

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
'SUPPORTING PEOPLE' PROGRAMME IN GRAVESHAM**

**A REVIEW BY THE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**OCTOBER 2002**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Overview Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Implementation of Supporting People, a Central Government initiative to fund housing related support for vulnerable people at a local level.

1.2 The terms of reference of the Review were:

**To examine all aspects of how the Government's new regime entitled Supporting People impacts upon Gravesham Borough Council - including the new relationship this subject entails with Kent County Council and to report to Cabinet on the Committee's findings highlighting any aspects that require particular attention.**

1.3 The context in which the review was undertaken was an implementation date of the Supporting People programme of 1 April 2003.

1.4 Two evidence gathering meetings were held in August 2002. Witnesses were from Kent County Council (the Contracts Manager from the Implementation Team), Gravesend Churches Housing Association and Cubfield Accommodation Ltd. The Commissioning Manager of the Implementation Team gave a presentation to the Committee at its scheduled meeting on 1 August 2002 and the Housing Operations Manager from GBC was also present to provide input from a Gravesham perspective.

1.5 The recommendations to the Cabinet are:-

**1.5.1 to ensure that the benefits office has supplied a full list of claimants and awards to the KCC Supporting People Implementation Team in order to determine support service costs.**

**1.5.2 to establish what contingency plan is in place for people receiving support that are eligible to be transferred to Supporting People but have not been identified in time to meet the 1 April 2003 deadline.**

**1.5.3 to establish whether landlords and support provider staff are sufficiently prepared to answer queries and complaints from tenants about changes to their benefit.**

**1.5.4 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that any support service costs currently funded through Social Services but identified as accommodation related support eligible for funding through Supporting People be transferred to Transitional Housing Benefit.**

**1.5.5 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that sufficient future provision is made available for vulnerable people to have their accommodation related support needs met through Supporting People by the establishment of robust floating support schemes. Such schemes will help the Borough fulfil its responsibilities under government legislation such as the Homelessness Act July 2002.**

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Supporting People

A consultation paper, *Supporting People: A new policy and funding framework for support services*, was published by the DETR in 1998 and set out a new integrated policy and funding framework for the provision of housing related support for vulnerable people.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) describes Supporting People as:

"Supporting People is a central government initiative to fund housing related support for vulnerable people at a local level. The Supporting People programme is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people have the opportunity to live more independently. Through working partnerships with local government, service users and support agencies, it promotes straightforward, cost-effective and reliable housing related solutions, which complement available care services and support independent living".

The Supporting People Grant is made up of money transferred from other funding sources known collectively as legacy funding and currently paid through Transitional Housing Benefit. **THERE IS NO NEW MONEY.**

In Kent the Supporting People Grant will be administered by Kent County Council.

The implementation date for the Supporting People programme is 1 April 2003.

### 2.2 Funded Support Services

The ODPM gives the following examples of what local authorities will be able to fund under Supporting People.

- Help older people remain in their home as long as they wish to by funding visiting support services
- Continue to provide warden services in sheltered schemes
- Help young people leaving care prepare for greater independence through training in basic skills such as cooking and hygiene
- Help people leaving institutions (eg prison) or who have been homeless set up home
- Provide on-going support for people adjusting to more independent living, if moving into their own home after living in a special housing and support scheme.

### 2.3 Aims of Supporting People Programme

The aim of the Supporting People programme is to improve the quality of support to vulnerable people. It will do this in several ways.

- Focusing provision on local need

- Improving the range and quality of services
- Integrating support with wider local strategies
- Monitoring quality and effectiveness
- Introducing effective decision making and administration"

## 2.4 Advantages of Supporting People Programme

- Formal contracts will be placed by KCC with landlords and/or service providers. The Supporting People grant will be paid to KCC to administer payments to landlords and service providers thus easing the burden on Borough's and District's benefits departments
- Regular review and performance monitoring of service provision to encourage a programme of continuous improvement and best value principles of comparison with other providers. At present no such review or monitoring is carried out.
- Accreditation of landlords and support providers. To ensure services are provided by a stable organisation that is likely to be able to meet capacity. No landlord or support provider accreditation is carried out under the current system

## 3. OUTCOME OF REVIEW

### 3.1. Transitional Housing Benefit

The Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme was introduced principally to identify expenditure on accommodation related support through the housing benefit system. Money used to pay for support services through THB will be transferred (together with some other funding sources) to a new fund called Supporting People Grant which will commence from April 2003. From this date eligible people in rented accommodation will continue to receive housing benefit to assist with the cost of their core rental liability (i.e. the bricks and mortar). However, the charge for the support service will be met through Supporting People Grant paid to the agency, or in some cases the individual, providing the support service.(1)

THB is currently paid through GBC benefits department.

Before 1 April 2003 the Housing Benefit department will need to have:

- recalculated Housing Benefit awards to remove the Transitional Housing Benefit elements
- notify claimants of the termination of their Transitional Housing Benefit claims
- provide the Supporting People team with a list of claimants and awards in order to determine support services costs

This information is critical to the ring-fenced Supporting People budget being sufficient to cover the costs of support services.

### Recommendation

**To ensure that the benefits office has supplied a full list of claimants and awards to the KCC Supporting People Implementation Team in order to determine support service costs.**

#### **Recommendation**

**To establish what contingency plan is in place for people receiving support that are eligible to be transferred to Supporting People but have not been identified in time to meet the 1 April 2003 deadline.**

By law all those in receipt of benefit must be informed of any changes to their benefit. The Implementation Team is anticipating that there will be many queries and letters of complaint. They are developing a leaflet or letter advising claimants "not to worry" but it is imperative that landlords do the same or work with them on this. Landlords have a responsibility to train their staff and set up systems for advising vulnerable and confused tenants. The SP team does not have the capacity to answer the queries raised by tenants from all over the county. The first port of call for a tenant with questions will be the housing officer or scheme manager/warden and these staff need to know the answers.

#### **Recommendation**

**To establish whether landlords and support providers staff are sufficiently prepared to answer queries and complaints from tenants about change to their benefit.**

There is a suggestion that some support services supplied by Social Services could legitimately be classed as accommodation based support and as such be funded through the Supporting People grant. However, for this to happen, these services have firstly to be identified under THB. In order for a claim for THB to be awarded the provision of support needs to be a condition of occupying the dwelling, this would require tenancy agreements to be amended to reflect this change. Decisions need to be made on this issue very soon if all the amendments are to be made before the April 2003 deadline. This is particularly relevant if, for whatever reason, the Social Service budget was reduced then funding for these services could be lost.

#### **Recommendation**

**To ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that any support service costs currently funded through Social Services but identified as accommodation related support eligible for funding through Supporting People be transferred to Transitional Housing Benefit.**

### **3.2 Administration**

KCC will be the administering authority for Supporting People.

There is a Commissioning Forum, lead by KCC, with Lead Officers for Supporting People from each Kent local authority (except Medway). There is also a Supporting People Implementation Team which has the responsibility of collating all the supply mapping information and developing the contracts procedure for service providers.

The Supporting People Implementation Team has so far identified about 20,000 people countywide entitled to support under the scheme. People in sheltered accommodation constitute about 80% of this figure.

### **3.3 Contracts**

Due to the need to capture and pay for existing services with the minimum of disruption to providers and users an interim contract document will be produced. The interim contract will run from April 2003 until the time of the first review.

KCC as the administering authority for Supporting People will place the contracts with landlords and service providers. The Implementation Team will have the responsibility of monitoring the cost, quality and effectiveness of the support services.

All contracted schemes must be reviewed in the 3 year cycle between April 2003 and March 2006. Reviews should then follow a three year rolling programme apart from Sheltered and possibly other home for life schemes which will follow a five year programme.

### **3.4 Locality Plan**

Additional information is available in the Locality Plan, entitled Local Supporting People Vision - Gravesham Borough Council, which seeks to reflect the strong links between Housing, Health, Social Care and Community Safety (Appendix 2). This plan addresses current issues and priorities and explores the links of the Supporting People programme with other local strategies.

The locality plan was approved by Cabinet at their 16 September 2002 meeting and, along with plans from other Kent authorities, will form part of the countywide shadow strategy.

### **3.5 Floating Support Schemes**

The introduction of Supporting People from April 2003 means that many organisations are looking with renewed interest at establishing floating support services during 2002, so that any funding for these schemes provided through THB can be identified and transferred to the new Supporting People Grant. However, funding floating support to vulnerable people through an increased tenancy service charge requires that a number of practical issues are addressed relating to tenancy agreements, payment systems and administration. As many vulnerable people who may benefit from floating support will be eligible for Transitional Housing Benefit, it is also important to set up arrangements which meet the legal requirements of this scheme.(1)

Floating support schemes are a means of supplying support to help individuals to successfully maintain their tenancy and can be home for life but are more likely to be short term. A short term scheme is one designed to be of less than 2 years duration but there may be circumstances that override this.(If, for example, there was a lack of available accommodation for the client to move on to). The scheme would not need to stop right on the 2 years but would be expected to identify why people under the scheme could not move on to greater independence.

