

Inspection report

March 2005



# Supporting People Programme

Surrey County Council

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# Summary

## Introduction to the Supporting People Programme

- 1 'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide support services, which help vulnerable people live independently. The programme went live on 1 April 2003.
- 2 The aim of the Supporting People programme is to establish a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework, delivered locally in response to identified local needs, to replace the previous complex and uncoordinated arrangements for providing housing related support services for vulnerable people.
- 3 The Supporting People programme brings together a number of funding streams including Transitional Housing Benefit (THB), which paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's Supported Housing Management Grant (SHMG) and Probation Accommodation Grant Scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities.
- 4 Surrey County Council was inspected in the second year of the Supporting People programme. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

## Background

- 5 The county of Surrey lies to the south and south-west of London. There is no single large centre of population, but eight towns have populations of over 25,000. There are also extensive rural areas.
- 6 The population is 1,059,900<sup>1</sup> of which 5 per cent describe themselves as ‘other than white British’; this is low by comparison to the England average of 13 per cent. The number of people over the age of 65 matches the national average of 16 per cent.
- 7 Overall deprivation is low at county level, but with some pockets of deprivation at ward level, particularly in Spelthorne. Unemployment is low at 1.7 per cent, compared to the England average of 2.6 per cent<sup>2</sup>. The average house price of £312,670 is the highest of any county in England, and the average annual income is 40 per cent above the national average. Major employers include the county council, the University of Surrey, BP, Legal and General and several large NHS hospitals.
- 8 The council comprises 76 councillors and is Conservative-led with 51 councillors. The council operates an executive and scrutiny model of governance; the executive has ten members and there are seven select committees.
- 9 The county council acts as the administering authority for the Supporting People programme across the county. In commissioning Supporting People services the council works in partnership with five Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), the probation service and 11 district and borough councils.
- 10 The total budget for the county’s adults and community care services is £175 million in 2004/05, compared to £155 million the previous year.
- 11 The total amount of Supporting People grant allocated to Surrey in 2004/05 is £19,834,001<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the council received a £710,714 administration grant to fulfil its role as the administering authority.
- 12 The highest cost Supporting People service is £735 per person per week in a specialist accommodation scheme for people with learning disabilities, although this service is being decommissioned. The lowest cost scheme provides support for older people in sheltered housing and costs £0.93 per person per week.
- 13 There are 138 different providers with 251 contracts, providing 334 services. There are over 12,000 supported accommodation places and 615 units of floating support excluding Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs).

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<sup>1</sup> Census – mid-2002 estimates.

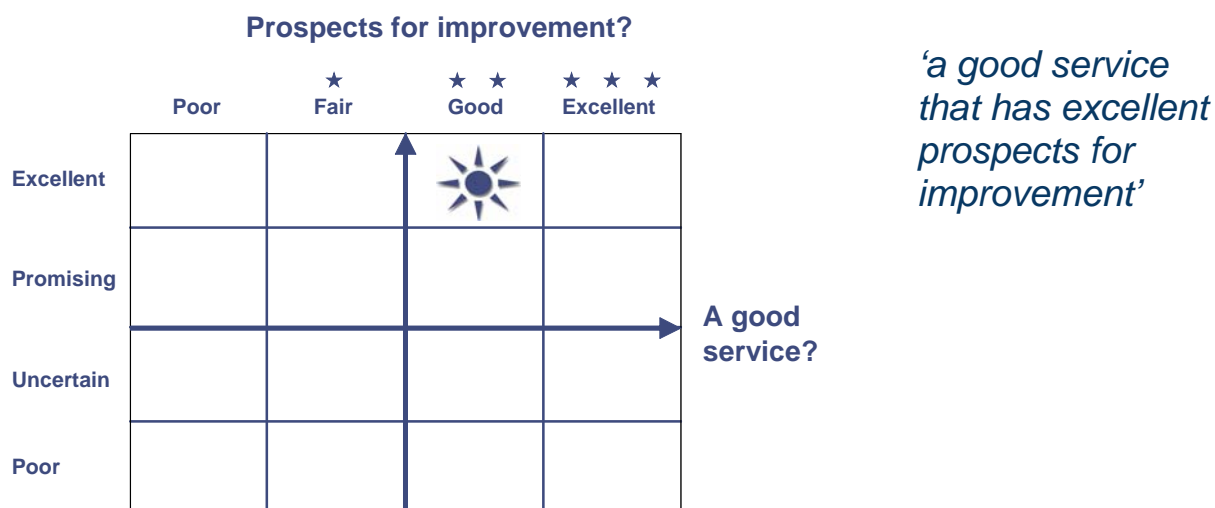
<sup>2</sup> Claimant count for Job Seekers Allowance.

<sup>3</sup> This includes a £20,000 award made after the initial allocation of £19,814,001.

## Scoring the service

- 14 We have assessed Surrey County Council as providing a ‘good’ two-star service that has excellent prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

### Scoring chart<sup>4</sup>: Contents – Supporting People Programme



- 15 We have assessed the council's administration of the Supporting People programme to be good because:
- ◆ the council has established strong delivery arrangements for the programme that include a well resourced and skilled Supporting People team;
  - ◆ the Supporting People team is administering the programme effectively, to the satisfaction of partners and service providers;
  - ◆ governance arrangements were set up at an early stage and have generally operated well during the early implementation of the programme. The commissioning body has effective meetings and is strongly chaired;
  - ◆ there has been systematic research into, and analysis of, the supply and need for supported housing services in the county;
  - ◆ a draft five-year strategy has been produced with the involvement of stakeholders, including consultation with service users. The strategy addresses the findings of the needs and supply research and sets priorities for future development, which the council has begun to address;
  - ◆ telephone access to information about services is generally good;
  - ◆ there is a range of good quality information on Supporting People services for providers and service users;
  - ◆ there is a dedicated website providing useful and up-to-date information for service providers;
  - ◆ there are robust financial arrangements and budgetary control is sound;

<sup>4</sup> The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

- ◆ there is effective partnership working on Supporting People issues. There is a strong level of engagement with the district and borough councils through their involvement in the Joint Management Board (JMB) and other fora;
- ◆ service providers are very positive about the council's implementation of the programme;
- ◆ there are clear procedures for service reviews and the programme of reviews is on schedule. Reviews are addressing the appropriate issues and are seen as fair and constructive by providers;
- ◆ independent, trained interviewers are contracted to obtain the views of service users during each service review;
- ◆ there is evidence of a focus on achieving value for money, particularly through the service review process. The council has scrutinised its highest cost services and has taken action to reduce costs or reconfigure services where appropriate; and
- ◆ there is evidence that service reviews are resulting in the remodelling of services for the benefit of service users.

16 However we found a number of less positive aspects of the programme that need to be addressed. These include:

- ◆ the involvement of service users and providers (other than the local authority providers) in the governance arrangements is intermittent and not systematic;
- ◆ there has been a lack of consistent involvement of health services in the governance arrangements – particularly in the Joint Management Board (JMB);
- ◆ the commissioning body is not yet taking a proactive approach to scrutinising the costs and value for money of services;
- ◆ there appears to be some funding of ineligible costs for some services that have not yet received service reviews;
- ◆ support plans are not in place for all service users;
- ◆ more work needs to be done to benchmark the cost and quality of services;
- ◆ there has been some joint working with neighbouring authorities, but this is an area that needs to be developed;
- ◆ work on addressing the needs of diverse communities and groups is still at an early stage. Research to assess needs has been carried out, but an action plan has only recently been developed. Not all providers are monitoring the profiles of service users; and
- ◆ the website has little information targeted at service users.

17 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has excellent prospects for improvement. We found the following strengths:

- ◆ the council has effectively implemented and delivered the early stages of the Supporting People programme. There is also a wider corporate track record of delivering improvements;
- ◆ there are effective performance management systems in place, both corporately and within the Supporting People programme, including reporting arrangements to the commissioning body;

- ◆ there is corporate support for, and commitment to, the Supporting People programme. There is leadership of the programme at a senior level, including strong leadership of the commissioning body;
- ◆ there is strong capacity to deliver the programme and improvements from the lead officer and the Supporting People team;
- ◆ there is clarity among officers and most of those involved in the governance arrangements about roles, responsibilities and accountability;
- ◆ the programme of service reviews has already demonstrated that it can deliver improvements to the scope, quality and value for money of services;
- ◆ positive relationships have been established between the Supporting People team and service providers, district and borough councils and other partners;
- ◆ relationships between the county and the 11 local authority housing departments on supported housing issues have improved significantly since the programme began;
- ◆ the council has shown a willingness to learn from other organisations, and has taken the lead on sharing its own learning and expertise;
- ◆ the future priorities for the programme are clearly set out in the draft five-year strategy, which has been developed with significant involvement from partners and providers;
- ◆ the draft future strategy is based on thorough research of housing support needs; and
- ◆ the aims and plans of the Supporting People programme generally link well with corporate and departmental aims and plans.

## Recommendations

- 18 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations:
- ◆ review the governance arrangements to ensure that service users and providers have consistent input by June 2005;
  - ◆ take steps to ensure that health partners are aware of the importance of their consistent involvement in the governance arrangements by April 2005;
  - ◆ ensure that all commissioning body members are clear about their roles in terms of their responsibility for the delivery of the Supporting People programme as a whole by April 2005;
  - ◆ take steps to ensure that the commissioning body has the capacity to scrutinise the outcome of service reviews, and proposals for new services, in terms of value for money and costs, by May 2005;
  - ◆ ensure that the council's frontline staff are aware of how to direct callers to Supporting People services and have access to appropriate information by June 2005;
  - ◆ take action to address the needs of diverse communities and groups, taking account of the recent research findings, by April 2005;
  - ◆ take steps to ensure that all providers collect and provide clear information on the profile of their service users by October 2005;
  - ◆ clarify the role and scope of the advisory group, particularly in relation to service users and providers, and ensure that potential attendees receive information about the group's meetings by May 2005;
  - ◆ work with providers to ensure that support plans are in place for all service users (with immediate effect and ongoing);
  - ◆ carry out further benchmarking exercises on the costs and quality of services, both within the county and with outside authorities (ongoing from publication of this report);
  - ◆ develop the existing links with neighbouring authorities to discuss and take forward Supporting People issues (ongoing from publication of this report);
  - ◆ develop the content of the Surrey Supporting People website to include information for all stakeholders, including service users and carers, by June 2005 and ongoing;
  - ◆ work with the probation service to develop an accommodation strategy and to meet the need for services for offenders, by June 2005; and
  - ◆ Surrey County Council will need to take action to address all other weaknesses identified within the report.
- 19 We would like to thank the staff of Surrey County Council, and in particular Andrea Cannon and Bebe Hudd, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

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**Mary Barnish – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation**  
**Sheila Callens – Commission for Social Care Inspection**  
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**Dates of inspection: 29 November to 3 December 2004**

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# Report

## Context

- 20 This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission (the Commission) following an inspection under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.

## The locality

- 21 Surrey is situated to the south and south-west of London, and is the most densely populated shire county in England. This is despite 85 per cent of the area being countryside, most of which is designated green belt. Surrey is one of the most prosperous parts of the country, with a high cost of living and wages at 40 per cent above the national average. This results in staff shortages in some areas of low-paid work.
- 22 Surrey has no principal urban settlement, but a number of towns have populations of over 25,000; Ashford, Camberley, Epsom, Ewell, Farnham, Guildford, Redhill and Woking. The average house price of £312,670 is the highest of any county in England<sup>5</sup>.
- 23 The population of the county is 1,059,900<sup>6</sup>, 5 per cent of whom are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, compared with the average for England of 13 per cent. This rises to 9 per cent in Woking and in Epsom and Ewell<sup>7</sup>.
- 24 Sixteen per cent of people are over the age of 65, the same percentage as for England as a whole. There is low unemployment, with 1.7 per cent of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), compared with an average of 2.6 per cent for England. The principal employers in the area include Surrey County Council, the University of Surrey, BP, Legal and General and several large NHS hospitals.
- 25 There are low average levels of deprivation in the county, but some pockets of deprivation do exist. The most deprived of the 11 districts and boroughs is Spelthorne; ranked 296th in the table of deprivation for the 354 English authorities<sup>8</sup>.

## The council

- 26 The council comprises 76 councillors and is Conservative-led with 51 councillors, 13 Liberal Democrats, six Labour and six Independent/Residents' Association. The council operates an executive and scrutiny model of governance. The executive has ten members and there are seven select committees including:
- ◆ Health Scrutiny Committee – reviews and scrutinises the operation of health services in Surrey;
  - ◆ adults and community care select committee; and

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<sup>5</sup> Land Registry, July – September 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Census – mid 2002 estimates.

<sup>7</sup> Census 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

- ◆ children and young people’s select committee.
- 27 ‘Local committees’ were established in April 2002, based upon the 11 district and borough councils.
- 28 The council has approximately 25,000 employees, including school staff. Its net revenue budget for 2004/05 is £940 million, a 6.3 per cent increase on 2003/04. The capital budget is £81 million. The budget for adults and community care services is £175 million for 2004/05, an increase of 13 per cent on the previous year’s budget of £155 million.
- 29 The council was assessed as a ‘good’ authority by the Audit Commission’s Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in December 2003 and again in December 2004, with a score of three out of four for adult social care.
- 30 The council’s vision, set out in the Corporate Plan 2004/05 is: ‘To make Surrey a better place’. This is supported by six themes:
- ◆ to learn and develop;
  - ◆ to live and do business;
  - ◆ to travel;
  - ◆ where vulnerable people are more independent;
  - ◆ where people feel safe; and
  - ◆ where everybody matters.
- 31 Since November 2002, the Surrey Strategic Partnership, led by the council, has conducted consultation to develop ‘Surrey 2020’ to form the context for a community strategy.
- 32 The council has a medium-term strategy for adults and community care (a service which includes the Supporting People team). This was developed in 2002 and has six main strands:
- ◆ health and social care;
  - ◆ social care and housing;
  - ◆ partnerships;
  - ◆ make full use of the power of Surrey;
  - ◆ quality and value for money; and
  - ◆ an open service.
- 33 The shadow Supporting People strategy 2002/03 was evaluated by the ODPM as ‘good’. The strategy’s vision for Supporting People is:
- ◆ to increase the supply of housing related support services for vulnerable people living in Surrey;
  - ◆ to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to enable people to live as independent and fulfilled lives as possible within their communities; and
  - ◆ to continue work to map hitherto unmet needs for housing related support and to use this evidence to seek the resources to meet these needs.

## The service

- 34 The county council acts as the Administering Local Authority (ALA) for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme in its area.
- 35 The Supporting People programme is designed to meet the housing related support needs of vulnerable people, including homeless people, older people with support needs, people with a learning difficulty, people with mental health problems, those with substance abuse problems, refugees, travellers and offenders.
- 36 The total amount of Supporting People grant made available to the council in 2004/05 is £19,834,001, plus an underspend of £1,087,627 carried forward from the previous year. In addition, the council receives a Supporting People administration grant of £710,714 to fulfil its role as the administering authority.
- 37 Surrey was inspected in the second year of the programme. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it continues to deliver the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the value for money presented by the contracted services and the outcomes for vulnerable people.

## Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: framework for delivery

- 38 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme:
- ◆ accountable officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process;
  - ◆ inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users;
  - ◆ core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables, and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme;
  - ◆ commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme;
  - ◆ councillors: approve key decisions of the commissioning body; and
  - ◆ Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.
- 39 Supporting People commissioning bodies are a requirement under grant conditions, except in local authorities judged to be excellent under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), and must have senior representation from the administering local authority, the local health services (usually one representative from each Primary Care Trust) and the area probation service. In two-tier areas, each district council is entitled to one representative. Each named representative has one vote although the Administering Local Authority has a veto where there is a demonstrable financial risk to the administering local authority.

## How good is the service?

- 40 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:
- ◆ governance of the programme;
  - ◆ delivery arrangements, including strategy and needs assessments;
  - ◆ financial management and monitoring;
  - ◆ service reviews carried out by the administering authority;
  - ◆ value for money;
  - ◆ user involvement;
  - ◆ partnership arrangements;
  - ◆ access to services, customer care and information;
  - ◆ diversity; and
  - ◆ outcomes for service users.

## Governance of the programme

- 41 The council created the necessary governance structures at an early stage. A shadow commissioning body and Joint Management Board (JMB – Surrey’s core strategy group) were established very early in the preparations for Supporting People and these groups have met regularly. The governance structures address the two-tier local government framework and the NHS structure in Surrey and are generally working well. However, the arrangements need to be kept under review and developed to ensure that they meet the challenges ahead.

### Commissioning body

- 42 In Surrey, the size of the county and the high number of statutory partners presented challenges when developing the Supporting People governance arrangements.
- 43 The shadow commissioning body was established in September 2001, from a Surrey Local Government Association (SLGA) steering group. Representatives from health and probation joined the group in December 2001 and it has met regularly since then.
- 44 Surrey has 11 district and borough councils and five health service Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). The commissioning body is comprised of nine members: three elected members of the county council; three elected members of borough councils; two senior officers from PCTs; and the chief executive of Surrey probation service. Other statutory partners can attend meetings on an observer basis.
- 45 The commissioning body is chaired by the county’s executive member for adults and community care, with a borough councillor as vice-chair. The accountable officer attends commissioning body meetings, as does the Supporting People lead officer.
- 46 The three elected members of borough councils are nominated by the SLGA to represent all 11 districts and boroughs. The SLGA has a process for the selection of representatives to this, and to various other boards in Surrey, and there is evidence that this arrangement works well and is welcomed by all 11 local councils.

- 47 The arrangement for health service representation is that one PCT officer represents the two PCTs in the east of the county, and the other represents the three PCTs in the west. Participation by health partners was initially inconsistent, although attendance has improved recently.
- 48 The probation service has found that the governance arrangements have led to constructive relationships with the Supporting People partners and an opportunity to influence decision-making. However, a lack of continuous representation by probation has sometimes undermined the service's ability to influence discussions on offenders. Representation has now been strengthened, which has enabled emerging offender issues to be highlighted in the draft five-year strategy.
- 49 We attended a meeting of the commissioning body, reviewed minutes of meetings and interviewed members. The body is strongly chaired, with an appropriate level of input and challenge from participants. The bi-monthly meetings are well organised and the scope, content and quality of papers is high. Although the meetings have very full agendas, they give sufficient attention to key issues.
- 50 The level of information provided to the board is appropriate to the level of decision-making required. For example, a comprehensive paper was submitted to the board in July 2004 setting out the options for the key investment and savings decisions the commissioning body needed to make in the context of financial uncertainty over future funding. The paper was clear and addressed the pertinent issues.
- 51 Members of the commissioning body have a strong understanding of the Supporting People programme and have made site visits to see at first hand the standard of the accommodation and services funded in Surrey. However, some elected members are unclear about the overall governance arrangements, including the links between the commissioning body and the JMB, and the role of the advisory group.
- 52 Commissioning body members believe that the relationships with the districts and boroughs are well managed, particularly via the JMB, despite the complex governance arrangements. There are also links between the commissioning body and other fora, such as the advisory group (see below) and through regular reports to groups such as the Surrey chief housing officers' group (see 'Partnership arrangements' later in this report).
- 53 There is a three-stage disputes protocol in place, signed by all members. However, dispute arrangements are ultimately determined by the grant conditions – which require that decisions should be taken unanimously or referred to the Secretary of State.

#### **Joint Management Board (JMB) – the core strategy group**

- 54 Surrey's core strategy group is called a Joint Management Board (JMB). It meets two weeks before the commissioning body and considers papers prior to the commissioning body receiving them.
- 55 Only statutory partners are represented on the JMB, although some of the local authorities are also providers. The 14 members are: senior housing officers from each of the 11 district and borough councils; the assistant chief probation officer for Surrey; and two senior officers from PCTs (although PCT representatives were not in place at the time of the inspection). The meetings are attended by the lead officer and by other council staff when necessary.

- 56 Non-statutory providers and service users are not represented on the JMB, although they are engaged in other ways (see 'User involvement' and 'Partnership arrangements' later in this report). The reason for this is that, with a high number of statutory partners, the council has been keen not to create unworkably large fora. This has worked well in the early stages of the programme, but we consider it may not be sufficient to deal with the more challenging decisions that lie ahead.
- 57 There has not been consistent participation from health partners in the JMB and there are currently no representatives in place. This is an area that needs to be strengthened.
- 58 JMB members have been involved with the detail of policy and practice and have taken a close interest in the development of the five-year strategy. Half-day sessions have been held to discuss items of special interest such as needs mapping.
- 59 Agendas for the JMB are set by the Supporting People lead officer. Agendas are regarded by a number of members as too long, which does not always allow for proper debate on all items (discussion about cross-authority services was one example given). There are plans for the JMB to be a stronger forum for strategic planning once the five-year strategy is in place.
- 60 The level of attendance at meetings is generally good. When critical decisions are to be made, all members are alerted to the importance of attending – examples of this have been proposals for remodelling services and discussions about the draft five-year strategy.
- 61 Draft terms of reference for the JMB have recently been circulated for consideration. However, we found that the district and borough council officers on the JMB have a clear understanding of their roles as representing the interests of Supporting People across Surrey.
- 62 The links between the JMB and the commissioning body are primarily via the Supporting People lead officer. The two chairs do not meet or liaise and JMB members do not receive commissioning body agendas or papers. The council has agreed to explore how best to strengthen these links.

### **Inclusive forum**

- 63 In view of the size of Surrey, it was decided not to formally set up an 'inclusive forum'. The council has addressed this requirement by having a number of 'forums' or conferences, primarily for providers, although representatives from statutory partners and the voluntary sector have also attended.
- 64 Three large forum events have been held over the past two years. Each consisted of either a full day or two half-days.
- 65 Providers that we surveyed and spoke to were positive about these events. However, there does not appear to have been significant involvement by service users or user groups in these events.

### **Advisory Group**

- 66 An advisory group – broader than the JMB – meets six-monthly. This includes officers and members from the statutory partners, plus a small number of other providers. The group receives information on the progress of the Supporting People programme and has an advisory role to the commissioning body, whose members attend. The chair of the commissioning body also chairs the advisory group's meetings.

- 67 The group meets in public in Elmbridge Borough Council’s chamber, but is not widely attended other than by second and third tier officers from housing departments. Details of meetings are publicised on the council’s Supporting People website, but providers are not specifically invited. A typical meeting includes a presentation by the lead officer or a provider or the ODPM, about a topical issue.
- 68 We observed a meeting of the advisory group, attended by 13 people, which confirmed that the group is mainly attended by representatives of the district and borough councils and that involvement of other organisations is limited.
- 69 The meeting was held to discuss the draft five-year strategy and included an informative presentation. There was also discussion around the recently announced reduction in Surrey’s Supporting People grant for 2005/06.
- 70 The advisory group plays a useful role, although the level of involvement expected from providers and users is unclear. Providers that have shown an interest have joined the group, but it is unclear on what basis other providers or user groups are encouraged to become members of the group.

**Accountable officer**

- 71 In Surrey, the post of ‘accountable officer’ is held by the county’s executive director of adults and community care. This officer attends the commissioning body and regularly meets with the chair and is therefore directly engaged with the programme and able to offer advice and guidance. He also has links with the accountable officers from other authorities in the South East.
- 72 The accountable officer (as executive director) manages five area directors of adults and community care. The North area director has been given lead responsibility for housing issues and so, in turn, manages the Supporting People lead officer. This arrangement provides effective links between the accountable officer and the operational Supporting People team.

**Delivery arrangements**

- 73 The council has established strong delivery arrangements for the programme that include a well resourced and stable Supporting People team. The team has the necessary skills and expertise to deliver the work programme and has made good progress, in the context of being in Year 2 of a large programme.
- 74 The supply of supported housing services in Surrey has started from a relatively low base, with the exception of sheltered housing. However, the council has identified the levels of supply and needs and has begun to address the priorities set out in the draft five-year strategy. Many of the services that are in place have lower unit costs than might be expected using ODPM comparative data.

**The Supporting People team**

- 75 The county appointed a shadow Supporting People team in the early months of preparation and a full team has been in post since the autumn of 2001. The team established good working arrangements with the partner organisations at an early stage and continue to reap the benefits of this groundwork. The team has grown since the inception of the programme, but, with the exception of a change of lead officer in September 2002, the team has been stable since inception.
- 76 The council received an administration grant of £745,060 in 2003/04 and £710,714 in 2004/05. A grant of £568,571 for 2005/06 has recently been announced.

- 77 Surrey County Council's offices are based in Kingston, outside the county's administrative boundary. It was therefore decided to base the Supporting People team at the offices of Elmbridge Borough Council in Esher, to give it a base within the county and closer ties to the local councils and to supported housing providers. We found that this arrangement is working well and has contributed to breaking down the common 'us and them' attitude between county and district/borough councils.
- 78 The team is known as the Surrey Supporting People Team and not as a 'Surrey County Council' team, to promote the inclusive nature of the framework. The team of 12 consists of:
- ◆ the lead officer (responsible to the North area manager of adults and community care);
  - ◆ six contract officers, each with a 'patch' of providers and contracts. Each carries out service reviews, but also has a lead area of expertise such as IT, equalities etc. Four contract officers were initially recruited, with further appointments in September 2003 and April 2004; and
  - ◆ the other posts are: finance manager, finance officer, research officer, office manager and administrative assistant.
- 79 With the highly competitive job market in Surrey, the county invested in the new team by grading posts at competitive levels, which has enabled it to attract and retain skilled staff. During the inspection we found unqualified praise for the way in which the team leader and staff have delivered the programme from partners, providers (through a survey, focus group and visits) and others. Representative comments from the 48 responses to our provider survey included:

*'SP staff are very approachable and respond rapidly to telephone or email enquiries'.*

*'Surrey SP team works hard, using regular forums, a good website and newsletters. Officers keep us up-to-date and aware of all key developments. An inclusive approach'.*

- 80 Staff reported that they had received appropriate training and we found a number of examples of staff being involved in, and contributed to, Supporting People issues at a regional and national level. For example, one of the contract officers recently wrote a guidance article on procurement and contracts for a national bulletin<sup>9</sup>.
- 81 The team has regular meetings and has established procedures and processes that are not solely dependant on individuals. The team initially worked to an implementation plan<sup>10</sup>. Pending the agreement of the new five-year strategy the team's activities flow from the lead officer's 'personal performance contract', a report on the past six months achievements and the activities planned for the next six months was made to the commissioning body in September 2004.
- 82 Operationally, the Supporting People programme is well administered by the team. After initial problems with IT systems, the processes and monitoring arrangements now operate effectively.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Tendering of SP services' by Andrew Ralph, SITRA bulletin, October 2004.

<sup>10</sup> 'Surrey Supporting People Team Implementation Plan for 2002/03', updated October 2002.

## Five-year strategy

- 83 All Supporting People administering authorities are required to submit a five-year strategy to the ODPM by 31 March 2005 and Surrey is on course to meet this deadline. In developing its strategy, Surrey has taken account of the comments made by the ODPM in the assessment of its shadow strategy; the results of needs mapping undertaken by the research officer and consultants; and, the results of mapping of service provision in Surrey.
- 84 The draft strategy<sup>11</sup> has been developed with help and input from all of the district and borough councils, the PCTs and the probation service. Providers also had an input through forum events. A number of specialist stakeholders were also involved, for example, the Drug Action Team and the Youth Offending Team.
- 85 Service users, and potential service users, were consulted through face to face meetings, questionnaires and via the research projects that were commissioned.
- 86 The work that was completed for the 2002/03 shadow strategy included a comprehensive map of the supply of supported housing services. Some growth in supply has since taken place to start to tackle some of the gaps that were identified.
- 87 Having established a map of supply, the council drew up a plan to assess the level of needs across the county. Since April 2003, the council has used three main methods of carrying out needs mapping work:
- ◆ the appointment of a research officer to gather all the existing research together and to carry out specific research projects;
  - ◆ making links with existing needs mapping partnerships. For example, the 'Valuing people partnership board', the Drug Action Team and the county's own market research project (in collaboration with the Surrey Care Association); and
  - ◆ commissioning research to further inform the strategy. For example, the value (or not) of floating support services; the support needs of socially excluded individuals who appear to fall through the nets of the statutory agencies; and, the needs of BME communities and individuals.
- 88 This mapping work confirmed that there is a need for more services for virtually every client group. The only exception is traditional sheltered housing for older people with a low level of needs, where it is recognised that there is a surplus of provision; the council has begun to discuss ways of addressing this surplus with providers.
- 89 In the draft strategy the council recognises that, within the constraints of a cash limited grant, the council is:

*'..not going to be able to help everyone we would like to help immediately – or even within the five-year timeframe of this strategy. However, our plan for the next five years is to map out a process and timetable whereby funds will gradually be re-distributed in order to meet the strategic objectives endorsed by all our statutory partners'.*

<sup>11</sup> 'Supporting People in Surrey – Surrey Supporting People Strategy 2004/09', draft for consultation December 2004.

- 90 The council plans to do this through a combination of actions:
- ◆ commissioning new services;
  - ◆ re-modelling existing services in cooperation with providers, so they are more effective in meeting strategic priorities;
  - ◆ withdrawing funds from a small number of services that are not strategically relevant; and
  - ◆ re-negotiating contract prices where value for money is not being achieved.
  - ◆ working closely with sheltered housing providers to see if there are ways of re-modelling their services, or re-directing funds to other strategic priorities as schemes are run down.
- 91 In developing the draft five-year strategy, the council re-visited and tested the strategic priorities set by the 2002/03 shadow strategy. Broadly those strategic priorities have been reinforced by the new research undertaken. The five original priorities were:
- ◆ women at risk of domestic violence;
  - ◆ young people and care leavers;
  - ◆ people with multiple and complex needs (often people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with mental health, alcohol or drug needs, a history of offending and challenging behaviour);
  - ◆ frail elderly people (including those with dementia); and
  - ◆ people with learning disabilities.
- 92 Additional priorities have been highlighted by the more recent research:
- ◆ floating support services for people with mental health problems;
  - ◆ an increased demand for accommodation for offenders; and
  - ◆ targeted provision for particular client groups. For example, those with brain acquired injuries or people on the autistic spectrum.
- 93 These priorities have the endorsement of all the Supporting People statutory partners in Surrey.
- 94 In addition to the direct levels of need, there are a number of examples of other learning from the needs mapping research. For example, it was found that most people receiving floating support do not receive support from any other source, and that although physically disabled people do not constitute a large group numerically, there are long waits for suitable accommodation or adaptations. This learning is being fed into future plans and the council will need to work with the borough and district councils to resolve the problem.
- 95 Once the initial five-year strategy is in place it is anticipated that the JMB will play a more strategic role than at present. For example, in the last three years of the strategy there are proposals for countywide floating support, a complex needs service in the east of the county and a domestic violence service for people with complex needs. The strategic planning of these services will be carried out through the JMB.
- 96 The involvement by partners in the development of the strategy includes work to ensure that the 11 borough and district housing strategies align with the Supporting People strategy and that all include targets for the level of supported housing in their areas.

