

4 facts 4 questions about the future of **Supporting People**

This briefing has been written by a group of organisations from across health, social care, housing, homelessness, substance misuse and criminal justice.

We, and the services we represent across the country, work in many different ways to address the needs of vulnerable groups in society. We have come together because of a common concern that the services funded by Supporting People, which help transform the lives of these vulnerable people, are being put at risk.

The coalition government has given its commitment to protecting the most vulnerable during these difficult economic times. As organisations working with the most excluded people in our communities, we believe this is only possible if local authorities safeguard the types of services funded by Supporting People money.

In this short briefing we present the key facts about Supporting People and four sets of questions local authorities should ask as they make difficult decisions about services. If you are a Councillor, Chief Executive or Officer we hope this will be a useful checklist as decisions are made. If you are an MP, local resident or service provider, you may wish to put these questions to your local authority to ensure the value of this support is recognised.

4 facts...

about Supporting People

1

Supporting People services provide vital support to vulnerable groups

At any one time over one million people are receiving Supporting People services.¹ These services transform people's lives and reduce their dependency on other forms of services and benefits by providing housing related support. For example, Supporting People funds accommodation-based services supporting homeless people, and services which help individuals with learning disabilities and mental health issues to live independently in their own homes and participate in the community. Supporting People is administered by upper-tier local authorities – London boroughs, metropolitan boroughs, unitary authorities and shire counties.

2

Supporting People provides excellent value for money

An independent evaluation² carried out in 2009 for the Government estimated that the national annual investment of £1.6 billion in housing-related support generated net savings of £3.4 billion by avoiding more costly acute services. This means real cost savings and economic benefits to every local area. Cuts to these services are likely to create disproportionately negative impacts on vulnerable people, and result in greater costs to local authorities, health, police and other statutory services.

3

Nationally Supporting People funding has not been significantly reduced

The value of Supporting People was recognised by Government in the recent Spending Review, which made clear that Supporting People would not be cut at the rate of other expenditure. The national fund has been reduced by less than 3% in cash terms over the next four years (12% allowing for inflation). In a letter to local authorities at the end of last year the Department for Communities and Local Government said that local allocations are also much the same as last year:

“for practical purposes Supporting People has contributed to an authority's 2011-12 settlement at least the amount received last year less the relevant floor percentage [in the local authority's Formula Grant settlement].”³

4

The need for Supporting People services is likely to rise

As the independent evaluation noted: *“the present economic downturn is likely to intensify the demand for services paid for by the grant, particularly where such services deal with the needs of the socially excluded.”⁴* This is supported by findings from a 2009 ADASS survey which found that: *“nearly 40% of adult social care departments have seen a rise in levels of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation.”⁵*

We are now facing a period of radical upheaval in a number of areas which risks increasing the demand on services yet further. In particular the cuts to housing benefit and changes to the homelessness duty create instability which may increase local demand for housing related support.

4 questions...

a local authority checklist

We believe that there is a strong case for maintaining spending on Supporting People services; that this case has been championed by national Government; and that continued investment will provide economic and strategic benefits to local areas over time. For local authorities to make the best choices regarding the future of Supporting People services we believe they should consider the following questions:

1 **Is the local authority taking a strategic approach to Supporting People services?**

- a) Has the authority carried out any analysis of costs and benefits of services?
- b) Has the authority undertaken a full needs analysis of the current and future population?
- c) Has the authority completed a comprehensive impact assessment of any proposed changes to funding or service provision?
- d) Is this information being used by councillors to inform the decision making process?

2 **Has the local authority considered alternatives to cutting services?**

- a) Has the authority considered, with partners, how current services could be run differently? For example, has joint commissioning or improved coordination of services been examined?
- b) Has the authority considered whether any necessary cuts can be spread over a number of years?
- c) Are cuts being targeted on less essential services rather than blanket cuts applied to all services?
- d) Have the administrative costs been considered and can these be reduced?

3 **Has the authority consulted with partners and service users?**

- a) Has the authority been in regular contact with current providers?
- b) Do current providers know the details of any proposed changes and have they had a chance to comment or suggest alternatives?
- c) Have providers been given the opportunity and encouraged to consult with their service users?
- d) Has the authority consulted directly with service users?
- e) Have other statutory partners been informed and their views sought about any proposed changes?
- f) Is feedback from such consultation processes being used to inform decision making?

4 **Has the authority considered the wider impact of any cuts or changes to Supporting People services?**

- a) Has the authority considered the impact on other statutory partners such as health and criminal justice?
- b) Has the authority considered what the burden will be on services which remain if some are closed? Will remaining services be able to be as effective?
- c) Will withdrawal of Supporting People funding have an impact on other funding streams coming into the area, for example charitable match funding or services jointly funded by health?

14 organisations...



ADASS
www.adass.org.uk



Centre for Mental health
www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk



Clinks
www.clinks.org



Crisis
www.crisis.org.uk



DrugScope
www.drugscope.org.uk



Homeless Link
www.homeless.org.uk



MEAM
www.meam.org.uk



Mind
www.mind.org.uk



National Housing Federation
www.housing.org.uk



Rethink
www.rethink.org



Revolving Doors
www.revolving-doors.org.uk



Salvation Army
www.salvationarmy.org.uk



SITRA
www.sitra.org.uk



St Mungo's
www.mungos.org

References...

- 1 - Communities and Local Government Department, *Housing for older and disabled people webpage*, 2010 - <http://bit.ly/ii6GY6>
- 2 - Capgemini for Communities and Local Government, *Research into the Financial Benefits of the Supporting People Programme*, 2009 - <http://bit.ly/dEN9rs>
- 3 - Letter to Local Authority Chief Executives from the Department for Communities and Local Government, 22 December 2010 - <http://bit.ly/htofFN> (PDF download)
- 4 - Capgemini for Communities and Local Government, *Research into the Financial Benefits of the Supporting People Programme*, 2009, p.5 - <http://bit.ly/dEN9rs>
- 5 - Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, *Directors report extra demands being placed on adult social services*, October 2009 - <http://bit.ly/dHF6jK>