Setting up floating support schemes in private sector tenancies involves meeting additional requirements if they are to satisfy THB regulations. Where the landlord is in the private sector, THB can only be paid if the claim is accompanied by a valid community care assessment. This assessment is effectively a form confirming that social services has assessed that the person requires support and that the landlord (or agency acting on behalf of the landlord) will be providing services to meet those support needs. Community care assessments for THB purposes are not available for people aged under 18 and therefore it is not possible to arrange floating support services for 16 and 17 year olds living in private rented accommodation. (1)

### **Recommendation**

**To ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that sufficient future provision is made available for vulnerable people to have their accommodation related support needs met through Supporting People by the establishment of robust floating support schemes. Such schemes will help the Borough to fulfil its responsibilities under government legislation such as the Homelessness Act July 2002.**

## **APPENDIX 1**

**Evidence gathering meeting of the  
Overview Scrutiny Committee**

**REVIEW:**                   **Implementation of "Supporting People"**

**VENUE:**                   **Civic Centre, Gravesend - 1 August 2002**

**PRESENT:**               **Councillors: M Snelling (Chair)**  
                                  **J Burden (Vice-Chair)**  
                                  **V Ashenden**  
                                  **J Cribbon**  
                                  **J Jaggon JP**  
                                  **F Marven**  
                                  **D Turner**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Finch - Corporate Policy Officer**

**Interviewees:           Mr S Collingwood - Housing Operations Manager**  
                                  **Ms C. Martin - Commissioning Manager Supporting**  
                                                                                  **People Implementation Team**

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE GIVEN TO MEMBERS**

Ms Martin's evidence was given in the form of a presentation at a regular meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Martin said that "Supporting People" came out of a judicial review in 1997 and sought to bring different funding streams together in a single Supporting People budget.

KCC would be the administering authority and would have contracts with landlords and support providers.

Under Supporting People Gravesham Borough Council had three roles:-

- As a member of the commissioning forum;
- As a landlord;
- As a support provider.

All support service costs must be identified so that the ring fenced Supporting People budget will be sufficient to meet these costs.

Ms Martin went on to outline other aspects of the implementation process using the bullet points below:-

- County wide strategic planning for housing for vulnerable people (localisation of revenue funding streams);
  - Contractual relations/Service Specifications;
  - Monitoring and Review;
  - Good Practice;
  - Benchmarking of Costs;
- 
- Service User Consultation;
  - The missing link between housing management and care in the community (Transitional Housing Benefit/Supporting People Grant);
  - Complements wider strategic links (e.g. Community Plan/Safety) - the grey area between social services eligibility criteria and mainstream housing management activity;
  - Helps meet District/Borough statutory obligations e.g. Homelessness Act (support for vulnerable service users in specialised and general needs stock).

#### Transitional Housing Benefit:-

- Last Chance Saloon for Districts/Boroughs who want to appropriately support vulnerable people in their stock via floating support. Robust floating support schemes will pay dividends next year!
- Interim Contracts set in place between October and December;
- Pipeline Schemes offer some opportunities;
- Growth monies restricted after April 2003 - the pot is big, and the treasury will get nervous.

#### What are the Supporting People team doing?

- Reconciliation of Legacy funding streams with Housing Benefit, the Housing Corporation, Probation and providers;
- Liaison with Housing Benefit to make sure that we get the information the ODPM requires;
- Matching schemes with levels of THBS - using information from HB (in sheltered/home for life we will match service users to services);
- Establishing that boroughs have disaggregated their HRAs - the ODPM will be checking to make sure that the correct assumptions have been made to obviate boroughs being paid twice - subsidy and THBS);
- Finalisation of Interim Contracts for distribution to all providers;
- Monitoring and review schedule (high cost high risk first);
- Shadow strategy;
- Annual Plan (spend/planned spend);
- Prioritisation of bids for SHMG/growth monies to the housing corporation/ODPM (annual plan);
- Finalising decision making processes (Commissioning Body will comprise Elected Members/Core Strategy Development Group will comprise lead officers)
- Advising on charging and means testing policy for social services/commissioning forum;

- The Supporting People team is working with HB and providers to ensure that all of the services identified are appropriately funded using SP3s to inform interim contracts to ensure payment. We are totally dependent on accuracy of information from Housing Benefit, and other legacy funding stream sources. Supporting People cannot do this on their own!
- We are liaising with KCC ISG to put "going live" IT systems in place. They have all relevant guidance.

What do Housing Benefit need to do:

- Supply us with milestones every quarter;
- Produce a service level spreadsheet (A47/2001);
- Produce a claimant data extract in October 2002 and March 2003 ) A47/2001);
- Failure to do so will mean that KCC will be unable to pay any providers in GBC (Borough/RSLs/Managing Agents);
- Vulnerable people will not get the services;
- ODPM regards HB information as the Audit trail for THBS - they will ignore anything providers tell us, unless it is backed up by HB Depts.;

Post 2003:-

- SPIT will ensure payments, monitor and review services, draw up the strategic plan, advise on good practice, benchmark costs and advise the commissioning forum/core strategy development group;
- KCC is the administering authority, and will hold the ringfenced budget on behalf of the CB;
- The administering authority/commissioning body will work to a memorandum of understanding.

Questions:-

***There is difficulty in getting support for vulnerable people, will you be ready?***

Yes, we will be ready but only if all the Housing Benefit and Transitional Housing Benefit information and the audit trail is in place. This depends enormously on District and Boroughs.

***Are you confident?***

Yes, Locality Officers have been appointed whose sole job is to make sure everything is in place.

***If there is a shortfall in the budget is the cost shared between all councils in the county?***

No, only the council responsible for the shortfall will suffer.

***Are health packages included?***

No, social funding and health care funding are separate streams. What support services are included in the Supporting People programme are clearly defined.

***What improvement will those in receipt of support services expect to see over the old system?***

The service they receive will be monitored and reviewed. Users will be consulted and there will be written service specifications.

***What human resource issues does the implementation of this programme raise and who funds them?***

We may need to appoint an officer in a co-ordinating role and extra admin. staff. Any such post will be funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

***Will the mapping exercise be ongoing as support service needs are not static?***

There is an allowance for growth in the funding and there are opportunities to identify floating support schemes.

***It is intended that there will be elected members on the Commissioning Body, will they have to declare an interest?***

As the elected member will be representing his or her council there should be no problem. They would have every right to discuss matters with other council members.

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F Marven

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs S Whatmough - Head of Democratic Services  
Mr D Finch - Corporate Policy officer (Scrutiny Support)

**Interviewee:** Mr I McCartney - Contracts Manager - Supporting People  
Implementation Team

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE GIVEN TO MEMBERS**

This summary consists mainly of a brief prepared by Mr McCartney for this evidence gathering meeting.

Additional points that were raised during the meeting were.

By law all those in receipt of benefit must be informed of any changes to their benefit. The Implementation Team is anticipating that there will be many queries and letters of complaint (eg people in sheltered housing with warden services may ask why they should pay for a warden service if they never use it!). They are developing a leaflet or letter advising claimants "not to worry" but it is imperative that landlords do the same or work with them on this. Landlords have a responsibility to train their staff and set up systems for advising vulnerable and confused tenants. The SP team does not have the capacity to answer the queries raised by tenants from all over the county. The first port of call for a tenant with questions will be the housing officer or scheme manager/warden and these staff need to know the answers.

With support service costs being absorbed into Transitional Housing Benefit and post 1 April 2003 into Supporting People Housing Benefit departments will be looking very closely at landlords claims to make sure that no support services are included. If these costs are not identified by 2003 this money will be lost. Supporting People will **NOT** pick up the shortfall.

In the future there may be a need for the tenancy agreement to refer to the payment of rent and support services. There may also be legal implications in any eviction procedures resulting from the non-payment of service charges.

Unpooling of rents - needs to be accurate as an audit trail will need to be set out for central government to follow.

## GRAVESHAM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – CONTRACTS, MONITORING & REVIEW

The primary objective of implementation of the Supporting People (SP) Programme, is the continuation of services in April 2003, to protect vulnerable clients. This requires that existing services be taken over as they stand, in anticipation of the programme of reviews which will begin in April 2003 in line with the review priorities set out in the shadow strategy.

