

Roles & Responsibilities within the Supporting People programme

Introduction

This document has been produced in response to requests received from across the Supporting People sector for clarification on the respective roles and responsibilities of the main players within the Supporting People framework. It therefore sets out below the expectations ODPM have of :

- The Commissioning Body;
- The Core Strategy Group;
- The Administering Authority;
- Elected Members;
- The Supporting People Accountable Officer;
- The Supporting People Lead Officer; and
- Bodies involved in cross-authority and regional working.

What follows is not intended to be an exhaustive description of roles and responsibilities. Nor is it intended to be prescriptive. Authorities should continue to consider the most appropriate local arrangements, provided that they are consistent with the core requirements and objectives of the Supporting People programme. In all cases this will mean the Supporting People programme will need to harness a range of skills, knowledge and resources from across the Administering Authority and indeed from its partners, and not be left as the sole preserve of a Supporting Team.



The Commissioning Body

- A Partnership of senior representatives with decision making powers from:
 - Administering Authority (particularly, but not exclusively, strategic housing and social care functions)
 - Probation
 - Primary Care Trust(s)
 - (In counties) District Authorities (particularly strategic housing function)
- Terms of reference should be in place which include a clear agreement on voting arrangements, when these will be invoked and how conflicts will be addressed and resolved. The roles of local authority elected members and PCT and Probation board members should be determined and agreed.
- Strategic oversight of the local Supporting People programme – including (but not solely) :
 - Oversight of service review process
 - Agree objectives and timetable for reviews
 - Understanding of process for reviews
 - Agree process of receiving reports on reviews
 - Monitoring of progress against timetable
 - Hear a review of a service review, where requested by a provider
 - Oversight of commissioning and decommissioning process
 - Set strategic objectives
 - Agree overall process, including rules for where decisions can be delegated and where key decisions come to the CB
 - Oversight of forward strategic planning
 - Ensure preparation and publication of 5-Year Strategy
 - Provide strategic steer for preparation of strategy
 - Agree and monitor progress of process for preparation of strategy
 - Set local SP priorities, as reflected in strategy
 - Ensure strategy recognises and addresses cross-authority and regional issues, including collaborative opportunities
 - Ensure the strategy reflects the priorities of the Community Plan
 - Sign off and own strategy
 - Oversight of administration of the programme by the Administering Authority



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- Satisfy selves that grant conditions and statutory guidance are being adhered to
- Satisfy selves that SP is being delivered in line with the strategy
- Receive and approve key performance information on service reviews, progress against key milestones & grant expenditure
- Partners should be represented at a level which allows the partnership to take strategic and commissioning level decisions – not only as the Commissioning Body, but on behalf of their own organisations
- Partners should bring their own expertise to the decision making process, as part of ensuring that all issues are covered. But decisions should be taken in the interest of the overall local programme and in accord with the Community Plan.



The Core Strategy Group

- Broader membership than Commissioning Body – potentially open to all key partners, including internal & external providers
- Partnership for close working around detail of issues facilitated by the administering authority.
- This group is responsible for ensuring the progress of the programme and driving improvements. Its representatives should be drawn from operational managers or their equivalents. The members of this group should be able to :
 - Analyse information presented to them;
 - Bring information and expertise about their particular service areas/ user groups;
 - Develop shared targets and performance indicators; and
 - Identify opportunities for programme development and promote innovation.
- Terms of reference will be required for this group to provide clarity about the relationship with the CB and the parameters for action. A memorandum of understanding will help to outline the decision making powers and the role of providers, their nomination to the group and their obligations in sharing outcomes with their wider membership.
- Leads on development of 5-Year Strategy and proposes this to the Commissioning Body
- Makes recommendations to the Commissioning Body and engages in activities that may include the following:
 - oversee Supporting People action plan & assesses progress;
 - receive performance monitoring reports;
 - receive financial / grant expenditure reports;
 - monitor effectiveness of partnership working;
 - identify additional funding opportunities across the partnership;



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- monitor and enable the engagement of service users including identifying opportunities to improve user participation; and
- monitor and seek to address gaps in services and unmet needs.