- 97 There has also been particular involvement by the probation service, including further research in collaboration with the Supporting People team. The aim of this research is to provide the foundations for a probation accommodation strategy that will be developed and dovetailed with the Supporting People strategy. This is intended to address concerns over the limited options for housing ex-offenders in Surrey.
- 98 The strategy has been discussed by the JMB and the commissioning body and, at the time of this inspection, had been circulated widely for consultation and was available on the council's Supporting People website. We attended a meeting of the county council's adults and community care select committee, at which the Supporting People lead officer gave a comprehensive presentation on the strategy and answered questions. All providers have been invited to comment on the strategy and the council has used a range of avenues, including providers and Surrey Users Network, to consult with service users. Our provider survey found that 100 per cent of the 48 respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's arrangements for consulting with them on the strategy.
- 99 The council is confident that, following the incorporation of the results of the consultation, the strategy will be endorsed by all 18 statutory partners by the deadline of March 2005. We found this to be a reasonable expectation.
- 100 Implementation of the strategy is linked to, but not wholly dependent on, the availability of funding. The reduction in funding over the next year will restrict plans to meet identified needs, but the strategy will still be instrumental in setting funding priorities and re-modelling current services. It is likely that there will be further de-commissioning of some services, which will also release funding.

### Existing services

- 101 The supply of supported housing services in Surrey has started from a low base. The Supporting people programme has inherited a legacy of a shortage of supported accommodation for all groups, with the exception of sheltered housing, and a low level of floating support services. The county is aware of these shortages, which were also confirmed by the supply and needs mapping work (see 'Five-year strategy' above).
- 102 The ODPM's final financial assessment of the council's initial grant allocation, the 'platinum cut', showed that the client groups which account for the largest funding allocations are older people and people with learning disabilities. This data also showed that there were no specific Supporting People funded services in place for some groups of people. These groups are: older people with mental health problems (although some services for frail older people have since been developed), people with HIV/AIDS, refugees, rough sleepers and travellers.
- 103 There are also low levels of funded services for some other groups, such as offenders and people with drug problems. For example, probation legacy funding from the Probation Accommodation Grants Scheme (PAGS) accounts for only around 0.5 per cent of the Supporting People grant.
- 104 There is also a low level of floating support funded through Supporting People, with just 615 units, compared to the 12,000 units of supported accommodation. Providers do however point out that a range of floating support services continue to be provided by district and borough councils without Supporting People funding – support for people in homelessness temporary accommodation is one example.

- 105 The five-year strategy addresses these deficiencies and there are examples of work which is already underway to address them. For example, although there is only one accommodation service (with nine beds) which has drug users as its primary client group, a new service with 47 units of floating support has been developed. A contract officer sits on the housing sub-group of the Drug Action Team (DAT) and this link has supported the development of the new service.
- 106 When legacy funding was reviewed, unallocated funds totalling £36,000 were identified and redirected to two areas of need: a ready made scheme for offenders, which was able to provide six additional units for £6,000; and £20,000 for a new scheme for offenders who also have drug and alcohol problems.
- 107 The data appendix at the end of this report provides a detailed picture of how Surrey compares to the regional and national averages in terms of provision and costs. These figures show that, overall, Surrey receives a relatively low level of Supporting People grant per head of population (£0.36, compared to the South East average of £0.52 and the national average of £0.70). Unit costs are also lower than the national and regional averages.
- 108 During the course of the inspection we visited nine services as a sample of the range, cost and quality of services provided. We generally found a good quality of service delivered at reasonable costs. There were examples of services that had not yet received service reviews, where some costs did not appear to be appropriate for Supporting People funding – these are commented on elsewhere in this report (see ‘Value for money’ below). However, we found that the Supporting People team has a clear understanding of grant conditions and is working with partners to explain eligibility criteria and address any ineligible costs as part of the service review programme (see ‘Service reviews’ below).
- 109 Through our visits we found a number of positive examples of how the Supporting People team has engaged with service providers. For example, following a visit to a new service for women fleeing domestic violence, we raised a concern over the low take up of places. We found that the Supporting People team was already aware that there had been a problem and that this had been discussed with the provider and the local authority. Referral procedures had been clarified and it was agreed that, if demand remained low, consideration would be given to using some of the properties for other vulnerable clients. The minutes of a meeting with the service provider showed that the issue had been addressed appropriately.

### Services in development

- 110 There are three capital projects currently in development:
- ◆ a large foyer scheme for 42 vulnerable young people. The revenue requirement for this scheme is £170,000 a year, although some of this cost is likely to be met by the county’s children’s services. The need for the scheme was identified in the shadow Supporting People strategy and recent evidence produced by the Leaving Care Team underlines the demand for the service;
  - ◆ a smaller scheme for six people with learning disabilities with a revenue requirement of about £32,000 a year. This scheme was also flagged up in the shadow strategy; and
  - ◆ a scheme for five people with learning disabilities where Housing Corporation funding has recently been invested to improve facilities and create more units. Further discussions need to take place about the strategic relevance of the scheme and the appropriate level of any Supporting People funding.

- 111 We found that an appropriate level of information about these schemes has been taken to the commissioning body and the JMB to enable informed decisions to be made.
- 112 There are ten 'pipeline' schemes in development for which revenue funding has been approved. Funding has been requested for a further two schemes and the council has details of a further 11 schemes for which funding would be desirable, if it becomes available. We found that the client groups served by these schemes are in line with the strategic priorities set by the council.

### **Management of Supporting People grant**

- 113 The council has managed its Supporting People grant prudently and this has placed it in a stronger position to deliver services over the next few years than would otherwise have been the case.
- 114 Surrey received a Supporting People grant of £19,948,094 in 2003/04 and £19,834,001 in 2004/05. Grant levels for 2005/06 were announced at the beginning of December, while the inspection was on site, with Surrey receiving £18,835,049, a reduction of around 5 per cent.
- 115 An underspend of £1.08 million in 2003/04 was carried forward to 2004/05 and there is a projected underspend of £450,000 in 2004/05, giving a total projected underspend of £1.45 million at the end of the year which can be carried forward to 2005/06 and will offset the reduction in grant funding.
- 116 The underspends have primarily been due to three factors: delays in pipeline schemes, some negotiated savings on contracts in 2004/05 and under-occupancy in some long-term services.
- 117 Three new services have been approved in 2004/05, but the council did not seek to spend all of its budget because of the uncertainty over the level of future funding. The underspend that Surrey will carry forward should mean that no existing services are threatened by funding shortfalls in the next year, although the council will have to consider an inflation freeze for existing services and limited future growth.
- 118 There will be a saving of approximately £700,000 in 2005/06 from the withdrawal of support from residential homes (formerly funded by Social Housing Management Grant). The council intends to use this for the continued support of people with learning and physical disabilities.
- 119 The council is taking a well managed and inclusive approach to the reduction in funding, which includes discussions with partners. For example, the issue was discussed at the advisory group meeting which we attended in early December 2004. The commissioning body was due to discuss the issue at its meeting in January 2005.

### **Financial management**

- 120 The Supporting People team has exercised tight financial control over the budget and has robust monitoring and payment systems in place. It has a clear picture of its current and projected end of year financial positions. Providers are satisfied with payment systems and IT systems are generally satisfactory. The council has taken a prudent approach to future financial planning based on risk assessments.

- 121 A total of 251 contracts are in place, covering 334 services with 138 providers. By August 2003, 46 contracts had yet to be signed by providers (but had been signed by the council). At the time of the inspection all providers had interim contracts. A draft 'steady state contract' has been developed, but the council took the view that these contracts could not be priced until the authority's individual grant allocation for 2005/06 was known (this was announced towards the end of the inspection week) and that no new contracts will be for longer than 15 months in the first instance to protect the county's position<sup>12</sup>.
- 122 In 2002 the Department of Health (DoH) introduced a 'fairer charging' policy providing guidance to local authorities on how to set charges for non-residential services. Councils are not required to charge for services but, if they decide to do so, they are expected to follow the principles contained in this guidance.
- 123 Surrey introduced a fairer charging policy in stages from October 2002. There is a clear policy document, last updated in September 2004, and an explanation of fairer charging in leaflets and in a staff newsletter.
- 124 All providers have been given general information about fairer charging, including application forms and guidance notes. Supporting People staff also remind providers of the fairer charging process when answering queries concerning regarding payments. Leaflets have also been provided to Surrey Welfare Rights Unit, who assisted with the training of providers on charging. Take up has been fairly low, although the council has continued to promote the policy to providers and service users.
- 125 In 2004/05 Surrey received around £114,000 less in Supporting People funding than it did the previous year. However, as an underspend of £1.08 million had been carried forward from the previous year, it was still able to offer all service providers an increase in contract prices for inflation in 2004/05. This protected existing providers from having to make their own across the board savings, and has had the effect of fostering positive relationships.
- 126 Surrey had one case in which a significant budget issue arose due to an application for Transitional Housing Benefit not being resolved by April 2003. The claim was not processed pending requests from the local housing benefit department for further evidence. An appeal was made and eventually the claim was backdated. The annual impact on the budget is about £19,000, although half of this was met by the adults and community care service in the first year, as it had been responsible for not supplying the information that had been requested.
- 127 We found a positive response to financial management and payment arrangements from our provider survey, visits and focus group. Findings from the 48 responses to our provider survey included:
- ◆ 100 per cent were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's arrangements for negotiating Supporting People contracts;
  - ◆ 96 per cent were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's provision of information on fairer charging;
  - ◆ 96 per cent were either satisfied or very satisfied with their own understanding of the charging policy;
  - ◆ 93 per cent were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's provision of training on fairer charging;

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<sup>12</sup> 'Update on pipeline schemes', paper to commissioning body, September 2004.

- ◆ 94 per cent were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's payment methods; and
- ◆ 100 per cent were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's monitoring arrangements for service providers.

128 One provider's comment on the Supporting People team's performance in this area was:

*'The best of all our financial arrangements with local government; payments are always on time'.*

- 129 We found evidence of good financial control including: effective monthly budget monitoring; scrutiny of providers' financial status during service reviews; making timely payments to providers; and, monitoring of providers' capacity against contracts and linking this to payments through the computer system.
- 130 The financial system took some months to bed down and some payments had to be estimated during this period and so were not wholly accurate. However, now the system works well. A schedule of payments is now posted on the website and this has significantly improved processing, although hard copies are posted to those providers who still wish to receive them.

## Service reviews

- 131 ODPM guidance requires Administering Authorities (ALAs) to review all services funded through Supporting People within three years, starting from 1 April 2003. ALAs are required to produce a service review timetable together with a rationale to explain how the reviews have been prioritised. Progress with the service review timetable is submitted to the ODPM as part of their regular performance reviews.
- 132 The service review process is central to ensuring that services are effective, provide good value for money and comply with Supporting People grant conditions. Until services are reviewed, contracting decisions that will influence the future shape of services and meet strategic priorities cannot be made.
- 133 The service review programme in Surrey is now on track, following some earlier slippage, with 97 of the 334 service reviews completed at the time of the inspection. The commissioning body receives regular reports on the outcome of reviews. There is a rationale for prioritising reviews and the review process is comprehensive and includes a focus on value for money.

## Implementing the review programme

- 134 Surrey has a large number of services to review. The reviews are carried out by the contract officers working in pairs (a lead and support officer for each review). The council has a schedule of reviews but was struggling to keep abreast of the timetable until a sixth contract officer was recruited in April 2004. The programme is now on track.
- 135 The review programme was constructed following an assessment of risks. The review programme began around six months before ODPM guidance was published, and so a decision was taken to delay the review of any potentially contentious reviews until the guidance was available, to limit the risk of challenges. All high risk services were still reviewed in the first year of the timetable.

- 136 The timetable included many high cost services in the first year, but in general was structured around reviewing services for the same client group and in the same borough/district in the same quarter, where possible. A number of homelessness projects were included in the first year because the council wanted to look at their policies, to see if any could be encouraged (with appropriate training and resources) to accommodate more challenging individuals.
- 137 There is a clear and comprehensive service review process which includes the following elements:
- ◆ initial contact with the provider, sending the documentation for the review including: accreditation information; Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) questionnaire; budget form for completion; request for information on stakeholders and how best to contact service users;
  - ◆ a visit to the provider to explain the requirements and agree timescales;
  - ◆ assessment of the strategic relevance of the service to the Supporting People strategy and other strategies;
  - ◆ assessment of the completed documents and QAF;
  - ◆ financial assessment by finance manager of two years' audited accounts and other financial information;
  - ◆ stakeholders are contacted for their views;
  - ◆ every service receives a validation visit; and
  - ◆ service users are interviewed by trained interviewers, mainly from a panel of adults and community care staff. Interviewers may attend a house meeting but also offer personal interviews.
- 138 Each provider is accredited once as part of the review process, but each of that provider's services is reviewed and receives a validation visit.
- 139 At the end of the process the review is recorded using the ODPM work book. All reviews are checked and signed off by the lead officer and a copy is then sent to the provider. The whole process generally takes from two to four months to complete.
- 140 From our interviews with contract officers and providers, we found that there is a transparency about the new funding regime and the value for money element of the review process. As one officer told us:

*'We are very transparent with providers about Supporting People having moved away from demand-led housing benefit payments, to a capped budget'.*

- 141 We particularly welcome the use of trained, independent interviewers to assess the views of service users. This brings added consistency and objectivity to the process.
- 142 We also found evidence that, in the course of reviews, the council works with providers and offers support to improve services. This includes the use of best practice examples, policy templates and support in completing performance indicators.
- 143 There are some difficulties in obtaining information from larger providers in the required format during service reviews. These providers do not always provide disaggregated staffing and costs information, which makes it difficult to interrogate costs of specific services. The council is working with providers to resolve this.

- 144 Providers can challenge findings and decisions to reconfigure or close a service by appealing to the lead officer and, if not satisfied, then appeal to the commissioning body. They have an opportunity to present a paper outlining why they are unhappy with the outcome of the review. Providers also have the right to use Surrey County Council's formal complaints procedure if appropriate, for example if complaining about the behaviour of staff members when carrying out a review.
- 145 Our provider survey found that 98 per cent of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's processes for service reviews. Providers that we visited and those that attended a focus group meeting were also positive, including some who had faced reductions in funding as a result of reviews. Providers particularly welcomed the training and information that had been provided on the review process.
- 146 There is evidence that service reviews are resulting in the remodelling of some services for the benefit of service users. Examples include a service for young people and another for offenders. Reviews have also identified the need for floating support – which has been taken forward.

## Value for money

- 147 There is evidence of a focus on value for money from the Supporting People team. Value for money is a key element of service reviews and has been highlighted in communications with providers. Outcomes of service reviews are reported to the commissioning body, although there is still work to be done on building the capacity of the commissioning body to take a full role in leading on value for money issues. Services generally have below average costs, but more work needs to be done on benchmarking services on costs and quality.