### **Interim Contracts**

Due to the need to capture and pay for existing services with the minimum disruption to service users and providers who have been providing accommodation based support for many years without a contract regime, an Interim Contract document will be produced. The Interim Contract will run from April 2003 until the time of the first review which must take place within the first three years. The contract document was designed to be simple, uniform and uncontentious but following comment and debate has constantly evolved with final comments still being considered. KCC has been at the forefront of these negotiations with the SP team working closely with Service Policy & Standards (Contracting), and the ODPM. At the time of writing there are three versions of essentially the same structure of contract:

- A complete and exhaustive contract which sets out the principles of the contracting framework precisely. This was thought appropriate for contracting with districts and boroughs as housing/support providers and also with large Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
- A shorter version for smaller agencies
- A form of letter for services in which individuals are providing support in their home for small number of clients or other very limited provision
- For in-house services a service level agreement will be used

Following recent discussions a “plain English” version of the first contract has now been produced and it is anticipated that this will be used as often as possible.

### **Contract & Payment Methods**

1/ Block Subsidy      2/ Block Gross

The grant that will be paid to KCC to administer payments to landlords and service providers will be paid net of an assumed income from charging service users. This will lead to the two forms of contract above.

Block subsidy contracts will always be used to pay for services previously funded by Transitional Housing Benefit (THB) as there is a direct relationship between the provider of support and the tenant through the tenancy agreement.

It is possible to establish a similar but not tenancy based relationship in order to use block subsidy payments. The provider would have to agree to establish it and the tenant would also have to agree. It is anticipated that, in the main, subsidy contracts will be used for long term schemes that are “chargeable” and gross contracts for short term schemes.

Where there is no such tenancy or other relationship, the Administering Authority (AA) pays the service provider Gross and either the AA or the provider collects charges. Either the AA or the provider must establish a direct relationship with the tenant who must agree to pay charges.

The AA may, as an ancillary element to a Gross contract, engage the provider of service to collect charges on AA’s behalf. The provider would charge a fee and responsibility for enforcement remains with the AA.

### **Who holds the contract**

The contract can be made between the Administering Authority and either the landlord or the landlord’s agent who provides the service. Landlords and service providers need to work out their own business relationship – models of every type are available from the ODPM – and decide who is to hold the contract. If they cannot agree on this the SP team has the right to decide who shall hold the contract.

### **Purpose of Interim Contracts**

- capture of different funding streams
- seamless transition between different funding streams
- capture of services
- designed to be non contentious
- avoids need for protracted contract discussions
- gives standard contract wording across sector and nationwide

### **How will the value of each contract be determined?**

- The Supporting People pot is made up of money transferred from other funding sources. These funding sources are collectively known as legacy funding.
- The correct amount of transfer is determined through the costing of individual services, and each AA will receive the appropriate amount based on existing services net of charges
- Baseline information is captured as part of the supply mapping exercises and will form the pricing schedule to the contract
- A formula for working out the total gross contract value will then be applied, using a formula to be provided by ODPM (not yet available). The SPINTLS system will then work out the contract value

- ODPM and DW&P will conduct a series of reconciliation exercises during 2002/3 to check the values included in the contracts and the AA grant totals

### **Defining services in the contract**

- The SPINTLS system provides a baseline summary of services which will form part of the service schedule to the contract
- Background documentation will be available in the form of SHMG and THB descriptions of services currently being delivered
- Each contract service schedule will contain a copy of the SPINTLS service information and a copy of the relevant SHMG and/or THB description of service
- Detailed format of schedule is being defined as part of the third phase of SPINTLS development.
- Contracts have to be agreed by landlords/providers by December 2002 with a target of 50% agreed by September. Supply mapping forms (SP3s) have been sent to providers but not all have been returned and there is a degree of error.

### **Reviews**

#### Introduction

All contracted schemes must be reviewed in the 3 year cycle between April 2003 and March 2006. Reviews should then follow a three year rolling programme apart from Sheltered and possibly other home for life schemes which will follow a five year programme. Reviews should be approached in a spirit of a positive and mutually beneficial partnership and should tie in with existing review relationships and timetables wherever possible.

It is not possible to provide review dates at this time as we do not have all the information necessary on SPINTLS in order to scope the scale of the sector or individual schemes. Without the information on the numbers involved it has not been possible to estimate a time by which the various service categories could be reviewed.

#### Main Criteria

We are still waiting for the criteria to be produced by ODPM Core Monitoring & Review Group. Its remit is to

- devise a local monitoring system that is streamlined and consistent
- enable local authorities to monitor both their own services and those of other local providers
- provide a basis for consistent measurement and comparison
- provide a self audit tool for providers enabling them to continuously review, improve and develop their services
- enable providers to compare their performance with that of other providers in similar service sectors

**It is likely that the service must:**

- operate in accordance with the SP strategy
- meet identified current and future demand and needs
- provide a quality service that meets effectively the needs and preferences of users
- be cost beneficial
- be provided by a stable organisation that is likely to be able to meet capacity

Services must be able to satisfy the criteria or have the potential and willingness to meet them within a targeted time scale.

**Accreditation**

The ODPM removed the necessity to have an accreditation process prior to the award of interim contracts but the SP team took the view that this was an unacceptable risk. Providers were invited to complete an accreditation questionnaire and the response was generally positive. Of the providers that completed the questionnaire over 70% were automatically accredited. Gravesham BC replied to this questionnaire and have been passported – ie fully accredited.

**High Risk/High Cost**

The above providers will be reviewed in the first months of the programme. Providers will be seen as high risk in the following areas

- those that are not automatically accredited
- those that have not completed the accreditation questionnaire
- providers with no previous history of working with local authorities
- those providers that, through the mapping process and communication with the SP team have given cause for concern or have expressed a wish to be reviewed early as part of a programme of self development
- those who have failed to meet contractual requirements
- those who have a history of service user complaints

Providers will be seen as high cost if the hourly rate charged for the client group is significantly higher than of providers of a similar service. (Suggested format is mean level +25%)

It is anticipated that providers of sheltered accommodation will be reviewed late in the programme. Although this is the largest sector in terms of both schemes and numbers of service users, it is also the most stable. The providers of sheltered accommodation are largely local authorities or large RSL's who are strictly monitored by the housing corporation.

## Monitoring & Review Programme

There are valid reasons to review providers one by one and also to review across the sector – ie all learning disability schemes, all substance abuse schemes etc. The SP team prefer the latter option because:

- we can compare like with like provision across the county at a moment in time
- administratively simpler
- encourages a programme of continuous improvement and best value principles of comparison with other providers
- all review staff working with the same criteria on very similar schemes at the same time

### Review Stages

There are three review stages suggested by the ODPM

**1<sup>st</sup>** Generally a desk top exercise using existing information and performance indicators. However, the SP team, after consultation with other purchasers, feel that this method simply measures those providers who are adept at administrative tasks and takes no account of service users views. It is likely that most 1<sup>st</sup> reviews will involve a visit from the SP team.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Where the 1st stage identifies areas of concern, or the need for change or even funding withdrawal, the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage review involves a deeper analysis. The aim is to agree actions and set targets to achieve change or improvements to the service.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** The 3<sup>rd</sup> stage considers withdrawing funding or alternative options if 2<sup>nd</sup> stage has not resolved the issues.

### Resources

The SP team has six Locality Officers who will conduct reviews under the direction of the Commissioning Manager working with the Senior Contracts Officer. The SP team are working closely with SSD Service Policy and Standards (contracting) and the Mental Health Accommodation Team in order to learn from their experience in terms of resource implications and tools.

### Service Specifications

The SP team is in the process of drawing up a list of service specifications to be used when issuing the full contracts. These can be used in conjunction with ODPM guidance or as a more local system designed to promote excellence in the sector. This work, together with the accreditation exercise, shows that the SP team is planning ahead and is extremely proactive in this area.

## **Conclusion**

Questions still need to be asked of the ODPM as to whether the reviews expected can be carried out to an acceptably high standard within the three year time frame allowed. It is likely that over 1,000 reviews will need to take place over the period, many of which will involve protracted negotiation and partnership working. As stated above, due to the SPINTLS information not being available at this time it has not been possible to set out in any great detail the timetable for sector reviews across the county. When the numbers are known it will be possible to scope this exercise in the required detail.

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**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs S Whatmough - Head of Democratic Services  
Mr D Finch - Corporate Policy officer (Scrutiny Support)

**Interviewee:** Ms Carol Wrate - Gravesend Churches Housing  
Association

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE GIVEN TO MEMBERS**

Ms Wrate initially described her Association's current accommodation as:-

- 19 units for temporary accommodation.
- 2 low/medium support units for those with learning and physical difficulties.
- 2 women's refuges - purely as landlord.
- 6 high support units for young people under 18.