The Administering Authority

- Responsible for the day-to-day administration and delivery of the Supporting People programme.
- The Administering Authority is not synonymous with the SP team. While the SP team will lead within the AA on SP matters, it is the wider authority which is responsible for the programme. As such, the SP team should enjoy and draw on access to support and expertise from across the authority. Some authorities have created virtual Supporting People teams, seeing this as the best way to ensure that the programme well integrated into the mainstream work of the authority and makes best use of the range of relevant expertise within the authority.
- Principal responsibilities are to :
 - Service and facilitate the Commissioning Body. The AA effectively acts as a Secretariat to the CB, which relies on it for timely support and advice. This function will require the agreement of clear lines of responsibility and communication, which should be reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding;
 - Carry out the service review process and report outcomes to Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group as agreed;
 - Undertake the research and development of the 5-Year Strategy under the direction of the Commissioning Body;
 - Manage the individual Supporting People contracts, payments and the relationships with the providers;
 - Monitor and report grant expenditure;
 - Carry out performance monitoring and management and report to the relevant bodies at agreed intervals including national Supporting People PIs;
 - Develop local PIs with key partners and be responsible for their collection and analysis;
 - Deliver the programme in line with the strategic objectives set by the Commissioning Body and secure Best Value;



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- Manage the overall programme in line with the standing orders of the local authority and with best practice in procurement and contract and programme management;
- Build and maintain links with other authorities, agencies, service users and delivery partners;
- Pursue and realise opportunities for cross-authority and cross-agency procurement and service delivery;
- Ensure the availability of good communication and ease of access to services for all users;
- Carry out reality checks to ensure quality of services; and
- Manage, support and encourage the provider base.



Elected Members

- Elected Members need to ensure corporate support for the Supporting People programme. Within this, they should make sure that :
 - Supporting People is well integrated into local plans for housing, social care, education, employment and regeneration;
 - Connections are made between Supporting People and other local programmes (both those delivered by the authority and others more broadly); and
 - Supporting People becomes part of the mainstream of council activity.
- Members should act as champions for the programme to ensure it is recognised within the authority, including by partners and the general public. Publicly acknowledging and valuing the programme will assist officers in making and maintaining effective working relationships with commissioning partners and with providers.
- Through their local ward knowledge, elected Members have a key role in informing and making the case for services for vulnerable people and in feeding back experiences of people who use the services. This will include not only existing service users but many who may be at present denied a service, perhaps because of gaps in service provision, or because of some of the tenure restrictions of legacy services.
- Clear arrangements will need to be put in place between the Administering Authority and Commissioning Body to allow elected Members to feed their knowledge, including the local political perspective, into Commissioning Body deliberations.
- Elected members may wish to consider developing partnership arrangements with board members in the PCTs and Probation in order to strengthen and consolidate the partnership arrangements established through the Commissioning Body. They may also wish to put in place similar arrangements to support cross-authority partnership working.



The Accountable Officer

- The Accountable Officer should have sufficient seniority to actively participate in key strategic groups in order to drive forward the programme and mainstream SP into everyday AA activity.
- The Accountable Officer should also be responsible for ensuring that the Supporting People programme is recognised within the authority and that the SP team is able to access the resources and support needed to administer the programme.
- This is a very different role from that of the lead officer who actively manages all the tasks and people involved in delivering the programme – the SP lead officer is often line managed by the Accountable Officer.
- Clear lines of responsibility for the SP lead officer and Accountable Officer are essential – some authorities have seen the two roles merging over a period of time with the lead officer taking on much more of a strategic role with the Accountable Officer being less involved. Whilst ODPM have no issue with the Lead Officer being more involved strategically there should still be a clear role for the Accountable Officer.
- It would not be appropriate for the Accountable Officer to chair the Commissioning Body, given the purpose of this body in overseeing the programme, but it would be appropriate for the AO to chair the CSG. The Accountable Officer is answerable to the Commissioning Body for the performance of the programme on behalf of the Administering Authority.
- The Accountable Officer has a key role in establishing and sustaining partnerships with PCTs and Probation at strategic and operational levels.