### Service cost comparisons

- 148 ODPM data<sup>13</sup> shows that the council has only six services with unit costs that exceed £400 per person per week and one that exceeds £600. The highest cost service is an accommodation based scheme whose primary client group is people with a learning disability, but designed for people with epilepsy. The cost is £735.48 per unit per week, but this service is being decommissioned and 12 months' notice has been served.
- 149 The next highest cost service is an adult placement scheme for people with learning disabilities. The unit cost is £581.14 per week, but following a service review this scheme is subject to an action plan which includes revision of costs.
- 150 The lowest cost service is an accommodation based service for older people with support needs, with a cost of £0.93 per unit per week.
- 151 The unit cost of the majority of services is below regional and national averages and the cost per head of the county's population is significantly lower than the average at £0.36 per person, compared to the South East average of £0.52 and the national average of £0.70<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> ODPM Batch 1 data.

<sup>14</sup> ODPM 'platinum cut' data July 2003.

- 152 Surrey's average unit cost for all Supporting People services is £34.68 per week. This is below the South East average of £49.54 and the national average of £47.46. However, these overall costs conceal a higher than average cost for the small number of floating support services, and low costs for accommodation based services.
- 153 Unit costs are, however, higher than the regional and national averages for the following services:
- ◆ women at risk of domestic violence;
  - ◆ people with drug problems;
  - ◆ young people leaving care;
  - ◆ people with physical or sensory disabilities;
  - ◆ frail older people; and
  - ◆ generic services.
- 154 The data appendix at the end of this report provides further information and illustrates the variations in cost and provision of services in Surrey against the regional and national averages.
- 155 A total of eight services had been decommissioned at the time of the inspection as they have been found to be not strategically relevant. Seven of these are registered care homes.

#### **Addressing value for money through service reviews**

- 156 Value for money is being addressed during service reviews (see 'Service reviews' above). The commissioning body receives a summary report following reviews, but this does not include comparative cost information.
- 157 While there appears to be a rigorous approach to value for money during service reviews, and an awareness of value for money issues by the chair of the commissioning body, we did not find evidence that the body challenges the outcome of reviews in terms of value for money. It appears that the body's role has generally been one of endorsing the outcomes of reviews, rather than using information to challenge conclusions. Reports to the commissioning body lack the appropriate level of detail to allow informed decisions to be made. This needs to be developed so that the body has a more robust role. A paper on value for money was prepared for consideration by the JMB and the commissioning body following our inspection.
- 158 The views of service users and stakeholders are also an important indicator of quality and value for money. The reports made to the commissioning body do not include the outcome of the consultation carried out with these groups during service reviews.
- 159 In response to these issues, the council has plans for the commissioning body to receive a paper and consider its approach to monitoring value for money in January 2005.
- 160 There are a number of examples of action taken to achieve value for money following service reviews. For example, one service was re-designated to meet the needs of service users with complex needs; another contract was renegotiated to increase the service level. A further service review led to an increased turnover of service users, resulting in more individuals having access to the service within the terms of the contract.

- 161 As of December 2004, £890,000 of savings had been identified from the original payments to providers, primarily because of notice being served on residential care homes in receipt of Supported Housing Management Grant (SHMG). Negotiations are underway with providers which are likely to lead to further savings of around £100,000, giving a total of £990,000 over a full year.
- 162 Our visits to providers generally found good quality services that appeared to offer value for money. There were, however, a small number where it was not clear that all costs were eligible for Supporting People funding. These services had yet to receive a service review, where this issue should be identified.

### Benchmarking

- 163 Surrey has conducted some benchmarking of services to compare costs and quality. For example, the Supporting People team has set up a benchmarking club for the eight Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) in the county. There has also been benchmarking with other authorities in the South East.
- 164 There is an acknowledgement that benchmarking is an area where further work is required and this is to be discussed by the commissioning body in January 2005.

### User involvement

- 165 There have been reasonable attempts to involve users in the Supporting People programme and in the development of the five-year strategy, but there is room for further development to be driven by the Supporting People team.
- 166 The size of the county and rural nature of some areas has provided a challenge to the council in addressing user involvement. There are some user groups in the county and the Supporting People team has made efforts to contact these and use them as conduits for information and consultation. This is a sensible approach and is likely to be more effective than establishing specific Supporting People user groups. However, these groups do not provide comprehensive coverage of people receiving Supporting People services.
- 167 Groups that have been involved include the Surrey User Network (SUN) which consists of users of the county's adults and community care services, and the Surrey 50+ network. There has also been contact with some client group specific networks, such as a domestic violence forum in east Surrey, and 'Community advocacy' for learning disabilities.
- 168 Other examples of user involvement include:
- ◆ three consultation days held in November 2003 for service users and potential users, followed by feedback and action points being sent to those who attended;
  - ◆ a questionnaire to over 500 members of the Surrey 50+ network to ask them about their future aspirations for supported housing;
  - ◆ preliminary work to identify the supported housing needs of BME groups and individuals in Surrey; and
  - ◆ research into floating support services, included interviews with 17 service users which provided information on what they most value from their support providers.
- 169 The Supporting People team has encouraged providers to involve their own service users through mail outs and through a workshop at the last Supporting People forum. The team is also planning to hold an event to exchange good practice on user involvement between providers.

- 170 The team has made use of specialist advocacy services. For example, it has used advocacy services for people with severe learning disabilities as part of service reviews.
- 171 Service user involvement is well embedded in some service areas, for example in the mental health planning system. Partnership boards for learning disability and physical disability are also examples of user and carer involvement at both county and area level.
- 172 In other areas there is less involvement. There is no representation by service users on the council's young people's strategy group, and an acknowledged need to do more user involvement work with young people in general. There is also a lack of involvement of clients of the probation service in supported housing services.
- 173 The county council's select committee system seeks to actively engage service users, stakeholder groups and the public in its scrutiny role. However, the service user representative was unable to attend the meeting of the adults and community care committee that we observed.
- 174 Service users are not directly involved in the Supporting People governance arrangements. The council's view is that user involvement is ensured in other ways, such as those described above – through events, consultation and via providers. However the council has expressed a willingness to explore ways of more directly involving users in the governance arrangements, while wishing to avoid 'tokenism'.
- 175 We found a very positive response to user involvement from the 48 responses to our provider survey, with 89 per cent of providers either satisfied or very satisfied with arrangements for general consultation with service users about Supporting People. There is also positive engagement with service users as part of the service review process (see 'Service reviews' above). Comments received from providers included:

*'Surrey has been keen to involve all stakeholders and has given user involvement a high priority'.*

*'SP team members frequently attend user group meetings'.*

*'SP team has carried out smaller focus groups as well as larger events, which is helpful as women from refuges will not feel 'safe' taking part in large forums'.*

- 176 We found examples of good practice on our visits to services. For example, a provider for complex needs has a service user group and tenant champions to represent tenants' views, although continuity is difficult due to the short-term nature of the accommodation.

## **Partnership arrangements**

- 177 There is effective partnership working on Supporting People issues. Providers have very positive views on the delivery of the programme and, in particular, the Supporting People team. There is a strong level of engagement with local authorities, and an improving involvement from health services. There is some joint working with neighbouring authorities, although this is an area that needs to be developed.

## Providers

- 178 There has been considerable involvement of, and consultation with, providers throughout the implementation of the programme. Providers have received comprehensive information on the programme in general and the service review process in particular. The positive feedback we received from providers who had received critical service reviews is testimony to the level of engagement and trust between them and the Supporting People team.
- 179 Providers participate through Supporting People fora and training days. Providers are also now being encouraged to participate by using the discussion page on the council's new Supporting People website.
- 180 There have been a number of open days and other events to inform providers of the development of the programme and consult them on the five-year strategy and other issues.
- 181 Our provider survey found that 98 per cent of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's involvement of partners in developing Supporting People services. Below is a selection of representative comments from providers in response to the survey.

*'As a provider we have been given an excellent range of opportunities to contribute, such as through the forums'.*

*'We received help through telephone conversations with the SP team'.*

*'A spirit of partnership and cooperation'.*

*'A number of seminars have been held which have been useful events for sharing information and networking'.*

*'The Supporting People forums are excellent, providing a wealth of information'.*

*'A number of useful training days'.*

*'Very understanding about the problems faced by small providers'.*

*'Our service review was a very positive experience. The SP team were very understanding of our client group' (learning disability).*

*'Provider forums regularly held to keep providers abreast of the SP Programme and associated requirements'.*

- 182 Providers we spoke to in the focus group were unanimous in their praise of the work of the Supporting People team and, in particular, found the staff to be patient, accessible and always ready to help and advise.

## Health and Probation partnerships

- 183 The five PCTs and the probation service are represented on the commissioning body and the JMB. The PCTs are represented by two senior officers, one for the east of the county and one for the west.
- 184 Participation by health and probation services in the commissioning body were initially inconsistent, but have strengthened. There has not been consistent participation from health partners in the JMB and there are currently no representatives in place (see 'Governance of the programme' above).

- 185 The view of probation services is that they have the opportunity to influence decision-making and have constructive relationships with members of the Supporting People team. Probation services have a strong involvement through their position on the Drug Action Team (DAT) executive and are currently working on a strategy to deal with persistent offenders. Links with the district and borough councils and the crime reduction partnerships take place through the community support group. A Supporting People contract officer sits on the housing sub-group of the DAT.
- 186 There are MAPPA<sup>15</sup> arrangements in place between the statutory authorities in the county. These are being reviewed to take account of new legislation and ensure that there is a memo of understanding with all agencies, including housing. The probation service believes that these arrangements are working well in practice.
- 187 Health priorities are clearly linked to the Supporting People programme. For example, recent initiatives to provide for frail older people with mental health problems and people with complex needs assist in meeting the Department of Health's Public Service Agreement target to improve the quality of life and independence of vulnerable older people.
- 188 The 'Mental health accommodation strategy' is an old document and does not incorporate the Supporting People programme. The council acknowledges that this needs to be reviewed and updated as soon as possible, in consultation with the Supporting People team and with borough/district and health partners. Following our feedback on this issue, the council confirmed that the strategy will be updated in the light of new NHS Trust proposals<sup>16</sup>, with Supporting People incorporated into the strategy.
- 189 Teams from the social care and health services have been co-located since 1996 – they work closely together and co-commission mental health services. There are no formal joint commissioning structures in place, but this is seen by the council as a strength rather than a weakness as it 'enables projects to be pursued without being entangled in cumbersome structures and bureaucracy'. It is however anticipated that a new commissioning structure will be in place from April 2005 as part of the arrangements for the new NHS Trust.

### District and borough councils

- 190 There is evidence of effective joint working with, and between, the 11 district and borough councils. The Supporting People team is based within the offices of one of the borough councils; this has helped to forge links with the councils, rather than Supporting People being seen as a purely county council function.
- 191 All 11 districts and boroughs are represented on the JMB and the advisory group. Representation on the commissioning body is through three elected members (see 'Governance of the programme' above). These arrangements are currently working well, although they have yet to be tested by the more difficult decisions that are likely to lie ahead.

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<sup>15</sup> Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). A multi-agency panel that considers the needs of high risk offenders in order to minimise risk on release from prison, this includes appropriate housing and support.

<sup>16</sup> A new county-wide 'Surrey and Borders NHS Partnership Trust' is being formed.

- 192 Commissioning body members believe that the relationships with the districts and boroughs are well managed, even though the governance arrangements are complex. In addition to the involvement through the JMB and advisory group, there are links with the boroughs and districts through regular meetings of the Surrey Chief Housing Officer Group (SCHOG), which is attended by both the Supporting People accountable officer and the lead officer. Some, but not all, boroughs and districts also have their own provider fora.
- 193 Six of the 11 authorities have their own housing stock, while the remaining five have transferred their stock to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The transfer RSLs and the stock-holding authorities are all represented on the SCHOG, together with one of the larger supported housing providers. There is a regular update on Supporting People at the group's bi-monthly meetings. A Supporting People report is also made to the six-monthly Surrey Chief Executives meeting and then to the SLGA.
- 194 The view of the nine local authorities that attended our JMB focus group was that relationships between housing departments in Surrey on supported housing issues have improved significantly since the programme began. An example of these improved links is that a Surrey-wide homelessness strategy is being developed to reflect and supplement the individual strategies of the 11 housing authorities. Other examples of improved relationships involving the housing departments include the 'Extra care housing strategy' work that is taking place.

#### **Cross authority working**

- 195 Surrey participates in the South East Region Implementation Group (SERIG) for Supporting People and hosts its meetings. It is also involved in sub-groups looking at benchmarking and contracting arrangements.
- 196 The council is conscious of the need to dovetail its Supporting People strategy with the emerging Regional Housing Strategy. This is being progressed in collaboration with SERIG.
- 197 The council has also recently met with its cross authority partners (as designated by the ODPM) to discuss cross authority issues. Modest progress has been made, as the council's priority has been to tackle issues across the 11 boroughs and districts within the county. At the time of our inspection, the council was in the process of agreeing a 'Cross authority statement' with its cross authority group colleagues – setting out the group's shared objectives.
- 198 There is recognition from the council that cross authority working is an area that needs further attention and development.

#### **Other partnership working**

- 199 An example of partnership working at a county and local area level is the commissioning of Extra Care housing schemes as an alternative to residential care. The county council has developed an Extra Care strategy with the district and borough councils and the PCTs. We found that this strategy links to the county's older people strategy and Supporting People strategy.
- 200 The Extra Care schemes will require a number of funding streams, including Supporting People. One scheme in development will provide 90 tenancies supported by Supporting People services and domiciliary care services. Primary care services will be on site and there will be a restaurant open to the public.

## Access and customer care

- 201 Access to services is generally good and there is a range of information on Supporting People services for providers and service users. Information is generally of good quality and is available in a variety of formats. The website provides useful information for providers, but less so for service users.
- 202 Although Surrey is a generally well populated and prosperous county, its size and the rural nature of parts of the county present challenges in terms of physical access to services. A number of rural wards are in the 10 per cent most deprived nationally in terms of access to services<sup>17</sup>. In this context, public access to services by telephone or through websites, and access to information materials, are particularly important.
- 203 Corporately, the county has taken steps to address this and is the first county to reach the target for 100 per cent of suitable services being available electronically, with the county's website listed in the top 20 nationally.
- 204 The Supporting People programme has its own website which can be accessed direct at [www.surreysp.org.uk](http://www.surreysp.org.uk) or via the county council's website – the site was launched in June 2004. We found that the site is easily accessible and contains useful information for partners and providers. The content is topical, up-to-date and informative. For example, the site includes information on the recently announced grant funding settlement for 2005/06; the draft five-year strategy; examples of good practice; information on provider payments; and, information on training courses and events.
- 205 Comments on the website and information materials from our provider survey included:

*'Regular newsletters and a good website'.*

*'The website is an excellent source of information'.*

*'Good website and regular information'.*

- 206 However, the website does not currently contain information aimed at service users or their carers/advocates, although the project plan for the site includes consultation with users and carers to assess how it can meet their needs.
- 207 The council has produced a range of printed materials for service users, which we found to be clear and accessible. These include: information on how to complain or make suggestions; a leaflet on the adults and community care medium-term strategy; a newsletter and leaflet covering 'fairer charging' and a draft 'service review' leaflet. Our provider survey found that 96 per cent of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the council's provision of information about Supporting People for service users.
- 208 Clear service standards are set out in the 'Better care: Higher Standards in Surrey 2004' charter, which includes a directory of contact details. A 12-page summary of the charter is also available. Supporting People is not specifically mentioned in the charter, although supported housing services and general contact details are included. There is not, however, a comprehensive directory of services aimed at service users.