She went on to say that Gravesend Churches Housing Association (GCHA) was not a large registered social landlord (RSL) and used small local agencies for support services (such as Moving Forward - an agency that provides support for people under 24 years of age).

The support offered was primarily the teaching of life skills to enable people to move into tenancies with GBC or a Housing Association. Another aspect of GCHA support was getting people into work. This presented a slight problem in that THB is not paid to people in work. Unfortunately getting someone into work did not necessarily mean they no longer needed support. Happily this problem had been satisfactorily resolved.

Questions:

***How do you appoint and pay your support providers?***

GCHA appoints support providers through a contract tendering process. Contracts are of 3 year duration.

Support Providers are paid on receipt of an invoice. This payment is made irrespective of whether GCHA has received the Transitional Housing Benefit to cover these costs. Cash flow, for small support agencies, is essential to their survival.

***Would payment be made as quickly under Supporting People?***

Providers like Moving Forward, would have a contract with KCC who would guarantee payment monthly in advance.

***What advantage do you see with the introduction of Supporting People?***

Opportunities to expand into areas where vulnerable people had not received the support they deserve and existing services could be developed and improved. Identify true cost of support.

***Any disadvantages?***

Performance and cost monitoring by KCC. Contract termination. Support agencies had not got involved in the implementation process soon enough.

Ms Wrate had concerns that when the Government became aware of the costs of providing vulnerable people they would be looking for ways to reduce these costs.

***What about the future for Gravesend Churches Housing Associations?***

GCHA was a general needs landlord able to respond at a local level. They were fairly positive and optimistic, intending to stay in the borough and considered themselves well positioned to take on low volume support units that were too small for larger organisations (eg GCHA was leasing a women's refuge from Hyde Housing Association).

**Evidence gathering meeting of the  
Overview Scrutiny Committee**

**REVIEW:**                   **Implementation of "Supporting People"**

**VENUE:**                   **Civic Centre, Gravesend - 29 August 2002**

**PRESENT:**               **Councillors: M Snelling (Chair)**  
                                  **J Burden (Vice-Chair)**  
                                  **D Turner**  
                                  **V Ashenden**  
                                  **E Colley**  
                                  **K Jones**  
                                  **F Marven**  
                                  **C Meredith**  
                                  **J Jaggon JP**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Whatmough - Head of Democratic Services**  
                                  **Mr D Finch - Corporate Policy officer (Scrutiny Support)**

**Interviewee:           Ms M Hook - Cubfield Accommodation**  
                                  **Mrs A Welch**

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE GIVEN TO MEMBERS**

Cubfield Accommodation was a limited company which, for a number of years, has been providing emergency temporary accommodation for vulnerable people on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council and other councils.

A couple of years ago they were approached by Claire Martin who is now the Commissioning Manager of the Supporting People Implementation Team to consider whether they could put in place a support service for people with mental health difficulties. This support service had been set up as a separate part of the business under different management.

The accommodation consists of 9 self-contained units and 2 - 3 bed. group houses. The support provided is for 10 hrs/week.

All clients are referred to Cubfield through the Community Health Team.

Cubfield started taking referrals in September 2001.

Questions:

***Has Cubfield experienced any problems in finding out about "Supporting People" and its implications for private landlords and support providers?***

Yes, we have not had much help from the "Supporting People" team. There had been difficulties in obtaining the guidance documents published by the government. Cubfield were unaware that there was a dedicated "Supporting People" website. (As a result of discussions on this review they now had access to the Supporting People website and had found it quite informative).

On a more positive note John Roach, the Gravesham and Dartford Locality Officer, had been most helpful.

***What type of clients and how are they selected, do they include ethnic minorities and what is the level of occupancy of your support units?***

Our clients are referred to us through the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Primary Care Trust. If Cubfield can supply the appropriate level of support then a 6 months tenancy agreement is signed, which is reviewed with the tenant and their care manager after 4 months. Currently only single people, including ethnic minorities, are accepted. Demand for places was constant with any vacancies filled more or less immediately.

***What level of support do you provide and what qualifications do your support workers have?***

Our support workers are experienced KCHT (Kent County Health Team) workers with NVQ's. The support we offer is to develop our client's life skills (such as managing money, bill paying etc.) to enable them to live more independently.

***Who do your tenants contact if they have any problems?***

Our support workers work a 24 hr, 7 day on call rota. If they cannot sort out the tenant's problems themselves then they will contact the tenant's community care manager

***How do you make money?***

There is a profit element included in the original calculations of support services costs. We also have to charge VAT.

***How many tenants have you moved into independent housing?***

2 and 2 have gone back into hospital.

***Do you anticipate any problems with payment under Supporting People?***

No, we are quite happy to be funded by KCC (Social Services). Payments should be made monthly. Cubfield has experienced difficulties with Gravesham Borough

Council's Benefits Office and Transitional Housing Benefit had been dealt with by 1 person only, resulting in a backlog of claims. One example being a 6 months tenancy had expired, the tenant had moved on before the THB claim had been met. Had we not been part of a larger business we would have experienced cashflow problems.

The Benefits Department seemed unable to deal with companies and could only address enquiries on an individual basis.

Not all the fault lay with Benefits as the claim for THB required the completion of many forms and for things like the community care assessment, photocopies were not acceptable. (Councillors Burden and Snelling asked that evidence of these problems be provided to the committee so that they could be investigated). With the demise of THB under Supporting People and the introduction of formal contracts with KCC, a lot of the difficulties Cubfield had experienced would be removed.

***Are you confident about the accreditation and the review process?***

Cubfield also runs a nursing home and has experience of inspection regimes as a private landlord. It welcomes the fact that the review process will include the quality of the service being delivered and be more stringent than it is at present.

***Do you see opportunities to expand the support service you are able to offer?***

Yes, we would anticipate that under Supporting People there would be opportunities to enter discussions on developing and expanding our services. It may be possible to make more properties, that Cubfield has at its disposal, available for future schemes.

## **Appendix 2**

## **Local Supporting People Vision - Gravesham Borough Council**

The Supporting People Programme aims to improve the quality of life for vulnerable people, by offering them a co-ordinated service plan and service delivery, enabling greater independence and control in making choices in their lives.

The services expected to be incorporated within this Programme include those relating to:

- Older people
- People with mental health problems
- People with a physical disability
- People with a learning disability
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Ex- offenders
- Young vulnerable people, including young people leaving care
- People who misuse substances
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups
- Asylum seekers
- People with HIV/Aids

The Supporting People Strategy does not stand-alone. It is a programme that facilitates the delivery of many local strategies and priorities. The Local Vision for Gravesham will reflect the strong links between Housing, Health, Social Care and Community Safety.

The following partnership arrangements, documents and strategies have been used to formulate the Supporting People Local Programme:

- Kent Community Care Plan (1999-2002)
- KCC Community Safety Strategic Plan (2002-2006)
- Gravesham Housing Strategy (2002-2007) incorporating Black and Minority Ethnic Community Survey (2000) and Housing Needs Survey (2001)
- West Kent Health Authority and KCC 10 year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (March 2001)
- West Kent Health Improvement Plan (HImP) (2002-2005)
- Learning Disability Joint Investment Plan (2001)
- Kent Drug Action Team Action Plan (Adult Services 2001 and Young People and Drugs 2000 and the Drug treatment plan 2001-2)
- Kent Youth Offending Team Youth Justice Plan
- Gravesham Community Safety Strategy (2002-2005)

A key element of all the strategies is recognising the strong link between good quality housing, strong communities and an individual's well being and quality of life. All the strategies share a commitment to reduce or to eliminate the impact of social exclusion, which certain groups of vulnerable people experience disproportionately.

Gravesham Borough Council is fully committed to the Supporting People Strategy. It has a strong background, often in partnership with its neighbouring authorities, of

maintaining an understanding of the needs of vulnerable people in the area, a commitment to establishing the true level of those needs and working in partnership with local providers and neighbouring authorities to meet those needs.

The appointment of a West Kent-wide housing research officer in 2000 has enabled the Council to identify in much greater detail both the housing and support needs of a range of client groups. In particular the needs of people with mental health problems and people with a learning disability are well documented. Research on the other main client groups is progressing well but not yet complete.

### **Current Issues and Priorities**

Gravesham Borough Council covers 38,640 households and has 4 main residential areas; Gravesend, Northfleet, Higham (Rural East) and Meopham (Rural South). It shares borders with Dartford, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, and Medway Unitary Authority. It has good transport access both to London and the Channel ports.

The Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2001 confirmed that the majority of properties are owner-occupied and a large proportion are pre-1919 terraced houses. Dwellings in Northfleet East have the highest repair costs and experience the highest levels of unfitnes.