The Lead Officer

- Manages the team which carries out the day-to-day administration of the programme.
- With the SP team, the Lead Officer ensures that the responsibilities and functions of the Administering Authority are carried out – i.e.
 - Service and facilitate the Commissioning Body;
 - Manage the service review process;
 - Facilitate the development of the 5-Year Strategy;
 - Manage the individual Supporting People contracts and the relationships with the providers;
 - Ensure delivery of the programme in line with the strategic objectives set by the Commissioning Body and consistently with Best Value requirements;
 - Manage the overall programme in line with propriety and financial probity rules;
 - Build and maintain links with other authorities, agencies and delivery partners and act as SP representatives on other bodies and groups;
 - Pursue and realise opportunities for cross-authority and cross-agency procurement and service delivery;
 - Provide support and encouragement to the provider base; and
 - Ensure opportunities for consultation with providers, users and other stakeholders.



Cross Authority and Regional Working

- The Cross Authority Groups (as proposed in *Focus on the Future*) were intended to be a mechanism for monitoring cross-authority service usage and for wider cooperation and collaboration around the commissioning, management and delivery of services on a joint / cross authority basis.
- As it has not proved possible to for ODPM to set robust or meaningful cross-authority targets, the formal monitoring role envisaged for the CAGs has become redundant. In some cases, the CAGs have provided opportunities for effective joint working across authority boundaries. However, in other instances authorities have rightly noted that the group which they are in does not pick up all of the relevant cross-authority issues.
- The Supporting People Regional Groups (originally, and in some cases still, known as the Regional Implementation Groups) have also provided opportunities for effective joint working across authority boundaries.
- As is reflected in previous pages of this document, there is an expectation within the programme that Commissioning Bodies and Administering Authorities should identify and pursue opportunities for cross-authority working and solutions where that is the most effective way of providing effective and efficient services and meeting local needs. Joint working will particularly provide a better structured way for authorities to together manage issues around cross authority access to services, but should not be limited to this.
- Cross-authority solutions are likely to mean joint commissioning, joint procurement and / or joint management of a service across a region or sub-region. The development and implementation of the Supporting People programme has led to a situation where there are few or no services where the contracts are held on a cross-authority basis. That is why, when looking at what services should become designated services, we stated that there is no such thing as a cross authority service¹. But there is nothing in the grant conditions or other framework documents for the programme which prevent authorities entering into jointly into new contracts.
- In taking the programme forward, authorities are encouraged to look at the joint provision of services. That might include, for example, circumstances where

¹ *Focus on the Future*, page 16



- the vulnerable group under consideration is mobile by nature (such as people fleeing domestic violence or people who are homeless) where there is a benefit to planning and managing service provision across a broader area. In such circumstances, it will be more important to have the right level and mix of provision – particularly where linked to hostel or refuge provision – across a region as a whole, rather than for individual authorities to each have identical provision within their own boundaries. A joint, shared strategic approach will provide benefits both to authorities – by allowing them to jointly fund and manage a more effective range of services – and to service users – for whom there would be a better service range.
- there is a low level of need (which may include a specialist need) in a particular authority area which it may not be economic to deliver except when aggregated across a group of authorities. This would again be better addressed by a jointly commissioned and funded service, which would both be a more efficient use of the available funds and help to maximise the level of service provision which can be achieved.
- for historical reasons, the service premises are in one area but its users are more geographically spread and it would be more sensible and fair for all of the authorities affected to jointly fund and manage the service
- there are opportunities to improve value for money through aggregation of Supporting People contracts across a number of authorities. This could apply for any client group or form of service, and exploration of joint commissioning should not therefore be limited to the circumstances listed above.
- In looking at cross-authority issues, the CAGs and Regional Groups are useful fora for bringing authorities together. However, Commissioning Bodies and Administering Authorities should ensure that they look more broadly and identify and build working links with all authorities with whom they have common issues. This is likely to include all authorities with whom they share a boundary. It can, however, also include authorities who have common needs, borders and issues (for example, the Core Cities, two-tier authorities and seaside towns).
- Issues which should be looked at on a joint or cross authority basis include:



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- development of complementary strategies (in the case of cross authority issues) and of regional strategies including the Supporting People contribution to the regional housing strategy
- common service review and other Supporting People processes
- joint service reviews where there is a common service provider
- joint commissioning and management of services where there is a shared need
- common accreditation and pre-qualification processes
- standardisation of procurement documentation and processes
- sharing experiences, innovation and good practice examples to enable all authorities to learn from one another