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<sup>17</sup> ODPM indices of deprivation.

- 209 Annual Supporting People reports are provided for health and probation services, and regular bulletins are sent to the council's adults and community care staff. There are also regular newsletters for providers.
- 210 We carried out a 'mystery shopping' exercise to test access to information and advice by telephone. We found that service users are able to access contact details for services via Surrey County Council's website. Our telephone reality checks (posing as service users) were generally responded to with clear information and explanations of the services available and who to contact. Frontline staff that we telephoned, with one exception, were helpful, friendly and informative. Most initial queries were routed to the most appropriate officer. Staff offered to return calls with further information, and did so quickly.
- 211 The one exception was the response to a call made to the council's Contact Centre, which was uninformative and used excessive jargon. This may indicate a wider training need, or the need for clearer information sources to be available to frontline staff.
- 212 We looked at the Supporting People file of complaints received concerning service providers – a total of 11 complaints relating to eight providers. The complaints appeared to be appropriately dealt with, but there was no record of the satisfaction or otherwise of the complainant with the outcome.

## Diversity

- 213 Work on addressing the needs of diverse communities and groups is still at an early stage. Research to assess needs has been carried out, but an action plan had not been developed at the time of the inspection (although one has since been drafted). The Supporting People team is aware of diversity issues and is addressing these, particularly through service reviews, but the response to diversity issues from local authorities and providers is patchy.
- 214 We found that diversity issues are not fully embraced at a corporate level, particularly in terms of race. There was a view that this is seen as a minor issue due to the low level of non-white groups in the county. The county council provides equal opportunities training, but this is not compulsory for staff and not all Supporting People staff have attended.
- 215 The BME population in Surrey has increased by 45 per cent since the 1991 Census and is now estimated to account for more than 5 per cent of the population, or over 50,000 people. The largest ethnic group is from India; the second largest group from Pakistan and the third largest from China/Hong Kong. According to the 2001 Census, the boroughs of Woking and Epsom and Ewell both have non-white populations that account for almost 9 per cent of the population.
- 216 The council has employed a consultant to carry out research to identify the level of unmet supported housing needs of people from BME groups in Surrey. The fieldwork is now complete and a draft report was produced in December 2004, but the results have yet to be analysed by the council, although there are examples of learning from the preliminary report, such as the need to advertise services through routes such as community newspapers rather than council offices. Following our inspection, an action plan has been drawn up and was endorsed by the JMB at its meeting in January 2005.
- 217 The researchers found a 'disappointingly' low level of knowledge from borough and district councils about the BME populations within their boundaries. Some of the councils have carried out or are carrying out research, and best practice from this could usefully be shared across the county.

- 218 In order to consult with the highly scattered BME communities across Surrey, the researchers identified 54 groups and organisations representing or working with ethnic minority communities or religious minorities. This bank of organisations will prove useful to the council in its future work in this area.
- 219 Surrey also has a large population of travellers (including Gypsies) – the fourth highest in the UK. The BME research project looked at their support needs and found that Surrey has a good level of provision and support in terms of dedicated sites and the number of officers from local authorities working with the travelling communities. The research found that, while the BME community highlighted the needs of older people with support needs and people with mental health problems, the needs most commonly highlighted in the traveller community were those of offenders or people at risk of offending, and women at risk of domestic violence. The council sees the BME research as a first step; it is now planned to set up a BME consultative forum to inform the council's response.
- 220 Although this research is welcome, the response to the needs of other minority and vulnerable groups is limited and at an early stage. For example, there are currently no specific Supporting People funded services in place for people with HIV/AIDS, refugees and travellers.
- 221 We found that information for the public is available in a range of languages and accessible formats. Materials carry straplines in six community languages and are available in large print, on tape or in other languages.
- 222 The Supporting People team arranged for 'diversity and inclusion' training to be offered to all providers, through specialist trainers, with around 40 attending. However, we found a lack of awareness of cultural issues on one provider visit. This provider was also unable to offer a choice of male or female support worker, which can cause difficulties for some service users.
- 223 We found a generally higher level of awareness from the authorities and providers in areas with higher BME populations. One authority has recently appointed a Punjabi speaking older people's support worker.
- 224 However, there are also examples of services which do not appear to be accessed by their local minority communities. There is evidence that this is being identified and addressed during service reviews, but it is an issue that the Supporting People team needs to continue to monitor and tackle.
- 225 A quarter of providers do not currently monitor by ethnicity. Those that are particularly resistant include almshouses and sheltered schemes for older people. Access to services is monitored by the Supporting People team through client record form returns, but these are not completed by sheltered providers as yet. The council is aware of these issues and plans to address them through the service reviews, although the majority of almshouse and smaller sheltered providers are not due to be reviewed until the latter stage of the programme.

## **Outcomes for service users**

- 226 The Supporting People programme in Surrey is delivering positive changes to a number of the services it funds and, through this, to service users. Service users that we spoke to were positive about their service providers. However, this is set against a low level of provision for most client groups, although the council is working to maximise the use of its available funding.

- 227 Visits to services and meetings with service users during the inspection showed that most people place a high value on the support that they receive and some new services have been established, although for many there have not been discernible changes over the past year. The views of service users we visited included:
- ◆ users of a floating support scheme for people with learning difficulties were happy with the services they received and praised their support worker: ‘if you have a problem you can contact the organisation and they will come and help you’; and
  - ◆ another scheme visited is achieving good short-term outcomes for service users, and has increased its turnover of clients significantly over recent years, by enabling them to achieve greater independence within the community.
- 228 The programme is also seeking to improve outcomes for service users by identifying the gap in provision for floating support, and addressing this through new services that have been commissioned and through the draft five-year plan.
- 229 We found from our visits and interviews that a significant number of service users have not yet received support plans – contrary to the requirements of Supporting People. The absence of support plans is picked up at service reviews, as these are required to meet the minimum standards of the QAF. The council has acknowledged that it needs to do more to highlight the need for all providers to have support plans in place and intends to do this via its provider newsletter and website.
- 230 We found instances of some services appearing to provide a limited level of support through Supporting People funding and inappropriately using funding to pay for housing management work. However, this should be tested and addressed during service reviews and until reviews have taken place it is difficult to evidence this.
- 231 Unallocated legacy funding was redirected to meet the needs of service users in priority areas. For example, £20,000 was used to provide a scheme for offenders who also have drug and alcohol problems. A positive outcome for residents is that they can remain in this scheme until ready to move on, rather than when their period of probation supervision has finished. The RSL provider has developed its contacts with the local prisons and improved referral arrangements for prisoners completing sentences.
- 232 The need for more accommodation for offenders and people with complex needs is highlighted in the draft five-year strategy. This is to address the current difficulty in placing offenders. Of 246 offenders referred for supported accommodation over a recent six-month period, 41 were rejected by every provider and only eight were eventually accepted. To address this, accessibility of schemes is discussed at service reviews and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are to be drawn-up to accompany new contracts.
- 233 Some case studies of users receiving Supporting People funding in Surrey are listed below.

### Case Study 1

A housing trust is providing a homelessness support service (funded by Supporting People and housing management) which provides a good example of joint agency working. The service has negotiated with the local Primary Care Trust for a health visitor to make a weekly visit to temporary accommodation to ensure that the children of homeless parents have access to regular healthcare checks. The homelessness service has also developed very good links with the local community mental health team.

### Case Study 2

Mr S, aged 75 years of age, was a tenant in a traditional sheltered housing scheme, before going into hospital with a fractured femur. He was transferred to a hospital specialising in the rehabilitation of older people. Despite intensive rehabilitation, it was decided that Mr S could not return to his sheltered housing flat, and a residential care placement was sought.

After a brief period in the residential care home, Mr S's condition deteriorated, including confusion and decreased mobility. It was around this time that an enhanced Extra Care service was launched at an Extra Care scheme. Following an assessment of Mr S's needs, it was agreed that he would be transferred to this service.

Initially, he required intensive 24-hour support, but slowly and with determination, Mr S regained his independent living skills, including becoming mobile, walking well with the aid of a stick and able to do his own local shopping. He enjoyed several months living in the Extra Care scheme before, regretfully, suffering a short illness and passing away.

Mr S is an example of how social care, health and housing can work together in providing care support to frail older people. His case demonstrates that caring for frail older people can be achieved in a supported environment, where agencies work together in ensuring that the tenants' optimum level of independent living skills are rehabilitated and maintained, enabling them to have a good quality of life.

## Summary

- 234 We have assessed the Supporting People service provided by Surrey County Council to be a good, two-star service. The council has successfully implemented and delivered the programme during the first 20 months. The necessary governance structures were set up at an early stage and these are working well.
- 235 The delivery of the programme by the Supporting People team has been strong, with robust financial arrangements, information provision and partnership working. The involvement of the borough and district councils has been a particular strength.
- 236 There is a comprehensive and objective service review process. The programme of reviews is on track and resulting in improved value for money and improvements for service users.
- 237 The draft five-year strategy is based on thorough research and has set priorities for future development of services which the council is beginning to address. Some new services have been developed and others restructured following service reviews.

- 238 However, the governance arrangements do not provide for regular involvement by service users or non-statutory providers and there has been a lack of consistent involvement from health services – particularly in the JMB. There is also a need for the commissioning body to take a more proactive approach to scrutinising the costs and value for money of services.
- 239 The supply of Supporting People services has started from a low base. There is a shortage of supported accommodation for all groups, with the exception of sheltered housing, and a low level of floating support services.
- 240 Work on addressing the needs of diverse communities and groups is at an early stage. Research has been carried out, but an action plan has not yet been developed.
- 241 There has been some joint working with neighbouring authorities, but this is an area that needs to be developed.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

### What is the evidence of service improvement?

- 242 The council has effectively implemented and delivered the early stages of the Supporting People programme. This has been supported by governance arrangements that were set up at an early stage and by corporate support for the programme. Some early actions have been taken to decommission and reconfigure existing services, and to develop new services, although some pipeline services have been slow in coming to fruition.
- 243 The Supporting People team quickly established procedures for making payments to providers and carrying out service reviews. This enabled the team to address problems at an early stage, such as IT processes for payments, and to now provide an efficient service to providers, as confirmed by our survey and focus group (see 'Partnership arrangements' above).
- 244 The programme of service reviews is now on track, following some earlier slippage, and has been used to improve the quality of the services being delivered and to gain further understanding of what is needed in future.
- 245 The provision of information to providers and partners, and the level of consultation with them have been particular strengths. However, more could be done to provide information to service users and to involve them in consultation.
- 246 The introduction of the Surrey Supporting People website in 2004 has improved communication and is welcomed by the providers. The project plan for the site includes consultation with users and carers to assess how it can better meet their needs.
- 247 Positive relationships have developed between providers, district and borough councils and the Supporting People team. Clear messages have been sent to providers about expectations around quality and costs.
- 248 The programme has also delivered discernible benefits for groups of service users, particularly through service reviews, and this should grow as the review programme progresses.
- 249 The Supporting People programme has inherited a low level of service provision for all but one client group when compared to needs. The programme has taken some steps towards developing new services and re-engineering existing ones, but the development of some pipeline schemes has been slow, with allocated but unused funding likely to be carried forward for a second successive year. However, the draft five-year plan sets out the priority areas and plans for service development.
- 250 There are a number of examples of learning from other organisations, and the service has taken the lead on sharing its own learning and expertise on a number of issues.
- 251 The council, corporately, has a good track record of responding positively to inspections and taking action to address weaknesses. This is also true of the social care services.<sup>18</sup> The council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating was 'Good' in 2002, 2003 and again in December 2004.

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<sup>18</sup> Annual review meeting letter, 2003.

## How good are the current improvement plans?

- 252 The future priorities for the Supporting People programme are clearly set out in the draft five-year strategy. The priorities for the programme and the Supporting People team priorities have been set firstly by the 2002/03 shadow strategy and an implementation plan<sup>19</sup>.
- 253 The shadow strategy, which was rated as ‘good’ by the ODPM, set out the council’s vision for Supporting People as:
- ◆ to increase the supply of housing related support services for vulnerable people living in Surrey;
  - ◆ to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to enable people to live as independent and fulfilled lives as possible within their communities; and
  - ◆ to continue work to map hitherto unmet needs for housing related support, and to use this evidence to seek the resources to meet these needs.
- 254 During the intervening period between the shadow strategy for 2002/03 and the new strategy in 2005, priorities and targets are also set through the lead officer’s ‘personal performance contract’ which is then cascaded down to the rest of the Supporting People team. These contracts specify the key tasks that must be undertaken, success measures, completion dates and commentary on progress. We found these performance contracts to address the key current issues and to be fit for purpose.
- 255 We also looked at the way in which strategy development is being addressed through the council’s corporate strategies and plans.
- 256 Surrey’s corporate plan has a vision ‘To make Surrey a better place’ with six themes: to learn and develop, to live and do business, to travel, where vulnerable people are more independent, where people feel safe and where everybody matters. The plan contains a number of social care targets.
- 257 Since November 2002, the Surrey Strategic Partnership, led by the council, has conducted consultation to develop ‘Surrey 2020’– to form the context for a community strategy. The vision for this strategy includes:

*‘A county where people are concerned about the well-being of the community as a whole, ensuring that vulnerable and less privileged individuals are supported and that the rights of minority groups are respected’.*

- 258 A medium-term strategy for adults and community care services (2002/05) is in place. This has six main strands: health and social care, social care and housing, partnerships, making full use of the power of Surrey, quality and value for money and, an open service.
- 259 We found that this strategy drives the agenda for adults and community care services in Surrey. There are clear links between the Supporting People programme and the medium-term strategy, in particular, via the accountable officer who, as the executive director of adults and community care, was responsible for developing the strategy and now oversees its implementation.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Surrey Supporting People Team Implementation Plan for 2002/03’, updated October 2002.

- 260 The new five-year Supporting People strategy will be the improvement plan for Supporting People services in the county. We found that there has already been significant involvement of partners and providers in drafting the strategy, and a formal consultation period is now underway. To date there has been a high level of agreement between partners on the scope, content and priorities of the strategy. In our view the draft five-year strategy is comprehensive and is on schedule to be published by March 2005.
- 261 We found that the draft strategy does address the areas of weakness in supply of services identified in the earlier sections of this report. The draft also includes arrangements for monitoring and review of the strategy. The commissioning body will be asked to endorse an annual plan each year and will review progress against the five-year strategy and annual plan every six months, noting the effect of re-distribution of funds and whether desired outcomes are being achieved. We consider these arrangements to be satisfactory.
- 262 Relationships between the county and the borough/district housing departments on supported housing issues have improved significantly since the programme began. One example of this is the development of a Surrey-wide homelessness strategy to reflect and supplement the strategies of the 11 housing authorities.
- 263 There is currently no accommodation strategy in place for probation services, which undermines future provision of accommodation for offenders. The probation service is aware of the need for this and is looking to continue to fund a role of specialist housing worker to work on accommodation issues. The Supporting People team is working with probation to address these issues.
- 264 The council has plans to strengthen service-user involvement in the Supporting People programme. For example, it is planning to strengthen its links with the 'People with disabilities empowerment boards' in Surrey and to develop the Supporting People website to make it accessible for service users.