Average household income is lower than the national and regional averages. Single pensioner and lone parent households have significantly lower average income than other households in the borough but special needs households have the lowest.

In 2001, 487 “difficult to let” council homes comprising two estates, Wallis Park and Northcourt, were identified. Rent arrears and anti-social behaviour is particularly high on these estates which together with two other estates have been “targeted” to halt the cycle of decline, deprivation and dissatisfaction.

There is calculated to be an annual shortfall of 409 affordable housing units per annum if the Council is to meet all of the current and projected need over the next 5 years, and the overwhelming tenure requirement is social rented accommodation.

The issues arising from focus groups for the elderly and Key Workers were lack of suitable housing and length of wait for assessment for home adaptations for the former, and lack of affordable housing for the latter.

During 2002-2003 the level of grant funding for Housing Association development is approximately £3 million. In order to provide 400 homes annually this figure would need to be £16-20 million.

The research organisation felt there was justification for a 50% affordable housing requirement on all eligible sites in the borough. Currently the Council’s policy is 25% for all eligible sites defined as those comprising 25 homes or more or 1 hectare or more.

There is a sizeable private rented sector in the borough with a significant number of Asian landlords. Gravesham's Private Landlord Forum has highlighted the need to engage these landlords.

The population profile differs from others in Kent because of its high Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representation. Gravesham has the second largest Sikh community in the country as well as a significant Muslim community. A BME sheltered housing scheme is in place with commitment from the Council to support a further development.

Gravesham is located within the nationally recognised growth area known as Thames Gateway. Over the next twenty years it is anticipated that over 30,000 households and 50,000 new jobs will be created within Kent Thameside, which includes Dartford and Gravesham. This growth is particularly important in the light of the current shortage of affordable housing for existing residents and key workers.

Gravesham continues to have strong strategic links with Dartford in particular through the Kent Thameside Joint Executive Committee, Local Strategic Partnership, North Kent Area Investment Framework (which also includes Medway and Swale) and Housing Association Joint Commissioning Partnership.

The Housing Service 2001-2003 Best Value Housing for All Review covers many areas relevant to Supporting People:

- The letting of dwellings, granting of tenancies and assignments.
- Customer services, housing information and advice.
- Homelessness (feeding into the Homelessness Strategy).
- Housing development and Housing Association partnerships.
- Tenancy management.
- Resident participation.
- Rents.
- Maintenance improvement and repair of the Council stock.

Equally relevant is the 2003-2005 Best Value Review exploring the following:

- Warden services.
- Special needs services.
- General estates service.
- Caretaking.
- Caravan and mobile home parks.
- Housing strategy and business planning.

## **The Supporting People Programme within the context of other local strategies:**

### **Kent Community Care Plan (1999-2002)**

The Kent Community Care Plan 1999-2002 advocates key objectives for Housing Partnerships. To meet these objectives the County Council will aim to improve the prevention and rehabilitation services and will work in partnership towards better integration of health and social care services through joint strategies and joint commissioning of services. The plan incorporates the following priorities:

Identifying current and future needs for supported housing  
Improving integrated service delivery, development and provision across agencies  
Increase involvement of tenants in planning services and policies  
Develop Joint Investment Plans

*The Community Care Plan clearly has a significant overlap with Supporting People and the links are:*

#### Older People

- Expand provision of supported housing.
- Promote support schemes to enable people to stay in their own homes.
- Promote the use of Lifeline Community alarms.

#### Learning disability services

- Provide a full range of housing from fully independent to fully supported.
- Review the effectiveness of residential care and direct resources to community based services.
- Expand the Direct Payments scheme.
- Work in partnership with strategic partners on a learning disabilities strategy.

#### People with Physical Disabilities

- Expand the Direct Payment scheme.
- Improve access to aids and adaptations.

#### People with HIV/AIDS

- To identify HIV/AIDS strategy with stakeholders to improve health, social care, housing, lifestyles and transport.
- Identify housing and support needs.
- Improve access to services and participation in planning.

#### People with Mental Health Problems

- Improve the range of supported housing provision.
- Develop fully integrated multi disciplinary Community Mental Health Teams.
- Develop 24hr access to crisis services.

### Substance Misuse

- Work in partnership with other agencies to integrate social services with health and the voluntary sector.
- Review the use of residential services.

### Asylum Seekers

- Work with partners to provide a reasonable level of service.
- Influence the Government to place asylum seekers across a wider range of local authorities.

Gravesham is one of the four Kent hubs for placement of asylum seekers.

## **KCC Community Safety Strategic Plan (2002-2006)**

The “Building of Vibrant and Safe Communities” has been identified as one of KCC’s highest priorities. It aims to ensure that Kent residents and their families can live their lives in security and safety.

### *Link to Supporting People:*

KCC has agreed to commission Help the Aged to deliver a proven proactive target scheme that will not only reduce the risk of burglary, fire and bogus callers but will increase personal feelings of safety and security in the home.

KCC will make £860k available over the next 4 years as grant aid to Help the Aged base 6 HandyVans in Kent to make vulnerable older people’s homes safe and secure. This also links to Gravesham’s own Home Improvement Agency and Zippy Chippy schemes.

## **Gravesham Housing Strategy (2002-2007)**

Gravesham Borough Council has identified its corporate “themes” within the Community Plan as:

- Building stronger, safer and healthier communities.
- Developing partnerships for regeneration.
- Services to support, protect and advise people.
- Looking after and improving the natural and built environment.

The stated mission of the Housing Service at Gravesham is:

“The provision of decent housing for all through an accessible, equitable and well-managed service”.

The Housing Strategy incorporates the findings from Gravesham’s Housing Needs Survey 2001, preliminary findings from the West Kent Special Needs Research 2001/2, and findings from a joint survey commissioned with Dartford BC into Ethnicity-specific Housing Needs. The Special Needs Research project is incomplete at the time of writing and will be finished after the Gravesham Housing Strategy is

agreed. The Strategy is further informed by information gathered with other agencies, partners and providers through the Private Landlords and Housing Association forums, Joint Stock Referral meetings, the Care and Repair Steering Group, and the Tenants Forum.

*Links to Supporting People:*

### **Building stronger, safer and healthier communities**

- *“Elderly, single adult, lone parent, black and minority ethnic and special needs households experience higher levels of unfitness and disrepair.”*

These households to be targeted for assistance through the Private Sector Renewal Strategy which will be produced during 2002-2003.

- *“Kent County Council Social Services assess the need for disabled adaptations within the Gravesham area as 325 annually, and Gravesham’s commissioned survey identified 2000 households that require a range of adaptations.”*

Despite a major grant-funding shortfall Gravesham will continue to explore with the Occupational Therapy Bureau all means of improving service delivery. The forthcoming Best Value review may change how Gravesham delivers the disabled adaptations service.

Gravesham is planning to develop an Accessible Housing template.

### **Developing partnerships for regeneration.**

- *To reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for Homeless families.*

A pilot Voluntary Accreditation Scheme has been agreed to attract decent private landlords to providing accommodation. It is anticipated that Council renewal aid and assistance will be targeted at landlords participating in the scheme.

### **Looking after and improving the natural and built environment.**

- *“In April 2001, there were 613 private homes that had stood empty for in excess of six months”.*
- *In April 2001 almost 1200 households in housing need registered under the Common Housing Register.*

Gravesham is targeting long term empty homes and acquiring 5 year nomination rights for Homeless families in return for provision of renovation grants. This will help to reduce dependency on bed and breakfast accommodation.

- *Clear links have been identified between poor health and cold housing in the West Kent Health Improvement Plan.*

Gravesham has identified that the Home Improvement Agency makes an important contribution to delivering energy efficiency measures within the borough and will continue to fund it at current levels for the duration of the strategy.

### **Services to support, protect and advise people.**

- *“The BME survey 2000 demonstrated a desire for a variety of care and support, including the need for additional ethnic sheltered housing as well as support to remain in the family home.”*

Gravesham continues to work closely with housing association partners to make existing housing services available to all sections of the community.

Awareness raising sessions and seminars on housing options for ethnic minorities have been set up, and local lettings plans have been drawn up to target new larger family houses to the Asian community.

Gravesham supports the plan by Presentation HA to build a further sheltered facility expected to consist of 20 “category 2”, and 5 “category 2.5” units of accommodation for BME elders.

“Gravesham strives to work in partnership with KCC to ensure that all asylum seeker households are appropriately housed.” A successful bid for DTLR funding to provide translation services has been arranged.

An objective of the Housing Service is to achieve the Race Equality Council’s level 3 accreditation by 2002/2003.

