



Report

Date **November 27 2001**

To **The Partnership Forum**

Title **Supporting People: Progress on Implementation in Buckinghamshire**

Recommendation

1. The Partnership Forum are invited to **note** progress made in implementing the Supporting People initiative. Partnership Forum members are **invited** to comment upon the working arrangements needed to make satisfactory progress with Supporting People and their attention is particularly drawn to paragraphs **19, 21** and **22**.

Background Information

2. A report was presented to the Partnership Forum in November 2000 outlining the Government's proposed changes to the funding arrangements for housing linked support services. Funding currently paid through Transitional Housing Benefit, Supported Housing Management Grant, Probation Accommodation Grant, Home Improvement Agencies will be pooled to form a single Supporting People fund. In future support services in Buckinghamshire will be paid from the Supporting People fund which will be administered in Buckinghamshire by the County Council. It is intended that, through these changes, funding for housing related support services will be more accurately targeted to meet local need , systems will be more efficient and support service providers will be able to respond more flexibly to a variety of needs. This will include developing a greater range of "floating support" services.

Resources Appraisal

3. The resource implications for Supporting People fall into two categories. First the resources which fund the Supporting People Team and its work in the interim period and beyond; second the changes that will affect the working arrangements of service providers receiving funding which will be part of the Supporting People initiative.

The Supporting People Team

4. A ring-fenced grant has been paid to the County Council as Supporting People Administering Authority to cover the implementation costs of Supporting People before the new regime comes into effect. The current grant level will be increased next year to meet the cost of implementing the IT systems for Supporting People.

Service Providers

5. As the existing sources of funding for housing related support services will no longer be available after 2003, agencies and organisations that provide these services will receive their funding from the new Supporting People Grant. The local level of Supporting People Grant is not yet known but will be determined by the DTLR based on the amount of money currently paid through existing funding streams and factored by population and needs indicators.

Supporting Information

Progress to Date

6. During the early part of 2001 the Core Strategy Group for Supporting People drew up a Supporting People Implementation Plan for Buckinghamshire and made a bid to DTLR for the Supporting People Implementation Grant for Buckinghamshire. A decision was made to pool the Grants available to the District and County Councils and that the fund would be administered by the County Council.
7. A Supporting People Project Manager has been in post since August 2001. The appointee to the project officer post has now withdrawn but we are actively re-recruiting for a Project Officer on a secondment basis. The recruitment process for an Information Officer post is under way.
8. The Core Strategy Group meet monthly to monitor and oversee progress. A County-wide Inclusive Forum has been established involving service providers, service users and referring agencies. We are in close liaison with relevant colleagues within the County and Districts on the IT and Housing Benefit aspects of Supporting People. Joint Planning Group leaders have been involved in early discussions on needs in the local area and the identified supported housing needs will inform the Supporting People needs analysis and strategy

development. Work has started on an extensive mapping of existing supported housing and related services

Key Activities for the Coming Year

9. Over the next 12 months the key tasks to be achieved by the Supporting People team are as follows:
 - Complete the supply mapping exercise. This will enable us to know what services are available, where they are placed and estimate levels of Supporting People eligible funding.
 - Carry out a needs analysis to build on current knowledge and understanding in the County. This will help with developing the Supporting People strategy and with devising the programme for reviewing services.
 - Develop an initial strategy and service review programme to be submitted to the DTLR in September 2002.
 - Put in place shadow contracting arrangements.

Guidance and Commissioning Arrangements

10. To help local teams and to ensure a degree of consistency of approach throughout all local authority areas the DTLR are closely involved in steering the implementation phase of Supporting People. New Guidance is being produced on a regular basis, some of which is changing earlier understanding of the programme.
11. The latest major guidance document issued on October 31st has given a clear steer on the commissioning arrangements and how the priority activities for next year should be achieved.

Roles and Responsibilities

12. Within the Supporting People programme, there is an expectation that a number of groups will be in place. Their roles and purpose follow.
13. *Inclusive Forum*: to ensure wide consultation takes place with providers, users, interest groups and others affected by the strategy.
14. *Core Strategy Group*: responsible for the main planning activities and supervises the work of the Supporting People Team who under the lead officer carries out the day to day work. This Group prepares the local strategy and annual statement.
15. *The Commissioning Body*: signs off the strategy and annual plan before formal submission to elected members for approval. The Commissioning Body is expected to be made up of senior officers and/or members of the local authorities and other relevant

organisations, health agencies and probation being the most significant.

16. *Administering Authority*: in Buckinghamshire this is the County Council which is responsible for day to day administration of the Supporting People Grant and other financial and legal issues.

New Contracting Arrangements

17. Service providers who currently receive funding for support services through one of the Supporting People eligible sources will be paid from the Supporting People Grant from 1st April 2003. Service providers will be expected to enter into a formal contracting arrangement with the Administering Authority.
18. In preparation for the formal contractual arrangements that will come into force on April 1, 2003 all potential Supporting People Service Providers will enter into shadow contracting arrangements during next year. In addition there will be a requirement for service providers to complete an accreditation questionnaire by December 2002. In order to be accredited, service providers will need to demonstrate attention to quality assurance measures, to have in place appropriate policies, procedures, staff support and training and demonstrate responsiveness to service users' needs.
19. The Partnership Forum may wish to give their views on the kinds of support that may be needed in order to help service providers in Buckinghamshire achieve the highest standards.

IT for Supporting People

20. In order that the transition to Supporting People is as smooth as possible without interrupting payments to service providers or affecting the quality of services to clients and residents, a detailed IT implementation plan has been drawn up. In particular the County and District Councils will be working closely together on understanding the business processes required for Supporting People, on compatibility of data and on information sharing protocols. Throughout the period from now until April 1 2003 the Supporting People team and the County Council's ICT staff will be working closely with colleagues in the District Councils and other agencies.

The Supporting People Strategy

21. The Supporting People Strategy will be developed over the next few months in consultation with service users, service providers, elected members and other relevant stakeholders. The strategy must take account of and complement other strategic plans including the Local Strategic Plan, Joint Investment Plans, and the Supported Housing Strategy. The Commissioning Body will formally agree the strategy,

which will be signed off by elected members in time for submission in September 2002.

Conclusion

22. In summary, there are three key issues on which the Partnership Forum is asked to express a view and become involved :

- which existing forum could most usefully adopt the role of the Commissioning Body (see para. 15)
- how service providers can best be supported to help them meet quality measures (see para. 19)
- encouraging all relevant agencies and service providers to become involved in the Supporting People Inclusive Forum so that they are kept informed of developments and have an opportunity to contribute to the Supporting People Strategy.

Background Papers

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