## **Will improvements be delivered?**

- 265 There is ownership and leadership of the programme at a senior level and strong capacity to deliver the programme and improvements from the lead officer and Supporting People team. Leadership of the commissioning body is also strong. There is a track record of delivering the programme to date, and the draft future plans are based on thorough research of housing support needs.
- 266 However, the level of financial resources available is unlikely to enable all of the ambitions within the draft five-year plan to be met, and an assessment of the implications of the recently announced reduction in future funding is being made. There is a perception among some councillors and officers that the county has been unfairly penalised by the future funding formula for Supporting People grant.
- 267 The service review programme and the visits that we made to services during the inspection suggest that there is scope for further savings, which can then be re-invested in services. The reduction in future funding highlights the need for the team to continue to make robust assessments of the strategic relevance of existing services and their value for money.
- 268 There is clarity among officers and most of those involved in the governance arrangements about roles, responsibilities and accountability. However, we found a lack of clarity among some members of the commissioning body concerning their roles. The council has acknowledged this and agreed to address it.

- 269 The governance arrangements have generally operated well to date, but it is unclear how providers (other than the statutory partners) and service users can have consistent input into these arrangements.
- 270 The JMB has been a largely reactive body to date as it has been addressing implementation. It now needs to develop a more strategic role and become more of a driver for improvement. There is also a need for the commissioning body to take a more proactive approach to assessing the value for money provided by services and challenging the costs of services.
- 271 Partnerships with statutory partners, providers and others are a particular strength and should pay dividends as the council tackles the more difficult decisions that lie ahead. There has also been involvement of service users, but this is an area that requires further development (see 'User involvement' earlier in this report).
- 272 In order to ensure that the five-year strategy is delivered, there first needs to be agreement between the council and its partners on the key priorities. To date there has been a high level of agreement. The strategy will now be reviewed with partners in the light of the reduction in future funding.
- 273 There are effective performance management arrangements in place to ensure the achievement of objectives. Performance management within Surrey has been externally recognised as a strength in Adults and Community Care services. Within the Supporting People programme there are clear arrangements for monitoring and reporting performance, including reports to the commissioning body.
- 274 The council invested in the Supporting People team by recruiting staff on competitive pay scales. This has been rewarded in terms of skills, capacity and stability. The team has worked hard to deliver the programme, particularly in carrying out service reviews. There is adequate support and training available for staff and the team has the capacity to continue to deliver improvements to the programme.
- 275 Financial monitoring and control by the Supporting People team is strong and regular budget reports are made to the commissioning body. Payments to providers are made on time and support and training is provided on financial issues if necessary.
- 276 There is a general lack of capacity in the social care market in Surrey, as it can be difficult to recruit home care staff due to high local wages and low unemployment. This is replicated in the supported housing market to a degree, but not across the board. It is an issue that the Supporting People team is aware of, and is monitoring through performance indicators.
- 277 Our interviews and the documents received show that corporate ownership of the programme in Surrey is strong and that Supporting People issues have been reported appropriately, although a large amount of the accountability for the programme has rested with the lead officer.

- 278 We found from observation of the adults and community care select committee that councillors engaged positively with the debate on Supporting People and demonstrated a commitment to partnership working. The strength of corporate support has also been emphasised by CSCI, which has commented that Surrey demonstrates ‘strong councillor and corporate commitment to providing good quality social care and to devolving operational decision-making to frontline teams’<sup>20</sup>.
- 279 The county council has a portfolio holder with housing as part of their remit. This has contributed to housing issues in general achieving a higher profile within the council.
- 280 As corporate champion for Supporting People, the accountable officer has worked to integrate the programme with the county’s wider agenda. The Supporting People team also seek his support in taking forward sensitive issues which might adversely impact upon partnership working, for example, key financial decisions or procurement plans.

## Summary

- 281 Overall, we judge that Surrey County Council has ‘excellent’ prospects for delivering further improvements in the delivery of its Supporting People programme.
- 282 The council has effectively implemented and delivered the early stages of the Supporting People programme and there is also a wider corporate track record of delivering improvements. There is corporate leadership of, and commitment to, the programme.
- 283 There is a strong capacity to deliver the programme and improvements from the lead officer and the Supporting People team. There is clarity about roles, responsibilities and accountability. The team has established positive relationships with service providers, district and borough councils and other partners.
- 284 There are effective performance management systems in place, both corporately and within the Supporting People programme, including reporting arrangements to the commissioning body.
- 285 The council has shown a willingness to learn from other organisations, and has taken the lead on sharing its own learning and expertise.
- 286 The programme of service reviews has demonstrated that it is delivering improvements to the scope, quality and value for money of services.
- 287 The future priorities for the programme are clearly set out in the draft five-year strategy, which has been developed with partners and is based on thorough research of housing support needs.
- 288 However, there is a lack of consistent involvement of service users and non-statutory providers in the governance arrangements, and inconsistent involvement of health service partners.

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<sup>20</sup> Annual review meeting letter 2003.

## Appendices

The purpose of an inspection is to make two judgements. The first is how good is the service being inspected? The second is what are the prospects for improvement? We carried out a range of activities to enable us to reach our judgements.

### Documents reviewed

Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. These included:

- ◆ self-assessment by the authority;
- ◆ supporting People Shadow Strategy;
- ◆ draft Supporting People five-year strategy;
- ◆ service review timetable and reports from completed reviews;
- ◆ Corporate Plan;
- ◆ Joint Review Position Statement;
- ◆ minutes of the commissioning body, Joint Management Board and cabinet meetings;
- ◆ Terms of Reference for the commissioning body and Memorandum of Understanding;
- ◆ user leaflets relating to Supporting People;
- ◆ newsletters;
- ◆ performance management information;
- ◆ housing and homelessness strategies; and
- ◆ financial reports and ODPM data.

### Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. We also followed up on issues relating to the management of the review and the improvements flowing from it. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ visits to a range of services provided as part with Supporting People grant;
- ◆ observation of commissioning body, adults and community care select committee and advisory group meetings;
- ◆ mystery shopping telephone calls;
- ◆ review of complaint files;
- ◆ observation of IT systems and work processes;
- ◆ focus group with providers from a range of services;
- ◆ provider focus group on offender issues; and
- ◆ focus group with representatives from district and borough councils who attend the Joint Management Board.

## List of people interviewed

We met a range of people involved with the service.

Alan Adams	Executive director of A&CC and Accountable officer
Andrea Cannon	Lead officer for Supporting People
Andrew Ralph	Contracts officer, Supporting People team
Anita Parker	Finance manager, Supporting People team
Colin Hughes	Contracts officer, Supporting People team
David Munro	Exec. member for A&CC and chair of commissioning body
Diane Woods	East Surrey PCT
Dina Bouwmeester	Contracts officer, Supporting People team
Donal Hegarty	Senior operational manager, Mental health services
Hannah Philpott	Contracts officer, Supporting People team
Julie Cook	Chair of Joint Management Board
Kay McKay	Director of planning and redesign, North Surrey PCT
Kevin Hetherington	Head of housing, Reigate and Banstead District Council
Kim Rippet	Housing needs manager, Guildford Borough Council
Liz Alvey	Extra care project manager
Liz Ball	Director of operations, probation service
Mike Lockwood	Chief executive of Elmbridge Borough Council
Oliver Paul	Drug action team
Peter Floyd	Contracts officer, Supporting People team
Tamsy Baker	Councillor, Guildford Borough Council
Tim Crowther	Councillor, Elmbridge Borough Council

## Demographic information

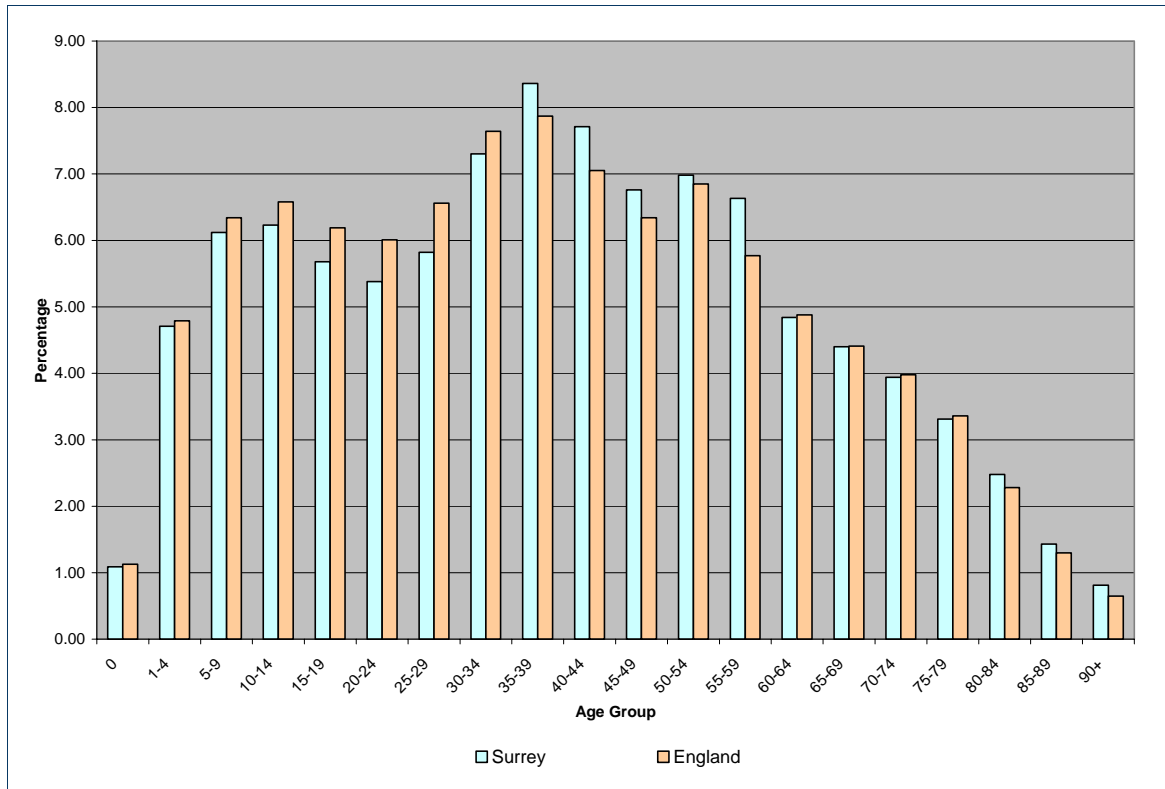
This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting People, comparing the council with England.

Measure	Surrey	England
Population (mid-2002)	1,059,900	-
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2002)	20.41	16.41
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than white – British 2002)	10.66	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate April 2004)	1	2.4
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) <sup>21</sup>	Spelthorne (296)	-

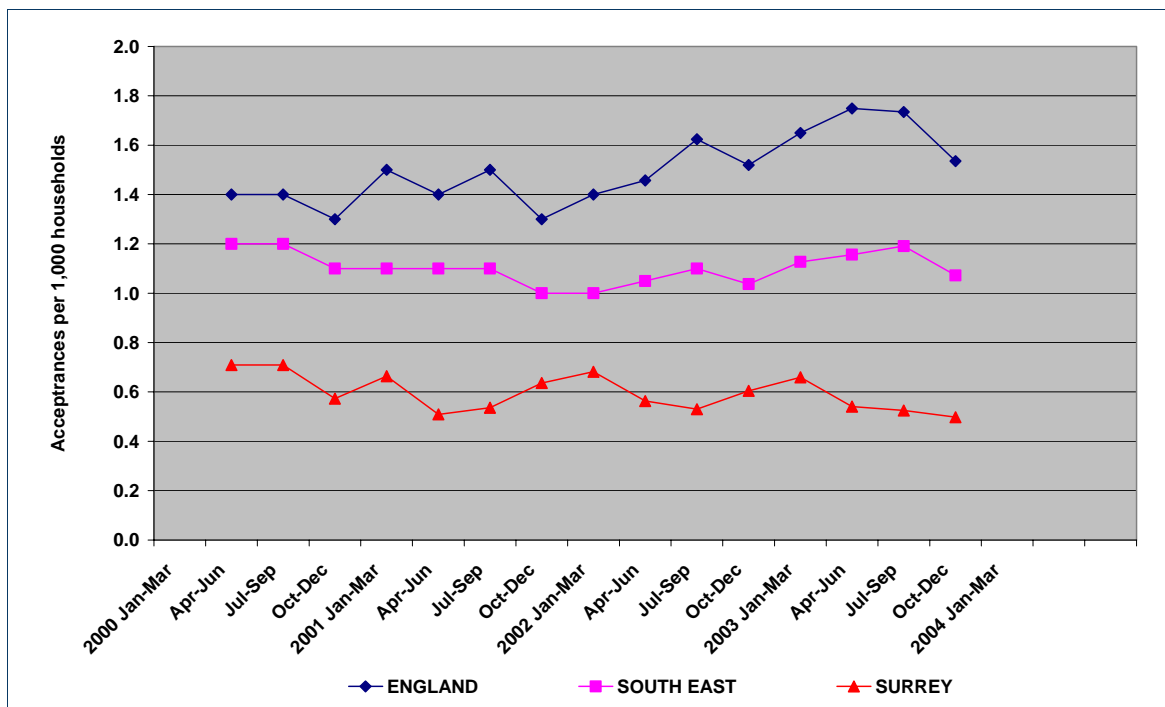
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<sup>21</sup> Deprivation Index 2004, average ward score for the authority.

**Percentage of the population in each age group compared with England**



**Households accepted as homeless between 1999 and 2003 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)**



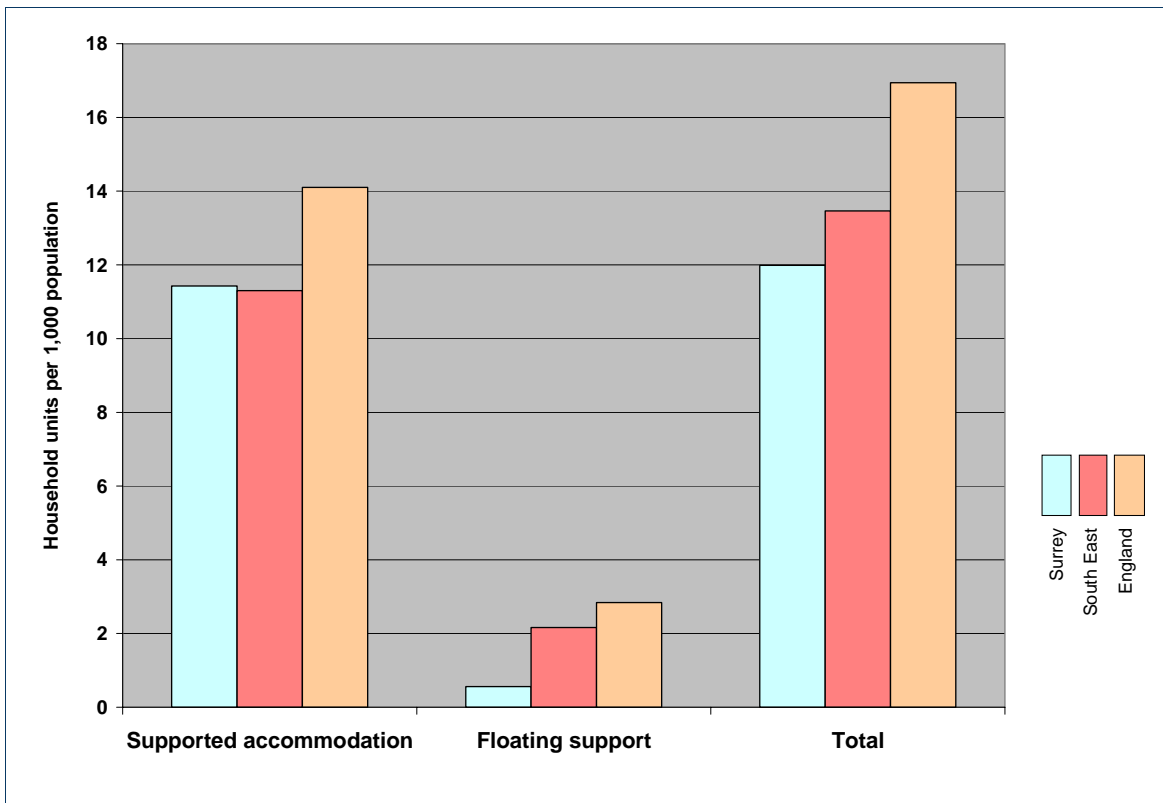
## Performance information

This section highlights strong and weak areas of the council's performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements:

- ◆ data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
- ◆ Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores;
- ◆ star ratings for social services;
- ◆ Performance Assessment Framework indicators for social services; and
- ◆ relevant Best Value Performance Indicators.