- *The 1991 census showed that 23.5% of households in Gravesham were over retirement age and 13% of households included someone with a special need. These figures correlate with the recent Fordham survey.*

Gravesham acknowledges research currently being undertaken by the Special Needs Research Officer and will feed the findings into future strategies.

Gravesham’s Joint Stock arrangement with Social Services enables up to 20 vulnerable people including care-leavers, substance misusers, people with mental health problems and those with physical and learning disabilities to become tenants with Floating Support provided. When these tenants are able to live independently they are offered secure tenancies.

Gravesham supports the expansion of floating support schemes to vulnerable tenants.

- *The proportion of the population who are over 75 is predicted to increase by 13% by 2007, whilst the proportion of people who are over 85 is increasing at a rate of 26%.*

Gravesham is looking at the configuration of its sheltered schemes due to changing demographics, needs and aspirations of the elderly through its Elderly Housing

Review. The West Kent HImP has the aim of ensuring that older people remain in their own homes as long as possible.

- *Gravesham recognises that the promotion of Social Inclusion needs to be tackled on a number of fronts.*

Health Action Gravesham is developing programmes to reduce accidents amongst the elderly population and setting up forums for the harder to reach ethnic groups.

In line with West Kent HImP targets to reduce teenage pregnancies, Joint Commissioning housing association partner Hyde HA is developing a scheme for teenage mothers with a floating support service attached.

Gravesham supports the re-use of existing under-utilised stock in the borough.

Gravesham recognises that the lack of affordable housing as well as social and domestic problems continue to cause homelessness among young adults. Its "Housing for Young People" group set up in conjunction with Dartford Borough Council will continue to highlight the lack of accommodation and support for young people and to bring forward new schemes to meet that need.

- *The numbers of households approaching Gravesham as homeless has increased by 25% over the previous year. It is estimated that an extra 60 applicants will need to be accommodated by the Council annually under the new homelessness criteria, 40 of whom will be young single people.*

Gravesham currently allocates 40% of permanent tenancies annually through the Common Housing Register for homeless households.

A Rough Sleeper count in October 2000 showed nobody sleeping rough in the borough, but the hidden homeless and asylum seekers are an issue.

Gravesham will carry out a homelessness review to examine current and likely future levels of homelessness, the level of preventative work including the provision of accommodation and support being undertaken, and the resources available to undertake the service. This will enable a robust 5 year Homelessness Strategy to be drawn up during 2002-2003. Gravesham and Dartford BC are currently discussing a joint homelessness strategy.

A comprehensive advice service will be established, endorsing the principle that "prevention is better than cure". This will be further explored under the Best Value review. A Housing Advice Officer has been appointed to start in July 2002 and a bid has been made for DTLR homelessness funding to provide additional housing advice support.

## **West Kent Health Authority and KCC 10 year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (March 2001)**

The priority from this strategy is to improve services including housing and education provision for teenage parents and pregnant under 18s.

### **West Kent Health Improvement Plan (HImP) (2002-2005)**

Links with Supporting People

- Objective - to improve the health and opportunities of young pregnant women.
- Action – to work with local authorities to develop supported housing schemes for young people between 16 –18 years old so that by 2003 no unsupported pregnant young women/parent is housed in unsupported accommodation.
  
- Objective – to reduce the number of people misusing substances.
- Action – to provide outreach support and programme.
  
- Objective – to improve the wellbeing of disadvantaged groups in local communities.
- Action – establish a programme of work to address the health and social needs of travelling communities, and refugees and asylum seekers.
  
- Objective – fully implement the National Service Framework (NSF) for Mental Health and mental health aspects of the NHS plan.
- Action – through the Local Implementation Team (LIT), formulate an implementation plan to deliver a “whole system” approach to mental health across all localities and boundaries, encompassing the voluntary sector, housing, employment opportunities, ethnic minorities and users and carers.
- Action – establish a “Crisis House” in line with the agreed outline business case.
  
- Objective - improve standards of care for older people in intermediate care.
- Action – continue to improve Medical Assessment Unit to reduce avoidable admissions.

### **Learning Disability Joint Investment Plan (2001)**

The Joint Investment Plan aims to set out how Social Services, Health and other partners will work together to ensure that people with a learning disability have support, advice and access to services that they need whilst also maximising opportunities and independence where appropriate.

*Links with Supporting People:*

In relation to housing the document aims to develop the range of housing options available to people with learning disabilities, acknowledging the individuals choice of where and with whom they live.

## **Kent Drug Action Team (DAT)**

Statistics prove consistently that drug misuse by young people is a serious problem in Britain. It does not exist in isolation, often going hand in hand with a wider range of social problems: unemployment, deprivation, criminal activity, social exclusion and poor health.

Adult misusers are many times more likely to be unemployed and may suffer other problems such as homelessness, debt and criminal activity.

The Kent DAT priorities are broadly focussed on the delivery of treatment, counselling and in-patient services e.g. needle exchange, prescribing and detox services.

The priority groups highlighted by the DAT are young people, parents who are misusing, clients with a dual diagnosis, offenders awaiting resettlement and clients returning from detox treatment.

It has identified a high need for outreach (treatment) services and a need to address equality of access to services in particular women, minority ethnic groups and rural areas.

*Young people* across the county are emerging as a priority group

*Parents who are misusing* are a priority for social services. In addition it has emerged from research in Thanet that the principal reason for a young person becoming looked after was their parents drug misuse. It is believed that this is common to the whole county.

*Offenders awaiting resettlement* and who are moving to Kent face a longer than optimum wait, which contributes to high relapse rates.

Support is needed for adults with a *dual diagnosis* and the DAT is recommending additional resources to prevent this client group falling between substance misuse and mental health service provision.

*Clients returning from detox* treatment require additional support in their return to the community. The likelihood of failure is greatly increased if a support network, including housing, support and daily occupation is not readily accessible.

*Links with Supporting People:*

Supporting People can play a key role in enhancing the services available to clients who misuse substances, complementing services being provided by Health and Social Services, by providing secure and good quality housing with tenancy support, thus helping clients to sustain their programme and help reduce isolation and social exclusion. This could take the form of either supported housing specific schemes or floating support services.

## **Kent Youth Offending Team Youth Justice Plan**

Through the nationally prescribed assessment tool (ASSET) the youth justice plan highlights the following as causes of youth crime in the county:

Poor self-esteem and lack of confidence to achieve in socially acceptable ways.

- Disruption in family relationships and unsuitable housing and accommodation.
- Under achievement in education and employment.
- Difficulties accessing health care, including support to address problems of substance misuse.

Targets of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) include

- Additional family support schemes, especially to support parents of young offenders.
- Safe Schools - to reduce bullying and criminal damage.
- Help to access suitable accommodation and support.
- Drugs support programmes.
- Work with Education and Health to better meet offenders needs.
- Positive Life-Choices Programmes.
- Target to reduce rates of re-offending.

A particular target for the YOT is that all young people subject to community intervention or on release from the secure estate have satisfactory accommodation to go to.

In many instances the link between crime and factors contributing to social exclusion is clear.

### *Link with Supporting People:*

The role that Supporting People can play is in assisting with better quality and more suitable accommodation and the delivery of housing support, in conjunction with other support services to reduce the factors of social exclusion. Ongoing dialogue with the Probation Service is intended to better plan for the needs of offenders.

## **Gravesham Community Safety Strategy (2002-2005)**

The Gravesham Crime Reduction Partnership has been actively tackling local community safety issues with the aim of making Gravesham a better place in which to work and live. It is recognised that a careful balance of targeted shorter-term reactive action and longer-term preventative action will be necessary.

Key priorities have emerged from the Crime and Disorder Audit and consultation process. These are:

- Tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Reducing crimes against property.

- Reducing personal crime and supporting victims.
- Working with young people.
- Reducing crime and disorder in focus geographical areas.
- Drug-related crime and drug misuse.
- Improving partnership working and partnership development.

The following objectives arising from these priorities are *linked with Supporting People*:

- To reduce burglary from people's homes, improve home security and safety and reduce repeat victimisation.
- To develop and implement measures to improve security by designing out crime.
- To reduce the level of racially motivated crime by responding effectively to victims and by taking firm action against perpetrators.
- To develop a consistent, multi-agency response to domestic violence which addresses the needs of victims.
- To support victims who are vulnerable adults.
- To reduce drug demand by delivering a co-ordinated multi-agency programme of prevention, education, rehabilitation and physical changes to local environments.

## **Special Needs Research findings and current provision**

### **Women Fleeing Domestic Violence**

During the 18 month period of May 2000 to November 2001 approximately 2300 incidents of domestic violence within Dartford and Gravesham were reported to the police. In Gravesham alone there were 848 recorded incidents in the year 2000/1.

The research recommends that:

- women require general needs accommodation and that the only supported housing required is the interim facility of a refuge.
- Housing Allocations give lead-in notice of property availability to enable women to make appropriate benefit applications and thereby reduce risk of rent arrears and return to an abusive relationship.
- floating support should be available to women when they move on from refuges.

Gravesham currently has two schemes housing three households each, and managed by Dartford and Gravesham Women's Aid (DGWA). DGWA is currently providing floating support to women and their families who have moved on to general needs housing. The service is not funded but it should be eligible for THB which would pay for a full time support worker, shared with Dartford service users. The DGWA statistics for 2000/1 show that approximately 50% of service users came from outside of North Kent.

Gravesham part funds the Asian women's refuge in Gillingham (Medway Unitary Authority) although there is no evidence of successful referrals from Gravesham due to the problem of matching immediate need with vacancies at the scheme.

## **Single Homelessness**

Research was carried out between September and December 2001 and does not therefore pick up any seasonal variations. The survey was completed by 28 people presenting as homeless in Gravesham. The results show that:

- The vast majority (24) were aged under 25.
- The gender split was almost 50:50.
- The majority (19) were unemployed.
- The majority (19) were born in Gravesham.
- The vast majority were homeless because parents/friends/relatives were unable to accommodate them anymore or there was a breakdown with parents for reasons other than violence.

In May 2002, 27 young asylum seekers (over 18 years old) with permission to stay were assisted by Finding Your Feet (the KCC-funded organisation working with young asylum seekers) to enter applications for the housing list.

In Gravesham there are currently two single homeless schemes (Depaul Trust and Gravesend Churches HA) and a direct access hostel (House of Mercy) with a combined total of 22 bedspaces. Gravesham Borough Council have just entered into an agreement with Moving Forward to provide support to a further 15 young single homeless given tenancies in their stock. Moving Forward also provide support to tenants of 9 PSL flats managed by Hyde HA.

The responsibility on Councils for accommodating 16 to 18 year olds under the Homelessness Act is likely to have significant implications on the housing supply.

## **Homeless families**

Gravesend Churches HA provide hostel accommodation to a further 9 families referred as homeless by Gravesham Borough Council.

Gravesham have disposed of 5 houses to Moat HA with the understanding that they are for accommodating homeless families and that a more intensive housing management service will be provided by Moat as required.

Gravesham intends to enter into an agreement with Gravesend Churches HA for the association to provide housing-related support to up to 50 clients who have been referred by the Homeless Family Unit.

## **Teenage mothers**

Research published in March 2001 shows that Gravesham contains one ward (Northfleet West) where the conception rate per 1000 under 18s was 98.6. This rate is more than 1.5 times the national average.

Overall, Gravesham rates of conception increased by 29.6% from 30.4 (1992-1994) to 39.0 (1995-1997).

Hyde HA have employed a floating support worker to work with teenage mothers, and will be opening a supported unit for 7 teenage mothers in May 2003.

## **Mental Health**

During Autumn 2000, a multi-agency stakeholder group, including service users and facilitated by the Sainsbury Centre developed a model for a comprehensive secondary mental health service across West Kent.

- It places the Service User and Carer to the forefront
- It is a mechanism by which the whole system can be operated at an individual needs based level and on an effective organisational basis
- It addresses National Service Framework targets
- Delivers against previous frustration of various systems and individual services that were not necessarily well linked
- Effective practical system that can deliver on partnership working and address the interface with primary care.
- Single point of entry to secondary mental health care services

People may suffer from a range of mental health problems, which may vary in severity and impact that it has on daily functioning over time. It is essential to provide a continuum of care which allows people to move through it in either direction as their needs change, whilst also allowing for an individual to remain within a resource if it meets their long term needs. A whole systems approach dictates that a continuum within one area of service provision e.g. residential services must be co-ordinated with other areas of service provision in order that they complement and support one another and therefore provide easy and appropriate access to the whole system.

For housing services a comprehensive continuum will include the following;

- 24 hours nursing home care
- Acute in-patient care
- Rehabilitation service
- Crisis resolution (a home based and residential based service)
- 24 hour residential care
- Supported accommodation – with varying levels of support
- Support in an individual's homes (for both the service user and carer)

Following initial consultation with Housing Associations, Allocation Teams, Community Mental Health Teams and District and Borough Councils, allocation of suitable property to people with mental health problems is an issue of concern across the whole of the West Kent Area. Results of these initial consultations indicate there are two methods that could be implemented to address current issues of concern,

- i. Develop supported housing schemes aimed at people with mental health problems who have never held a tenancy before or who have issues surrounding the maintenance of a tenancy. The scheme to be of a transitional nature providing people with support to gain the lifeskills necessary to enable them to maintain a tenancy and move on into the community at an appropriate time.

- ii. Housing related floating support to be provided to people with mental health problems living in the local community.

Based on 1999 population figures, the research indicates that for those people who require some degree of housing support rather than hospitalisation there is a need for 39 bedspaces in Gravesham. The suggested support requirements within these 39 break down to 10 minimal support, 19 medium support and 10 high support. Gravesham currently has 18 bedspaces in the voluntary/HA sector (MIND, MCCH and Hyde HA). Private provider Cubfield has 13 bedspaces. Advance HA will manage 6 flats which will become available post April 2003. A further 14 residential care home bedspaces are available in the private sector. Gravesham therefore will have a total of 51 bedspaces in a range of accommodation, where 39 is considered the number required for the population.

The Mental Health team however feel that service users from outside of Gravesham may skew the figures for provision in Gravesham, and that it doesn't necessarily meet the overall population requirement for residents of the borough. The opening of the Advance HA project should however ensure adequate provision.

The Mental Health team feel that Cubfield provide a service for people with complex problems who might ordinarily have difficulty being accommodated, and that these service users are likely to be more successful in a subsequent council tenancy than if they had gone directly through the Joint Stock agreement process.

Gravesham Borough Council is actively looking for partners to work with its general needs tenants who may have mental health problems. The Mental Health team has identified 22 people on their caseload who require some degree of housing support and who live in council stock. Currently Stonham HA provide a floating support service to people with mental health problems housed through the Joint Stock referral process.

Three potential groups identified by the Mental Health team as having possible housing support needs which are not currently being addressed, although there is no quantifiable data, are as follows:

- Sikh men with mental health and drinking problems.
- Young people apparently experiencing problems with their parents, who may in adulthood be diagnosed with a personality disorder.
- People discharged from hospital following an event such as a drugs overdose, who don't have a mental health problem but who are likely to experience difficulties in maintaining their tenancies on return to their communities.

There is anecdotal evidence that people from London boroughs are being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in the area and form the majority of this latter group.

## **Learning Disability**

Current provision in Gravesham is mainly residential care homes. Hyde HA in conjunction with Mencap and Elizabeth Fitzroy have 25 bedspaces in three schemes. One of the properties is unsuitable for its present service users, some of whom use wheelchairs. It is probable that 4 people may need more appropriate accommodation.

In addition there are 21 bedspaces in three schemes run by the National Autistic Society. Autism is often generalised as a learning difficulty although there are good arguments for keeping them separate. Approximately 16 of the bedspaces are filled by people who come from outside Gravesham and 9 of these come from outside of Kent or Medway due to its specialist nature. There are therefore issues around whether services for people with autism should be classed as cross-authority.

Gravesend Churches HA provide 10 units of supported housing in one scheme in Gravesham. They also have one scheme of 9 units of supported housing in Dartford for people with physical difficulties which is available to people with learning difficulties as a secondary client group. Both schemes are a joint resource across the two boroughs.

Similarly Gravesham Borough Council have an 18 bedspace unit within their sheltered stock which for Supporting People purposes describes people with physical disabilities as its primary client group and people with learning disabilities as its secondary client group. In reality the scheme houses people with learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities, people with minor mental health problems, or people who have any combination of the three.

The Disabilities team have identified 25 Gravesham Borough Council tenants on their caseload who currently receive housing-related support and a further 7 who may require support in the future.

The Home Support Network (a KCC in-house support provider) currently provide to Gravesham tenants with a learning disability support which could be funded through Transitional Housing Benefit rather than the Social Services budget.

Archery House, the Health Trust facility in Dartford currently houses 53 people who mainly originated from Dartford, Gravesham, and Sevenoaks (Swanley). The aim is for them to return to their respective boroughs.

The Trust is looking for RSL partners to develop accommodation in the community for the people presently there. Recent action in this respect has been slow due to the impending merger with Invicta Health Trust and the problem of moving sufficient numbers of clients initially to allow staff savings at Archery House whilst allowing community facilities to be staffed sufficiently. Also the plans for Health mean that residential accommodation will no longer be in the remit of Health Trusts.

