These agencies enable vulnerable people to retain their independence in their chosen home for the foreseeable future. Vulnerable people may include older people on low incomes, people with disabilities and other groups determined by local circumstances. The homes would usually be in the private rented, leasehold or owner occupied sector.
Inclusive Forum	The Forum has a central role in working up the priorities of the <i>Supporting People</i> Strategy at a local level, and should include all stakeholders groups. Fora are likely to be a half or full day workshops or seminar events bringing people together to exchange views and comments.
PAGS	Probation Accommodation Grant Scheme is a grant paid by the Home Office to Probation services, to fund accommodation and support for ex-offenders. PAGS funding for support will transfer to <i>Supporting People</i> Grant from April 2003.
Provider	Organisation providing housing related support services - includes RSLs, voluntary sector organisations, local authorities and the private sector.

Scheme (Contract) Review	A contract review is undertaken prior to the expiry of a fixed-term contract. The purpose of the review is to decide whether the contract should be renewed, and if so, on what terms.
Sheltered Housing	This term is used to describe a wide range of housing that is aimed at older and or disabled people. It includes grouped housing with a resident or visiting warden, bungalows and flats that are dispersed and very sheltered or extra care provision. Categories that used to be used to describe this wide range of provision are not helpful and they are not used in the guidance. Instead Commissioning Bodies are encouraged to consider the purpose of individual sheltered schemes and the benefits and services that residents have available to enable them to live independently.
Supported Housing Management Grant SHMG	Housing Corporation revenue funding for RSL supported housing services. From 1 April 2003 SHMG will transfer to the Supporting People Grant.
Two-tier authorities	Authorities with a county and district structure.
Voids	A vacancy in a housing scheme. Typically measured by a loss of rental income for a period and expressed as a percentage of the total income, which could be received for the period. It may also be measured by the period until the property is re-let or the placement is filled.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

About Anchor Trust

Anchor Trust provides a range of services for older people throughout England in partnership with local authorities, health and primary care services. These include Anchor Retirement Housing and Anchorcall, Guardian Retirement Housing, Almshouses, Anchor Staying Put, Anchor Care Alternatives, and Anchor Homes.

The Government's Supporting People programme will have an impact on many of our customers and partners, and in the way we manage and deliver housing and housing-related support services. Drawing on the Anchor/Housing Corporation funded Preparation Projects, this guide provides information on implementing Supporting People and will help providers begin to understand the arrangements and prepare for April 2003.

For a copy of our free leaflet *Signing up to Supporting People: Anchor services and Supporting People arrangements* visit our website at www.anchor.org.uk or contact us at Anchor Trust, Fountain Court, Oxford Spire Business Park, Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1NZ; Tel. 01865 854000 or Fax. 01865 854001.

ISBN No 0-906178-762

www.anchor.org.uk

Anchor Trust registered charity No. 1052183

Company No. 3137851

Designed and produced by
Corporate Communications, Anchor Trust

CS. BK. 06/02 DP761