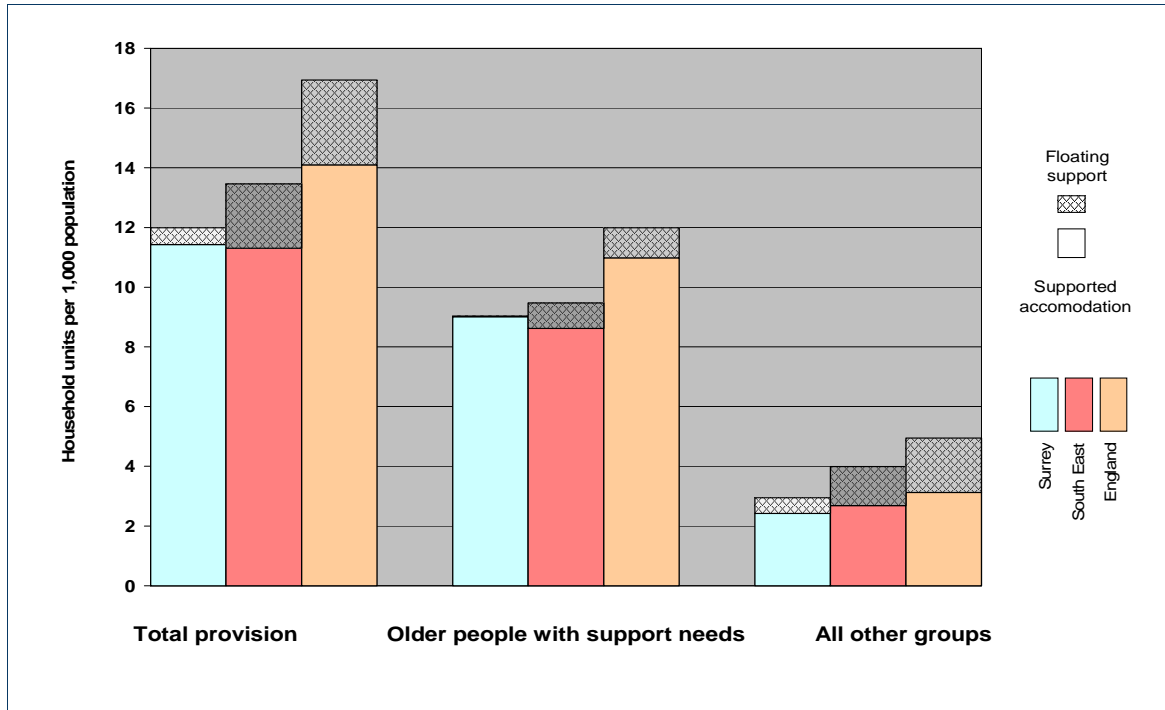
### Supporting People data

#### Total service provision funded through Supporting People<sup>22</sup>

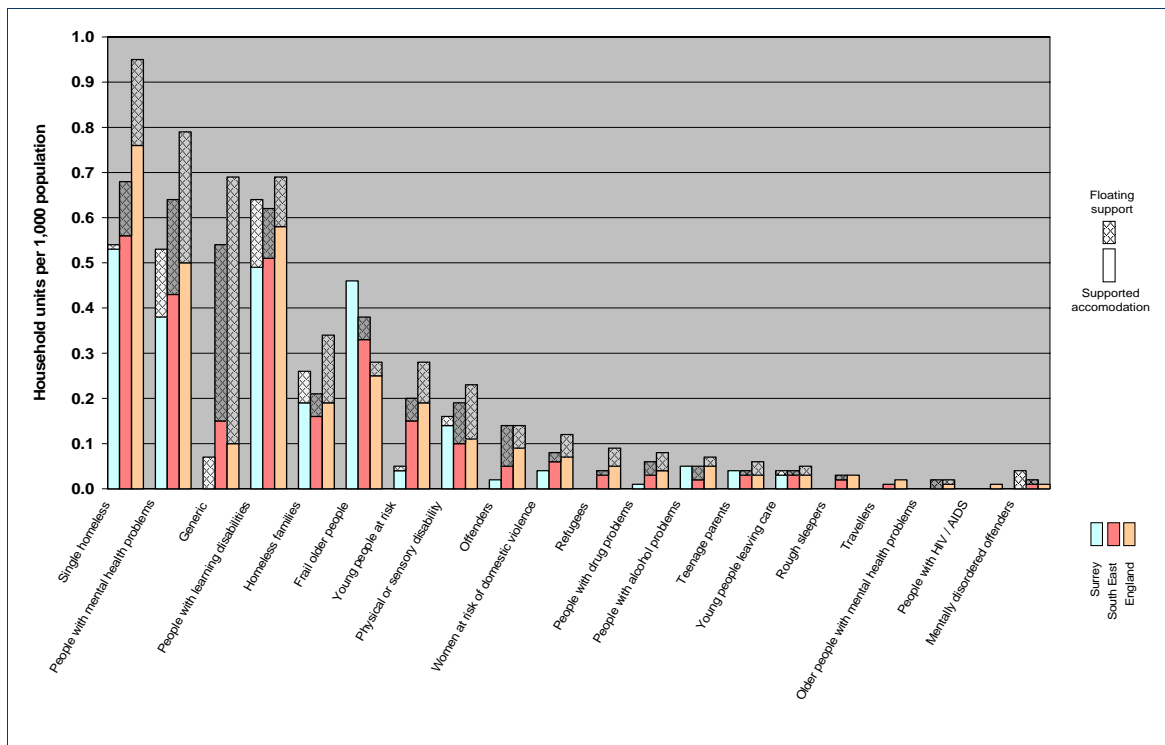


<sup>22</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

### Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England<sup>23</sup>



### Services for other groups compared with the region and England<sup>24</sup>



<sup>23</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Funding for Supporting People**

Surrey	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Final Supporting People grant	£ 19,913,094	£ 19,834,001 <sup>25</sup>	£ 18,835,049
Pipeline allocation	£ 360,725	£ 704,915	£ -
Administration grant	£ 745,039	£ 710,714	£ 568,571

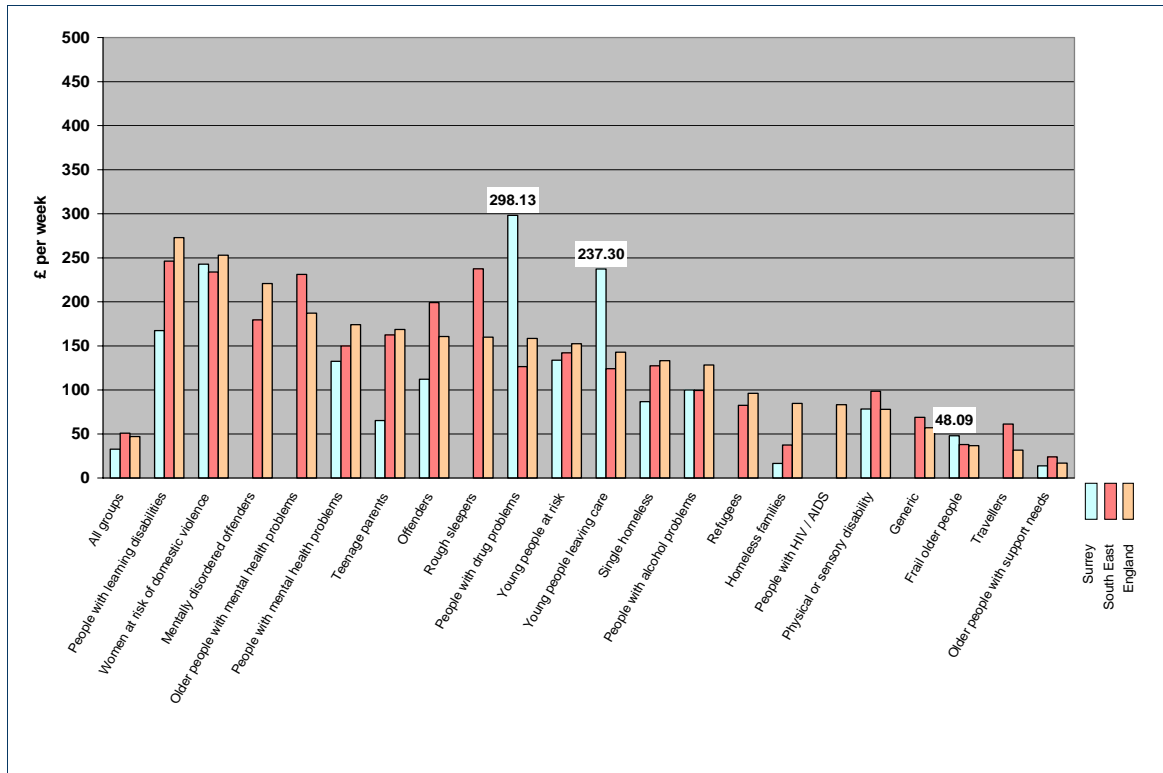
**Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2004/05 (£ per week)**

	Per head of population	Per unit	Per unit excluding community alarms	Per unit excluding community alarms and sheltered housing
Surrey	£ 0.36	£ 23.28	£ 25.87	£ 50.38
South East	£ 0.52	£ 24.85	£ 32.20	£ 57.44
England	£ 0.71	£ 28.16	£ 34.51	£ 61.08

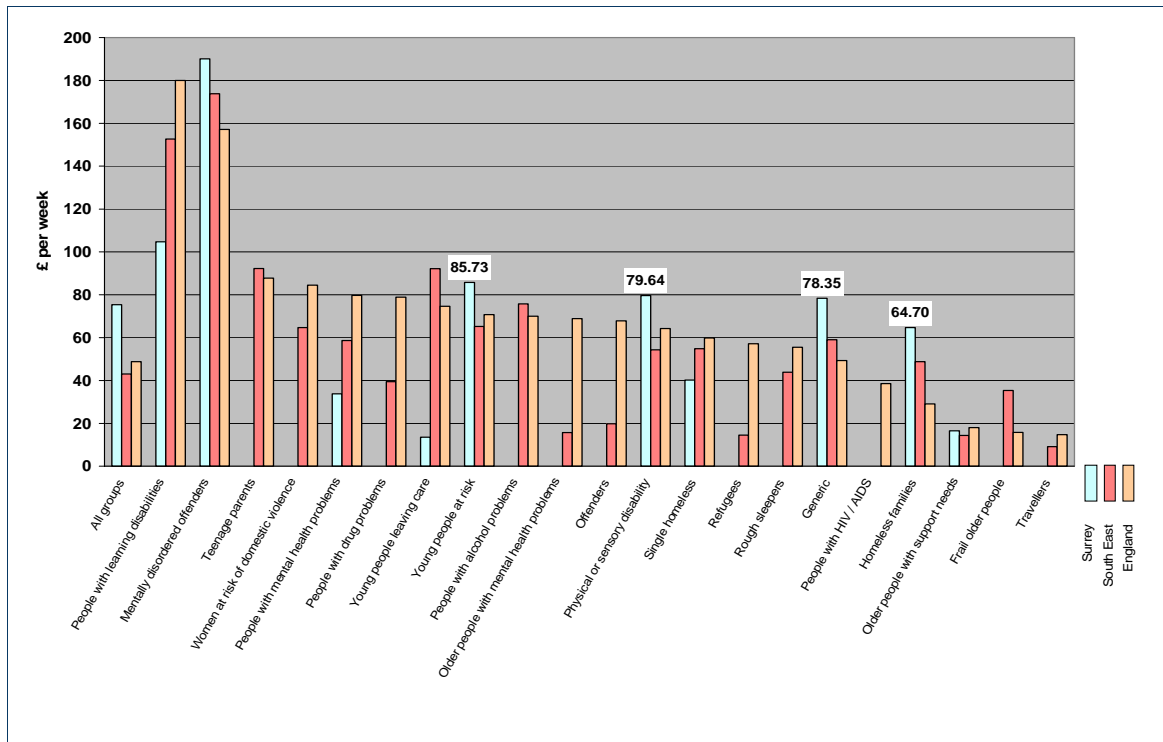
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<sup>25</sup> This includes a £20,000 award made after the initial allocation of £19,814,001.