Everyone at Archery House would initially require 24 hour support in community accommodation although this could be phased out over time for some. Many of them

are elderly but their learning disability label makes it difficult to place them in mainstream elderly accommodation.

The Moving On project group has produced an interim report suggesting four main housing options for people with learning disabilities:

- transitional schemes (shared housing with housing related support) lasting 2 to 5 years.
- self-contained flats with warden.
- general needs accommodation with floating support.
- shared ownership.

Service users who do not require residential care will be encouraged and supported to complete housing application forms.

Information gathered by Care Managers and Social Workers regarding service users able to move to more independent accommodation in the next 5 years shows that in Gravesham, 4 people will be in need of transitional accommodation and 14 will need self-contained flat-type accommodation with support.

### **Physical Disability**

Gravesham Borough Council has an 18 bedspace sheltered unit for people with physical disabilities, the secondary client group being people with learning disabilities. There is a waiting list for this facility. Gravesend Churches HA has a 9 bedspace facility in Dartford which is a shared resource and has people with learning disabilities as a secondary client group.

The Council is currently reviewing its policy of requiring 25% of new affordable housing to be lifetime homes.

### **Substance Misuse**

Kenward Trust have a 5 bed supported house for men only in Gravesham. It is the only supported scheme in North Kent. The Trust did operate a scheme for women in Dartford until recently but the lease was not renewed by the owning housing association due to disagreement about the acceptable level of voids there. In the opinion of the Trust the need for such a scheme is still there. The nature of the problems that service users face in their home neighbourhoods means that they tend to originate from outside of Kent, making this a cross authority service.

Stonham HA have received Social Service funding for a floating support worker to work with substance misusers across the whole of West Kent although the amount was insufficient to cover the cost of the service. It was agreed that Stonham would bid to the Housing Corporation for further funding and if unsuccessful the original funding will be returned to Social Services.

The Mental Health team have identified that there is a group of people who are discharged from hospital following an event such as a drugs overdose, who don't have a mental health problem but who are likely to experience difficulties in maintaining their tenancies on return to their communities. There is anecdotal evidence that

people from London boroughs are being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in the area and form the majority of this group.

### **Ex-offenders**

Gravesham currently has a scheme for 6 male service users run by HOPE. Schemes for women exist in Medway and Maidstone. Service users tend to come from out of area making this a cross authority service. Referrals come only from the Probation Service who fund the scheme. HOPE staff decide whether to accept the referrals based on any vacancies and their knowledge of the mix of existing tenants. HOPE do not keep a waiting list as such because of the immediacy of need of service users. However where potential service users are on parole or in police custody then a waiting list can be kept.

The Probation Service has indicated to HOPE a desire to set up a county-wide floating support service for ex-offenders though there is as yet no indication of numbers involved.

### **Elderly**

Gravesham Borough Council has 608 elderly sheltered units spread across 19 schemes. There are approximately an additional 680 tenants living in semi-sheltered schemes who receive a support service from council staff.

Presentation HA have a 14 unit scheme for Asian elderly. Presentation are currently looking for a site to develop a new scheme for Asian elders which is expected to consist of 25 units including 5 for frail elderly, enabling a carer to live with the tenant. Gravesham Borough Council support this development.

Shaftsbury HA have a 36 unit scheme in the borough.

There is no complete source of data on private sheltered/leasehold schemes in the borough. One scheme, St James Oaks came forward early, based on advice from the Association of Retirement Home Managers (ARHM), however latest advice from ARHM to its members is to avoid filling out SP3 forms until the issue of where the sector fits in the Supporting People programme is resolved.

KCC's list of residential care homes (January 2002) shows that there are 266 bedspaces across the borough in private, voluntary and Abbeyfield schemes. In addition there are 73 bedspaces for the elderly mentally infirm in private provision.

A number of Almshouses operate in the borough. All were informed of Supporting People in writing and invited to a presentation in order to decide whether to be part of the programme or not. No schemes have indicated an intention to join the programme. This may be because the amount of housing support provided is minimal or provided at no charge through charitable resources, and organisations may have made the business decision to retain their independence from statutory funding and monitoring.

Moat Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency (HIA) continues to enjoy the support and grant funding of Gravesham Borough Council, Dartford Borough Council and Kent County Council. The HIA is the principle provider of maintenance/repairs advice and work for homeowners and tenants from the private sector, 80% of whom must be in the social priority category (elderly, disabled, low income). The HIA has employed an Asian caseworker to help generate referrals from the Asian community.

Gravesham has plans to set up a “Community Bank” to assist the elderly in funding home repairs through the release of equity in their properties, and is reviewing renovation grant policy and similar issues.

### **Young People leaving care**

Current provision consists of 6 supported units managed by Moving Forward in a Gravesend Churches HA property and 2 units of accommodation managed by Kent Triple Key.

The 16 Plus Team report indicates the following:

Approximately 100 young people leave care in Kent each year, and about 25 of these are in West Kent. Roughly 16 of these will want to live in Dartford or Gravesham because it is their area of current residence.

The 16 Plus team feel that Gravesham Borough Council is very supportive in making accommodation available to young people. There is a need though for a greater variety of accommodation across Kent. Specifically mentioned as needy are pregnant women/young mothers, and young people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health problems. Sheltered accommodation with resident warden was suggested as ideal.

Supportive accommodation for “hard to place” young people and move on accommodation for all young people to live independently is in short supply.

The majority (80%) of young people leaving care will require some support and approximately 10% will require intensive support.

### **Vulnerable (non-specific)**

Gravesham BC have leased 15 properties to Stonham HA to accommodate vulnerable people who require housing-related support.

From January 2003 Hyde will be running a floating support scheme across Dartford and Gravesham for a maximum of 15 of their general needs tenants.

### **Asylum Seekers**

Gravesham have bid for DTLR funding under the Homelessness Act 2002 to provide translation services for former asylum seekers, particularly unaccompanied minors.

## **Travellers**

Gravesham have recently refurbished their Denton site, which has pitches for 8 licensees. The majority of families are long-term licensees.

## **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Issues**

The BME Survey 2000 found that:

- The BME community was 13440, or 14% of the population.
- In Gravesham, most Asian BME communities are concentrated in Pelham, Northfleet East and Riverside wards.
- No mental health problems were identified across the borough.
- (Learning disability questions were not asked).
- 11% of BME households in Gravesham have someone with special needs who may be described as frail elderly. (special needs refer to medical conditions such as diabetes, heart conditions etc) Figure is similar to white control group.
- Awareness of Sheltered Housing is quite good but perceptions of it not so good for reasons of culture, family support, food needs and feelings of humiliation. However the Presentation HA scheme is not seen in this negative way.
- There is a recognition among elders that young BME are adopting western attitudes to family life. In particular, extended families are becoming less the norm so that increasingly elders cannot depend on family support under the same roof.

The recommendation for Gravesham was to extend development of sheltered housing by BME providers.

Presentation HA has 14 units of sheltered housing for Asian elders. There is a waiting list of approximately 20 referrals, mainly via the Guru Nanak day centre.

Presentation HA are looking for a site in the borough to develop a second scheme which is envisaged will consist of 25 units including 5 for frail elderly who may require live-in carers. The new scheme will endeavour to be a mixed one, with tenants from all sections of the community including different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Moat Care and Repair have employed an Asian caseworker to try and encourage referrals from the Asian community.

Gravesham Borough Council is investigating how to better engage Asian private landlords through their Private Landlords Forum.

There is anecdotal evidence from the Mental Health team that there is a growing incidence of Sikh men with mental health and drinking problems in the borough.

Gravesham Borough Council continues to part fund the Asian Women's Refuge in Medway Unitary Authority although the ability to make referrals to it depends on bedspaces at the scheme being available when a woman presents as being in need.

## Appendix 3

## References.

- (1) The Supporting People Partnership For Nottinghamshire.  
Establishing Tenancy Support Services  
A Guide to Rent Support Charges and Transitional Housing Benefit  
in the run up to Supporting People  
(Ruth Rigby & Mark Kitney)

## List of Acronyms:

ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
THB	Transitional Housing Benefit
SP	Supporting People
SSD	Social Service Department
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
AA	Administering Authority
SHMG	Sheltered Housing Management Grant
DW&P	Department of Work and Pensions
SPINTLS	Supporting People Interim System
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
SPIT	Supporting People Implementation Team
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
HImP	Health Improvement Plan
NSF	National Service Framework
DAT	Drug Action Team
DGWA	Dartford & Gravesham Women's Aid
HOPE	Helping Offenders Prisoners Families