### Unit costs of supported accommodation compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent) <sup>26</sup>

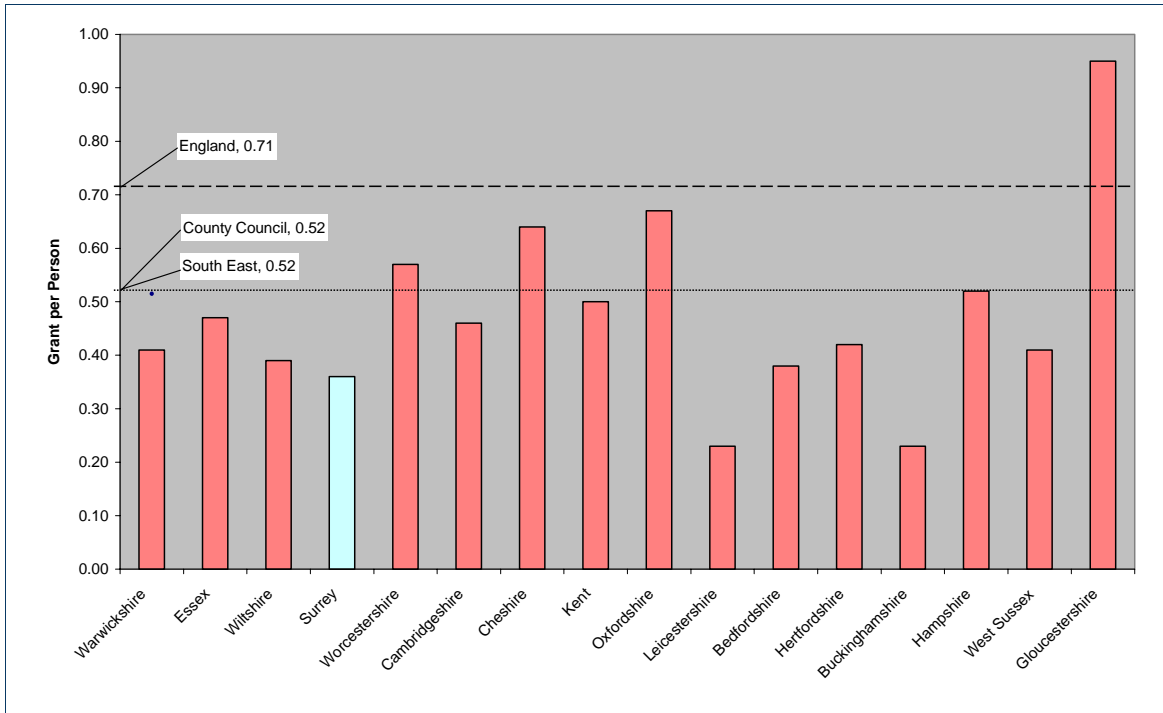


### Unit costs of floating support services compared with the region and England (labels show costs in the highest 25 per cent)

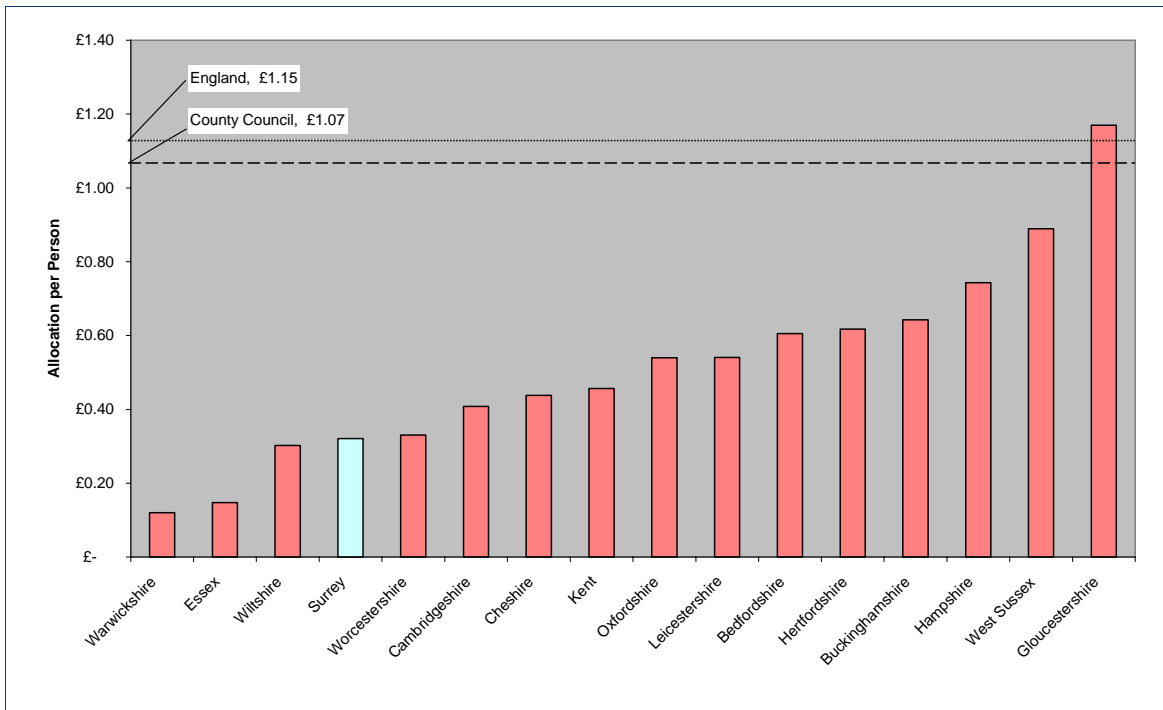


<sup>26</sup> Source: Platinum cut data, ODPM November 2003. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours<sup>27</sup>, all county councils and all English councils (2004/05)**

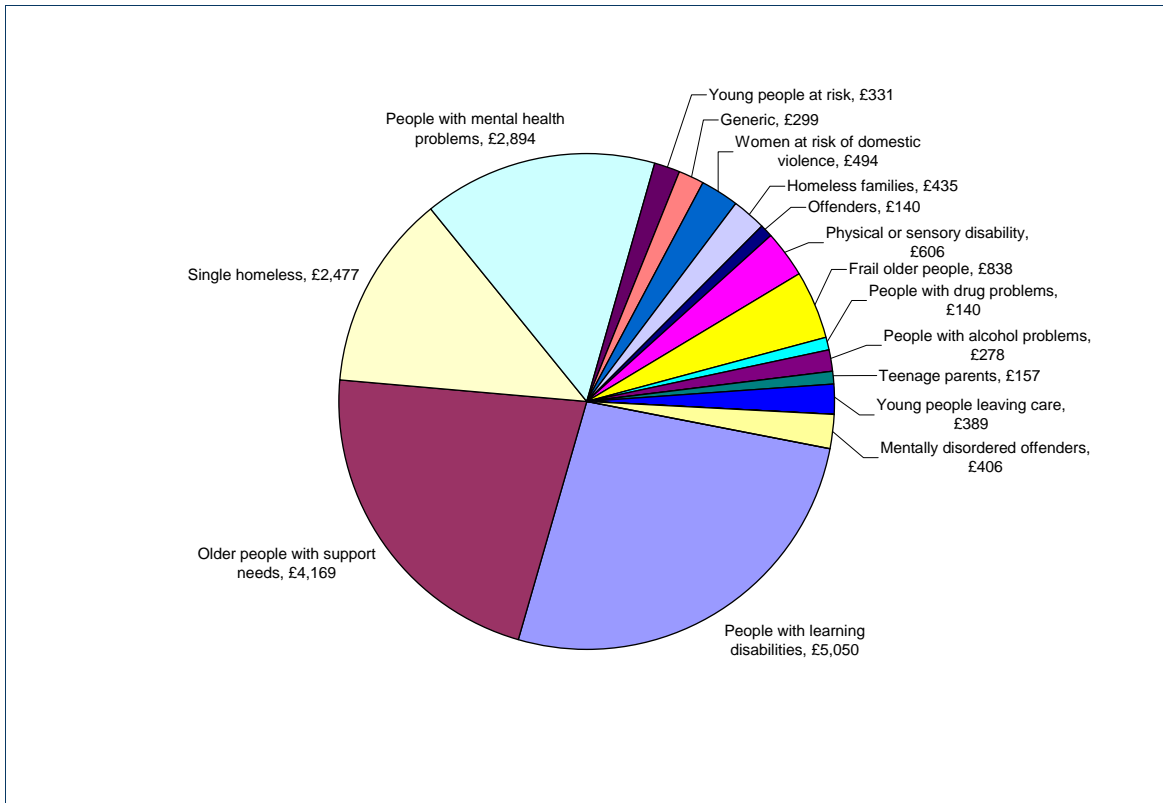


**Pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all county councils and all English councils**

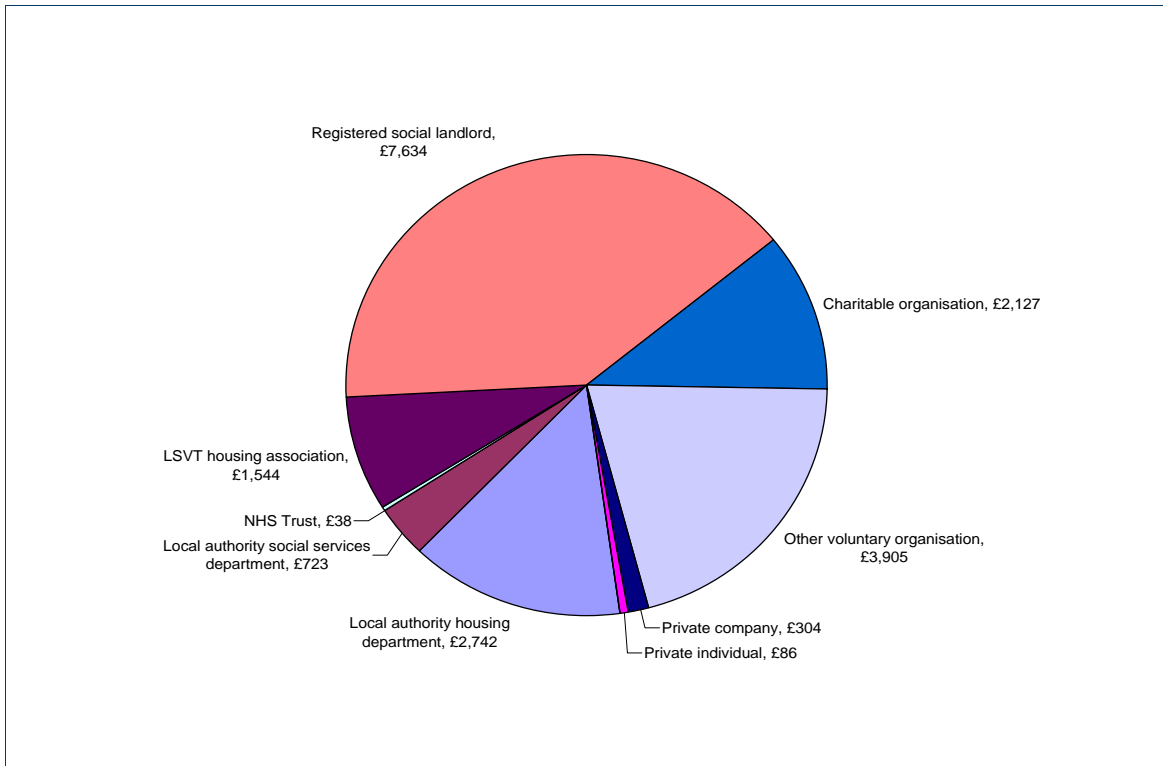


<sup>27</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

### Share of spending between user groups (£000s)



### Share of spending between types of provider (£000s)



### Social services star-ratings November 2004

The table below shows the Social Services Inspectorate ratings of the council's performance.

	Serving people well?	Prospects for improvement?	Performance rating (CPA equivalent)
Adults' Services	Most	Promising	★★★
Children's Services	Some	Promising	(3)

### Social services performance indicators

#### Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2003/04

The table below shows how the council's social services performed on indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Surrey	
Significantly above average (★★★★)	<p>Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31).</p> <p>Admissions of older people to residential/ nursing care (C26).</p> <p>Admissions of supported residents aged 18 to 64 to residential/nursing care (C27).</p> <p>Employment, education and training for care leavers (A4).</p> <p>Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that their opinions and preferences were always taken into account (D57).</p>
Above average (★★★)	<p>Physically disabled and sensory impaired users who said that they can contact social services easily (D58).</p> <p>Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54).</p>
Average (★★)	<p>Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40).</p> <p>Emergency psychiatric re-admissions (A6).</p> <p>Delayed transfers of care (D41).</p>
Below average (★)	<p>Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29).</p> <p>Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30).</p>
Significantly below average (●)	<p>Percentage change on previous year in total emergency admissions to hospital (A5).</p> <p>Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39).</p> <p>Older people helped to live at home (C32).</p>

## Best Value Performance Indicators

### Performance on relevant indicators in 2003/4 compared with County councils

The table below shows how the council performed on Best Value Performance Indicators relevant to Supporting People.

<b>Surrey</b>	
Average	Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).  The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).

### District council performance on relevant indicators in 2003/04

The tables below shows how district councils in Surrey performed on Best Value Performance Indicators relevant to Supporting People, compared with all district councils.

<b>Elmbridge</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).  Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a).  Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b).
<b>Epsom and Ewell</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a).
Average	Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).  The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b).  Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).

<b>Guildford</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a).</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).</p>
Average	<p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63).</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).</p> <p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a).</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b).</p>
<b>Mole Valley</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a).</p> <p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).</p>
Average	<p>Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63).</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).</p> <p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b).</p> <p>Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a).</p>
<b>Reigate and Banstead</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	<p>Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).</p> <p>Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).</p>
Average	<p>The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).</p>
Within the worst 25 per cent	<p>Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a).</p> <p>Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b).</p>

<b>Runnymede</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a). Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).
Average	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63). The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b). Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a). Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).
<b>Spelthorne</b>	
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a). Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b). Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a). Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).
<b>Surrey Heath</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a). Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b). Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).

<b>Tandridge</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63). Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a).
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a). Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b). Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).
<b>Waverley</b>	
Average	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63). Domestic violence refuge places (BV176). The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a). Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b). Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a). Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).
<b>Woking</b>	
Within the best 25 per cent	Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings (BV63). Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a).
Average	The level of the equality standard for local government to which the authority conforms (BV2).
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (BV183a). Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b). Council homes which did not meet the decent homes standard (BV184a). Domestic violence refuge places (BV176).

## Positive practice

*‘The Commission will identify and promote good practice. Every inspection will look for examples of good practice and innovation, and for creative ways to overcome barriers and resistance to change or make better use of resources’.*

*(Seeing is Believing).*

- ◆ Members of the commissioning body have a strong understanding of the Supporting People programme and have made site visits to see at first hand the standard of the accommodation and services that are funded in Surrey.
- ◆ Specialist research has been commissioned to inform the five-year strategy. This includes work to assess the value of floating support services; the support needs of socially excluded individuals who appear to fall through the nets of the statutory agencies; and, the needs of BME communities and individuals.
- ◆ Partnership work includes work to ensure that the 11 borough and district housing strategies align with the county’s Supporting People strategy and that all housing strategies include targets for the level of supported housing in their areas.
- ◆ The Supporting People team has exercised tight financial control over the budget and has robust monitoring and payment systems in place.
- ◆ There is a clear and comprehensive service review process which includes the use of trained interviewers, mainly from a panel of adults and community care staff, to interview service users. Interviewers may attend a house meeting but also offer personal interviews.
- ◆ The county council has a portfolio holder with housing as part of their remit. This has contributed to housing issues achieving a higher profile within the council.

## Supporting People – Housing-related support services

'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide support services that help vulnerable people live independently.

The Supporting People programme brings together significant funding streams including Transitional Housing Benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase; the Housing Corporation's Supported Housing Management Grant (SHMG) and Probation Accommodation Grant Scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 Administering Local Authorities.

Unitary and metropolitan authorities and counties are designated as an administering authority with the county taking the lead in most cases for the districts in their area.

Administering local authorities work in partnership, with districts where this is relevant, to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for support services with housing, social services, health and the probation service. Negotiation and consultation is also required with all housing and support service providers, other statutory service providers, the private sector and voluntary organisations to plan and commission support services to meet identified needs.

The programme allows for greater diversity of provision tailored to individual needs and delivered in a local strategic context. For example:

- ◆ support services for people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities whose needs have previously not been met in an appropriate or timely manner;
- ◆ support services for vulnerable older people who wish to live independently, including those in sheltered housing;
- ◆ temporary hostel accommodation – including probation hostels and those providing support for women fleeing domestic violence;
- ◆ support services for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties;
- ◆ floating support to a range of vulnerable people including young people leaving care; and
- ◆ home improvement agency services whose work includes providing practical support to older owner occupiers to enable them to live independently.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local Authorities would need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk).