Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities

Creating Sustainable Communities: Supporting Independence

Consultation on a Strategy for the Supporting People Programme

November 2005

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Supporting vulnerable people to live independent lives is an important element of building better communities. It is very easy for people starting with disadvantages to slip into deprivation and social exclusion. And lack of help in finding the right accommodation and ongoing support can be the crunch point.

We have already done much to tackle disadvantage and support the most vulnerable. The number of people rough sleeping is down by two-thirds and we have ended the long-term use of B&Bs for families. We are also providing support to improve our most deprived neighbourhoods as a high priority. Through our Social Exclusion Unit, we have identified and started to address root causes of deprivation and pockets where the problems are particularly severe.

Over the current three year spending period we are investing more than £5 billion through the Supporting People programme to help people overcome their housing problems. Often, as a result of being able to find and stay in housing that meets their needs, people can regain self-respect and, for those who have been socially excluded, the respect of others in their community. Now it is time to look across the programme and see if we could do even better. The recent report from the Audit Commission will help us in doing so.
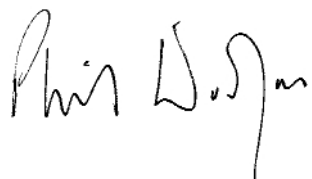
Supporting People is a cross-Government programme and, not surprisingly, an important part of delivering many key objectives and strategies. These include supporting older people in our communities, as set out in Opportunity Age. The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit's work on improving life chances for people with disabilities is another. The Reducing Reoffending Action Plan, which helps many people restart their lives, is a third. And there are key links to taking forward the future delivery of social care.

The work of ODPM's own Social Exclusion Unit indicates that the programme has already made a real difference. It has brought a clarity and focus to the support available for vulnerable people, including a more sustained focus on quality and involving the service user. By supporting the work of the voluntary and community sector, it has brought into focus the community leadership role of councils and councillors and what can be achieved in partnership. I have seen some of the excellent results first hand.

Now we need to build on this work and make sure the Supporting People programme is delivering what is needed in the best way possible. How services are delivered in the local scene is changing rapidly and we need to look at the programme in the light of these changes. Supporting People must be fully

integrated with local strategies and plans aimed at tackling priorities in the area and improving the quality of life for people in our communities. All services need to be designed and delivered with a better focus on the service user. And in central government we need to make sure that we put the right framework and flexibilities in place to allow all of this happen.

This is an important time for taking forward Supporting People, and I look forward to hearing your views on how we can best do that.

Phil Woolas
Minister for Local Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting People is a grant programme which enables the provision of housing-related support services to help vulnerable people maintain or improve their ability to live independently. This support might include helping an older person stay in their own home, helping someone coming out of homelessness to move towards having their own home, or helping a woman fleeing domestic violence to resettle following a crisis situation.

Supporting People is a successful programme. It enables over 1.2 million of society's most vulnerable people to live independently, and in doing so contributes to the achievement of important national and local objectives. But there remain areas for improvement, and Government wants to consider how to build on what the programme has already achieved.

The key focus of the programme should be on getting the right services and outcomes for vulnerable people. This needs local authorities, working in partnership with other service commissioners and with service providers, to make sure that all local services, including Supporting People services, are coordinated to work together properly. It requires authorities and providers to make sure that service design and provision is integrated and focused around and involves the users. And all, including Government, need to ensure that the programme is focused on outcomes rather than process.

Housing-related support works with a wide range of vulnerable groups, and there is no such thing as a typical service user. This diversity can make it more difficult to think about joining up services. We think that Supporting People generally works with three different broad types of need and, while it is a simplification, this provides a model for thinking about service design and provision. These three types of need are:

- People in receipt of care with support, for whom housing-related support underpins health and social care services. We believe that there are opportunities to improve how these services are commissioned and provided as an integrated package;

- People living independently with support only, for whom a small amount of support (such as a warden or a community alarm) makes a critical difference in being able to remain independent. We believe that there are opportunities to improve the extent to which this support is made available to people in their own homes; and

- People experiencing or at risk of social exclusion, for whom housing-related support plays an essential part in preventing or dealing with a crisis situation

and restoring independence in a sustainable way. We believe that there remain challenges to ensure that local government and other agencies focus properly on the needs of this group.

In promoting an improved focus on and within the provision of housing-related support, it is important that we also ensure funding arrangements support delivery. We need to consider whether we should change how we share out the funding and whether we need to offer more flexibility about how the funding can be used. We want to encourage the use of Local Area Agreements as a way to locally integrate funding and through that services. We also intend to make Supporting People part of testing the individual budget approach, which will give the individual greater choice and control of services.

It is important that authorities and providers continue to make sure that the management of the Supporting People programme is carried out in an efficient and effective manner. We need to consider whether Supporting People still needs its own specified administrative framework, such as the Commissioning Body, or whether authorities should have flexibility to make their own partnership arrangements. We also need to look at how we can improve joint working between county and district authorities.

Authorities have the opportunity to consider how to take forward effective management and monitoring of contracts. In doing so, we expect them to ensure that the administrative cost to both themselves and to providers is understood and minimised. We also expect authorities to apply best procurement practice, and to ensure appropriate support for the voluntary and community sector.

Technological solutions, such as the new Directory of Services, have always been an important part of the delivery of Supporting People. We want to consider how we might build on Directory as a means of supporting user choice of services. We need to look at how technology might support authorities and providers in most effectively tracking service outcomes, in enabling effective exchange of information between organisations, and in operating the programme and services more generally.

This document sets out the Government's views on these matters. But it also invites your views. We look forward to receiving them.

CHAPTER ONE
Why do we need a Supporting People strategy?

Supporting People enables over 1.2 million of society's most vulnerable people to maintain or improve their independence. It is a successful programme, but we want to consider how to build on this success. This document sets out our thinking on how we might approach this, and asks for your views.

WHAT IS SUPPORTING PEOPLE?

1. The Government is committed to supporting and enabling independent living. People generally want to live in their own homes if they can. But some people, often amongst the most vulnerable, need help and support to be able to do so.

2. This help and support can take a number of different forms. One form is housing-related support – that is, support which is specifically linked to helping a person either stay in their own home or move towards having their own home. Generally, this will mean helping them to be able to do things for themselves, rather than bringing in a service to do it for them, and might include:

   • Helping to develop life skills, such as understanding their tenancy agreement, budgeting and cooking, which will enable them to be able to live by themselves. This might apply equally to a teenage mother moving towards her own tenancy or a widower now managing a home for himself;

   • Support in accessing services and benefits. This might include helping an ex-offender to register with utilities and health services as she settles in the community, or helping to ensure that an older person is claiming his benefits;

   • Support in accessing training and employment. This might include helping a young person enter work for the first time, or a person with learning difficulties in moving into further education; and

   • Support through warden and / or alarm services. This assists independence through reassurance that help can be called if needed, and might be either a system within sheltered accommodation or a community alarm for a person in their private sector home. These are often associated with support for older people, but can be used much more broadly – including, for example, to support a woman resettling in the community after experiencing domestic violence.

3. Supporting People is a Government programme designed specifically to enable and deliver the provision of housing-related support. While it operates throughout the United Kingdom, it is overseen separately by ODPM (for England) and by the devolved administrations. This document applies to Supporting People in England.

4. Through the programme, we have invested over £5 billion over three years to enable the provision of support services at the local level. This has enabled local authorities to identify and commission the services which are needed locally, and service providers to work directly with vulnerable people. The programme is an essential part of the Government's drive to tackle disadvantage, reduce social exclusion and create sustainable communities. It helps to improve the quality of life for some of society's most vulnerable people, allowing them to move towards or maintain their independence, and prevent them entering into crisis, homelessness or institutional care.

WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

5. Supporting People is a successful programme. Over 1.2 million vulnerable people are receiving the support they need to live independently. Drawing housing-related support services together in a single programme has enabled a strategic and coordinated approach to service provision. Authorities are starting to recognise how support fits with health, care and other support services, particularly as a means of early intervention and crisis prevention. Working against the standards set through the Quality Assessment Framework has allowed providers and authorities to drive up and sustain quality and to build up service user involvement in defining what is provided.

6. We want to maintain and build on this success. The creation of Supporting People was a significant change, bringing together funding streams from across Government. As with any major change, there have inevitably been issues to work through and challenges to address. Recent issues around the level and distribution of funding have diluted the focus on strategic use and development of services. More needs to be done to integrate housing-related support and other services. Evidence from Audit Commission inspections suggests that many authorities have been slow to take ownership of Supporting People at the corporate level, thereby missing opportunities to make best use of the value of its services.

7. There are also a number of ongoing challenges for all public services to which Supporting People needs equally to respond. Local authorities and providers need to make sure that their services as a whole, and also their administrative practices, are as efficient and effective as possible. These services should be more responsive to what service users want, and to allow them choice. The assessment of needs and the provision of services should become better integrated, allowing users to work with one individual or agency rather than many. And authorities need to better define, and then support, the strategic role of the voluntary and community sector in providing their local services.

8. It is therefore timely to take stock of the Supporting People programme. At a time when Government and authorities are considering how to best invest public money, it is important to recognise the value of preventative services. There is much that has been achieved and learned in the early phases of Supporting People, particularly around prevention, service outcomes and understanding service needs, which can be transferred to other areas of service provision. But there is also an opportunity to build on this and take the role and provision of housing-related support further forward. In doing so, we will be able to draw upon the findings of the recent Audit Commission report. Thinking about these matters at this time will allow us to feed our conclusions into the process for the Comprehensive Spending Review.

9. Supporting People itself is at a crossroads. Authorities have put in place their 5 Year strategies and are moving towards the completion of their programme of service reviews. Through this, they will know what services they want and how well the existing services meet that vision. And providers will have been able to assess their services and understand how they contribute to local service delivery. The next phase is for authorities and providers to manage local changes. And, as that happens, the end of a formal ODPM requirement for service reviews provides an opportunity to consider how to most effectively manage performance and quality assurance in the future.

What do we want from a strategy?

10. The Government's programme of public service reform is ensuring that services become focused on and driven by what the service user wants. The arrangements for the commissioning and provision of housing-related support must work to ensure this happens.

11. The Supporting People strategy will be developed to ensure that:

    • Preventative approaches continue to be developed which enable independence and quality of life and avoid unnecessary use of costly crisis services;

    • Housing-related support services are properly and effectively integrated with the other local services that vulnerable people need and receive;

    • Services are designed and focused around the user, and are delivered in a way which allows them choice as to what they receive;

    • Local authorities have flexibility to decide how to most effectively invest across all of the services needed to support independent living;

    • The framework established for the commissioning of services best reflects what is needed to take an informed and integrated approach at the local level; and

    • The role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) as key deliverers of support to vulnerable people is recognised and supported.

These principles therefore set the context for both this consultation and for the work which we will carry out to develop a more detailed forward strategy. We are clear what we want to achieve, but we need to consider how we can best do that.

WHAT DO WE WANT FROM THIS CONSULTATION?

12. Supporting People is at its best where it is understood, owned and managed locally. It is authorities and their local partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors who are best placed to know their local context – what is needed (including where the need is cross-authority or regional), what the priorities are, and what other services are in place. And it is service providers who are best placed to innovate and improve around service delivery.

13. This document does not, therefore, seek to impose a solution from the top-down. Rather, it seeks to stimulate and provide the basis for a discussion on how best to take forward the commissioning and delivery of housing-related support. In doing so, we have put forward the Government's preliminary views, but we also raise a number of key questions and we would welcome input. This will allow us to better develop a strategy for Supporting People, and we would intend to issue our further thinking following the consultation in Summer 2006.

14. As is stated above, this document (and therefore this consultation) applies to Supporting People in England only. Its contents have, however, been discussed with the devolved administrations, as will any conclusions following this consultation. The devolved administrations will consider separately what implications this work might have for their own Supporting People programmes.

15. While Supporting People is administered by top-tier local authorities (i.e. counties and unitaries), references to 'authorities' within this document are not limited to them. All local authorities – county, unitary and district - have a role in supporting vulnerable people. We want them all to work to ensure that effective and appropriate services are in place. But, as is acknowledged in this document, we also know that this can sometimes be more complex in 'two-tier' arrangements (i.e. where functions in relation to services for vulnerable people are split between county and district authorities). We have not always been able to capture those complexities within this document. But, where we have not, we would still welcome views on them.

16. The rest of this document sets out our ideas and questions:

- *Chapter 2* considers the strategic role of Supporting People, and the role of local government and its partners;

- *Chapter 3* discusses how the focus of Supporting People might be sharpened by looking at the differences in what is provided through the programme. In particular, it looks at how the programme might be more

effectively focussed around outcomes, the different sorts of outcomes which can be achieved through the use of housing-related support, and also the different service contexts within which support can sit;

- *Chapter 4* discusses options for a long-term approach to allocating and distributing funding for the provision of housing-related support. This sits alongside the separate technical consultation which is being carried out on a distribution formula for the allocation of Supporting People grants. Copies of that consultation can be found on the Supporting People website at www.spkweb.org.uk;

- *Chapter 5* discusses issues which need to be considered and addressed in improving the local management and administration of Supporting People; and

- *Chapter 6* discusses how ICT services can be used to support the effective delivery of the programme.

17. We would welcome your views and contributions to the debate. Respondents may wish to focus on the key questions raised within this document, and these are summarised for ease of reference in Annex B. But you are welcome to raise other issues which you feel may be relevant. Anyone wishing to make a written response or submission should address this **no later than 28 February 2006** to:

Henry Demaria
Supporting People Team
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
1/F5
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

henry.demaria@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

18. When responding please make clear whether you represent any organisation or group, and in what capacity you are responding. A summary of responses will be published by 30 June 2006 on www.spkweb.org.uk. Paper copies will be available on request.

19. In order to assist Government is ensuring that any final conclusions from this consultation are properly rural proofed, it would be helpful if respondents could indicate either which local authority area their response relates to or, if they do not wish to identify this specifically, whether that is a district, county or unitary authority.

20. This consultation paper follows the criteria laid down in the Cabinet Office's 'Code of practice on written consultation' which is included at Annex A. Individual responses will not be acknowledged. Any queries on the content of the consultation paper should be addressed to the above email or postal addresses (telephone 020 7944 2661).

21. Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

22. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

23. The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and, in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

24. Additional copies of this paper can be downloaded from www.odpm.gov.uk or www.spkweb.org.uk. While the paper is generally being made available electronically, anyone requiring a printed copy should contact the response address, email or telephone number given above.

CHAPTER TWO
Supporting People in its Strategic Context

Local authorities have an important role in making sure that the right local services are in place to help vulnerable people live independently. In fulfilling that role, they need to work in partnership with service providers and with other local agencies, such as the health service. All of the local services, including Supporting People services, need to be coordinated and integrated to work properly together. They need to reflect and be focused around what the service users need, and authorities and providers need to ensure that they are focussed on outcomes.

We would welcome your views on what more Government, authorities and providers can do to ensure that the vision set out above is more consistently what happens in practice.

25. Supporting People is an important national programme which funds local provision of housing-related support, helping people to maintain or improve their ability to live independently. It is a cross-cutting programme, enabling support for a wide and diverse range of vulnerable groups. As such, it contributes to the achievement of a large number of key Government objectives, including:

- Creating sustainable communities;

- Tackling disadvantage and social exclusion;

- Increasing choice for older people, for people with disabilities (including people with learning difficulties) and for people with mental health conditions;

- Reducing avoidable hospital admissions and assisting timely hospital discharge;

- Reducing re-offending and, through this, reducing the need for custodial sentences and supporting community safety;

- Reducing and preventing homelessness;

- Reducing substance misuse;

- Preventing and addressing anti-social behaviour;

- Reducing health inequalities; and

- Supporting teenage parents and preventing teen pregnancy.

26. While housing-related support in itself makes an important contribution to meeting these objectives, achieving them requires an approach which brings together all of the right support and services. Furthermore, the achievement of national objectives requires effective joining-up of action at the local level, particularly around partnership working between agencies.

27. Given the importance of this local focus, there is a clear role for local government to play in ensuring that the right local services are in place and working effectively. Within the context of the broader partnership of the Commissioning Body, administering authorities already hold this strategic commissioning role for Supporting People. In addition, Supporting People often provides a strategic focus for working with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), given the significant role of that sector as provider of not only housing-related support but also the broader mix of services required to support vulnerable people.

LOCAL LEVEL COMMISSIONING

28. Local authorities have already made some progress. They have identified how the programme can locally contribute to the achievement of their key priorities and targets. They have produced Supporting People strategies which capture and articulate how their local programme sits within, and supports, delivery of their Community Strategy and other key strategies. They have identified local service need, and started to set priorities for how that need can be met within the available resources. Many have understood the contribution that housing-related support and other preventative services make to community well-being, and they have given this a focus and priority locally. They have explored and articulated the role of the VCS and other providers in delivering these services, and have worked to support that. Through regional groups and the Supporting People Beacon authorities, they have been able to share good practice and learn from each other.

Good practice examples – Supporting People Beacons

Four authorities – Oxfordshire, Salford, Suffolk and Telford & Wrekin – were chosen as Supporting People Beacon authorities in 2004/05.

Together, the Beacons ensured that a continuous series of learning events, open days, workshops and 'buddying' sessions were available over the 16 months of their formal beacon period. Oxfordshire and Telford & Wrekin also secured further funds to continue with peer support work after the beacon period.

This support was welcomed and valued by all Supporting People authorities, as well as by ODPM, and provided important opportunities for mutual learning across authorities. The Beacons also followed this up by jointly producing a CD-Rom featuring a wide variety of good practice examples, which was distributed to all Supporting People Lead Officers.

29. Positive progress is not yet, however, uniformly the case. Evidence from Audit Commission inspections to date suggests that, compared to other local service areas, there is a relatively high number of underperforming authorities for Supporting People. Within this, there seem to be particular issues around corporate buy-in and local ownership. In extreme cases, Supporting People and its preventative role is not seen as a core authority function, but is rather regarded as one which is separate and stand-alone.

30. We expect all authorities to take an integrated, strategic approach to the provision of local preventative and support services which contribute to social well-being and independence of living. This includes Supporting People services, but is not limited to them. Rather, this requires a co-ordinated approach to service provision, focussed around meeting the needs and respecting the wishes of the service user. This requires co-ordination within the local authority – particularly between social services and Supporting People – but also across agency and, in some cases, local authority boundaries (both across administering authorities and across counties and districts). And in doing so authorities should seek to draw on the knowledge of service providers, who will often have experience of seeking to work across different local functions.

Good practice example – LB Hillingdon Supporting People strategy

The Hillingdon Supporting People Strategy 2005-10 sets out clearly and concisely how the local Supporting People programme sits within and contributes to the borough Community Plan, Leader's Statement and other key local strategies. This applies not only to the document as a whole, in terms of aligning strategic aims, but also to the planning of services for individual client groups.

As is discussed in Hillingdon's strategy, this reflects a broader integrated approach to service planning through the Local Strategic Partnership framework. Oversight of the Supporting People programme has been integrated into this framework, rather than set outside it, with the Commissioning Body linking to the LSP via the local Health and Social Care Executive. This has helped to ensure that the strategic role and value of the programme is recognised and drawn upon locally, not only within local authority services but also across health and other service areas.

Details of the Supporting People programme in Hillingdon can be found at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/housing/supporting_people/index.php.

A FOCUS ON THE SERVICE USER

31. We expect authorities and providers to maintain and take forward the focus on users within the design and provision of services. There is already a clear expectation across all areas of public service that services should be designed and delivered in ways that are inclusive and sensitive to the needs and expectations of their users.

32. It is important, and challenging, that this applies equally in areas such as Supporting People, where services are primarily intended for vulnerable and sometimes socially marginalised people. For such people, there is a particular need to consider how to give them a real chance to contribute to service design. For some, measures will need to be put in place to support them in doing so. For others who are more difficult to reach or who may be reluctant to interact with their local authority, some form of advocacy may be more appropriate.

33. Through the Quality Assessment Framework, a strong emphasis has been placed on actively involving users in developing the Supporting People services they receive. In addition, some authorities have done effective work to draw service users into the wider process of identifying and planning of local housing-related support services. This is a success of the programme, and we would like to see it developed and spread through local service provision more broadly. We will consider how best to take this forward in the context of local government performance. In the meantime, we expect authorities to understand and apply good Supporting People practice to other service streams.

Good practice example – User Involvement in Staffordshire

Staffordshire worked to actively involve service users and their carers in the development of the Supporting People programme.

This has included the development of SP Street, a mini street consisting of cardboard houses which each represent a different client group. The display is taken to road shows and attendees are given £50 in SP cash (which is broken down into smaller denominations) and are invited to post the money into the houses (or client groups) where they would like to see it spent. Attendees are given different coloured money depending on which organisation they are from so the team can see who wanted what spent and where. SP Street also has a graffiti wall where attendees can post general comments about Supporting People.

The team has also led a project which invited users to take photographs of things relating to Supporting People that they did and did not like. Users were given disposable cameras to record their views. The results were sorted by client group and made into banners which were taken to road shows and events.

A FOCUS ON ACHIEVING OUTCOMES

34. We also expect a focus on outcomes. To date, authorities have needed to focus on understanding the services which they inherited through the creation of Supporting People, so that they can then take informed decisions on future commissioning. The Government has required both a programme of service reviews and the production of Supporting People strategies. But we have also signalled our intention to move beyond these towards a focus on what it is that services achieve. We want to capture the contributions of Supporting People to national and local objectives and targets. Where practicable, we also want to capture the value added by a service to its user.

35. As announced earlier this year, we are working towards the inclusion of outcome measures within the framework of the programme. We have already started to do this through Local Area Agreements (LAAs), which allow authorities to identify and set outcomes locally. As discussed later in this document, we intend to build on this and to encourage broader use of the LAA approach, which will support both this outcomes focus and the drive for integration with other local services. We also expect to be able to set programme outcomes within the grant conditions for 2006/07, on which we will consult in the Autumn.

36. We will also be looking at how measures might be set, both nationally and locally, which better capture and encourage a more holistic approach to support which includes, but goes beyond, Supporting People. We will do this in the context of the broader, ongoing work on local government performance, and we will be able to draw on work which providers have already done to measure and capture the impact of their services. We would encourage providers to continue to develop practice in this area.

37. In setting outcomes which go beyond Supporting People, we will also need to consider how best to approach this in two-tier situations – i.e. where the Supporting People function sits with the county, which then needs to work with the districts as housing authority. Any incentive framework would need to recognise where certain outcomes were not wholly within the responsibilities of the county authority, and we will also need to consider how districts are to be encouraged to positively contribute to Supporting People outcomes.

Key Questions

What more can Government and authorities do to ensure that Supporting People sits within an integrated approach to the strategic planning and commissioning of local level services?

How could we ensure appropriate and useful outcome measures for housing-related support at the national level? What more might authorities and providers do to set outcomes at a local level?

How might Government encourage the provision of housing-related support and other preventative services within the broader local government performance framework? How might this be approached in a two-tier situation?

What more might central and local government do to build upon, and transfer more widely, the steps already taken to create a user focus within Supporting People?

CHAPTER THREE
Focussing and Integrating Support

> Housing-related support works with a wide range of vulnerable groups to help them live independently. While there is no such thing as a typical service user, we think that Supporting People generally works with three different types of need:
>
> - People in receipt of care with support;
>
> - People living independently with support only; and
>
> - People experiencing or at risk of social exclusion.
>
> These are not neat or exclusive categories. Some people will be in more than one, and others will move between them. But we believe that this model provides a helpful way to look at how services are designed and joined together, and would welcome views.

38. Supporting People is a very diverse programme. There are 21 identified Supporting People client groups, with a variety of needs. For some, such as older people, housing-related support helps people to stay in their own homes. For others, such as homeless households, support plays a valuable role in helping them to settle into new homes. There is also diversity within these groups, such as of ethnicity and of gender, which the programme recognises and provides for.

39. Nor is the support provided through the programme limited to these groups. There is a recognition that the same, or similar, support can valuably be provided for other vulnerable people, such as men fleeing domestic violence or women exiting prostitution. It is important therefore that access to services is not limited only to the identified client groups.

40. Although there is this diversity, the nature and role of housing-related support is often broadly similar across everyone it works with. Placing housing-related support within the framework of Supporting People has allowed authorities to recognise the opportunities for services which work across a broader range of vulnerable groups. It has also assisted change in how support is provided, particularly in the growing role and use of support which is linked to the person. This "floating support" has been important in expanding support into private sector and owner-occupied housing. Similarly, providers of services have benefited from the opportunity to work across the housing care and support sector.

41. This more cross-cutting, strategic approach is valuable, and we wish to maintain and build upon it. At the same time, there are important differences within what housing-related support does which commissioners, in particular, need to recognise. A service designed to work in a crisis situation will operate differently, and need to link to different services, to one which is designed to maintain existing independence.

42. Looking at these differences provides a way of ensuring that housing-related support is focused on adding value for the service user and is aligned effectively with other services. Initial discussions with key stakeholders have suggested a model based around three key groupings:

   • People in receipt of care with support;

   • People living independently with support; and

   • People experiencing or at risk of social exclusion.

   This is illustrated in Figure 1 below. As this shows, these are by no means neatly separated groupings. Rather, there are overlaps, as well as movement across or between groupings. The model is, inevitably, a simplification of what can be complex and which ultimately is driven by the needs and circumstances of the individual. Nonetheless, we believe that it provides a helpful starting point for further consideration and discussion.

Figure 1 – Supporting People Groupings
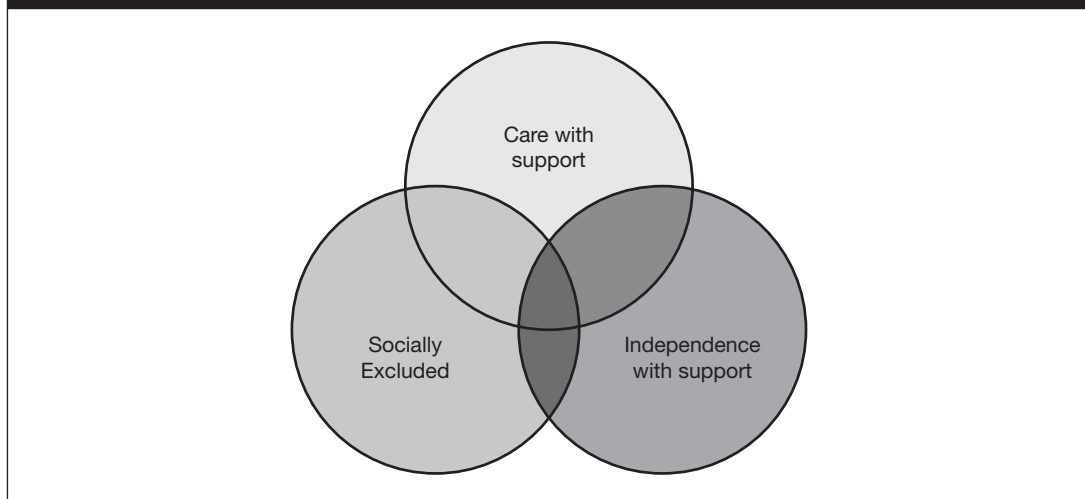
43. The following sections go on to consider each of the three groupings in more detail.

PEOPLE RECEIVING CARE WITH SUPPORT

For people in receipt of care and support, housing-related support underpins health and social care services. We believe that there are opportunities to improve how these services are commissioned and provided as an integrated package.

44. The objective of the Supporting People programme is to sustain or enable independent living. For some people, this will mean full and active independence. But, towards the higher end of the needs spectrum, this can mean working to prevent erosion of a person's existing levels of independence. Examples of those who might be encompassed by this group include (but are in no way limited to) frail older people, people with dementia, people with severe learning or physical disabilities, people in a chronic phase of HIV/AIDs, people with severe mental health conditions and people recovering from drug misuse.

45. People who fall within this grouping will normally need, and should receive, social and health care services in order to retain some independence. To do so, the person may have to move into some form of supported housing, but there is an increasing focus on how these services can be provided effectively within a person's own home. The Independent Living Funds and Disability Living Allowance can, in some circumstances, help the service user to buy in personal care services, and the Disabled Facilities Grant can provide help with adaptations to the home. The Single Assessment Process provides a gateway into services for some of this grouping.

46. Housing-related support can, and should, sit alongside care services as part of a broader package which sustains independence. Indeed, low level support of the sort provided through Supporting People will normally underpin, and so maximise the value of, the care services. For example, Supporting People might enable the provision of a community alarm or warden service to a frail elderly person. This will not only allow assistance to be called in the event of a fall or other incident. Through the reassurance that assistance can be easily summoned, it can also make a person feel more confident and through that contribute to falls prevention. Without this, there is an increased risk that a single incident may undo all the benefits of independence which have been established through care services, and may lead to hospitalisation or to more costly institutional care.

47. The value of low level support is well understood by care and health practitioners. But the role of Supporting People, and the opportunities to link provision of care and of housing-related support, is less clearly known at that level. And, unlike care and health provision, there are no statutory duties requiring the provision of housing-related support.

48. We believe that there are opportunities to improve and better integrate the commissioning of care and support for people who receive both. Indeed, particularly where services are commissioned by a local authority, there seems little reason why they should be provided separately.

49. Through their Value Improvement Project, Essex County Council are already moving towards a more integrated approach (see box below). We want to encourage other authorities to do similar. Receiving their care and support through the same provider should be beneficial for the service user, for whom this should provide a simpler and more consistent arrangement. Better integrated provision should also be more efficient for the provider and the commissioning authority, simplifying contract management arrangements and thereby reducing overhead costs.

50. We are, however, conscious that arrangements to enable this will need to acknowledge and address the risk that, without a statutory duty to provide support, funding may potentially be diverted towards those services which carry a statutory duty. This may happen even where investment in lower level support may be more cost-effective in the longer term.

Good practice example – Essex Value Improvement Project

Through its Value Improvement Project, Essex County Council is working towards integrated contracts covering the provision of care and support, including housing-related support. Whilst there are practical issues to resolve, this work is confirming that there are no inherent obstacles to configuring services in this way. Rather, it demonstrates that this can be achieved effectively if there is the vision, will and support for doing so and appropriate work is undertaken with providers to develop their capacity to provide integrated services. We, with Essex, will capture and share all that is learnt from this project. But it is already evident that there are significant benefits – both to the user and to the authority – to moving in this direction, and we would encourage authorities to explore this route more widely.

Information on this and other Value Improvement Projects is available at www.spkweb.org.uk/Subjects/Capacity_building/Value+Improvement+Projects

51. There are also opportunities to take forward this approach by building on the development of joint health and care teams. *Independence, Well-being and Choice*[1] highlights the importance of integrating care and health delivery, and sets out the options available to local government and the NHS to achieve this. Housing-related support is part of this service continuum, and the same considerations, advantages and options apply for its integration and joint commissioning, alongside treatment, health and social care services.

52. Alongside improved commissioning of services, the Government also wishes to explore approaches to improving user's choice and control over the services which they receive. *Independence, Well-being and Choice* describes work which is now underway to develop and pilot individual budgets, through which people will be able not only to choose which of the available services they would wish to use, but also to potentially receive the support in the form of a direct cash payment. That document proposes this model in the context of the provision of care services, but also acknowledges the advantages in extending it

1 *Independence, Well-being and Choice : Our vision for the future of social care for adults in England.* Department of Health, 2005.

to also encompass other related services. *Opportunity Age*[2] sets out this model as a means of improving choice for older people, and taking forward individual budgets also builds on commitments made in *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*[3].

53. We believe that individual budgets are a potentially valuable model for extending the principle of user choice to the provision of housing-related support. ODPM has committed to involving Supporting People services within the piloting of individual budgets. This will encompass situations where support is provided alongside care, and also where low level support alone is being provided. Work is underway to develop this approach in more detail, and we expect to be able to publish more on this later in the year. Evidence from the pilots will allow us to assess whether, and how, to roll out this approach on a wider basis.

54. In support of choice and the linking of services, there is also a need to develop and improve assessment. The Single Assessment Process already provides a model for an integrated assessment, but does not in itself include reference to need for housing-related support. *Independence, Well-being and Choice* already identifies the need to streamline and integrate assessments more broadly, working across service streams and agencies. *Opportunity Age* also identifies this, in the context of services for older people, and commits to taking this forward through Link-Age. ODPM will work at the national level to include Supporting People services within these improved assessment models, and we expect local authorities and providers to ensure that assessments are better integrated at the local level.

PEOPLE LIVING INDEPENDENTLY WITH SUPPORT

For people living independently with support only, a small amount of support (such as a warden or community alarm) makes a critical difference in being able to remain independent. We believe that there are opportunities to improve the extent to which this support is made available to people in their own homes.

55. Many vulnerable people are able to sustain their independence with the assistance of lower-level support. This can include older people, people with moderate learning or physical disabilities, people in a managed phase of HIV/AIDs, and people with moderate mental health conditions.

56. The same general considerations apply for this grouping as for people in receipt of care with support. It is important to ensure that housing-related support is appropriately linked to and integrated with other services. It is also important to offer choice, and again individual budgets offer a model for doing so. Once again, this process needs to be supported by properly integrated assessment processes.

2 *Opportunity Age : Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century.* Department for Work and Pensions, 2005.

3 *Improving Life Chances of Disabled People.* Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, January 2005.

57. However, unlike those also receiving care, for people in this group housing-related support will normally be the main regular service. As such, lead responsibility for integrating and co-ordinating services will often more properly fall to the Supporting People function. Indeed, this is the grouping where there is least likely to be a clear strategic role or lead elsewhere within the authority.

58. As for care services, there is also an increasing focus on ensuring that services are made available to be provided in the person's own home. This is important, but we believe it is even more so when looking at the provision of the sort of low level support services needed by people in this grouping.

59. Where, for example, a person principally needs the reassurance provided by an alarm service, perhaps accompanied by a small amount of support in claiming benefits or accessing services, there is no strong reason why the receipt of this should be tied to tenure or form of accommodation. For some, such as people moving towards old age, a move to supported accommodation is a valuable and preferred option, and can provide comfort that higher level support, and potentially care, will be accessible at the time when they are required. But for others the preference is to be able to move into or remain in their own home.

60. The availability of floating support, as described earlier, allows people to exercise this preference. Similarly, people wishing to remain in their own home can receive valuable assistance in doing so from Home Improvement Agencies, which not only provide support in ensuring that the home itself is appropriate (such as through helping to arrange any necessary adaptations) but often also provide a broader service around ensuring that the individual is receiving the right benefits and other services and make an important link to making sure that the home itself is of a decent standard. Services of this type, which come to and work with the individual, also play an important role in helping to navigate through the available options and services, and thereby support the ability to choose.

61. Current data suggests that there remains an imbalance between the availability of housing-related support tied to specific (often sheltered or supported) accommodation, and support which is not. This is particularly true of services for older people. There is a role for both approaches, but we also need the balance of supply to reflect what service users want.

62. Moving towards models such as individual budgets will assist in this by better empowering service users to signal what sort of services they would prefer to receive. But local government, alongside other commissioners and providers of services, should also continue to play a role in ensuring that the right mix of services is made available locally. Both plans for commissioning housing-related support and regional and local housing strategies should seek to reflect this. This will help to ensure that commissioners do not seek to develop new sheltered and supported housing in circumstances where an increase in floating support or other service models may be more appropriate.

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

For people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion, housing-related support plays an essential part in preventing or dealing with a crisis situation and restoring independence in a sustainable way. We believe that there remain challenges to ensure that local government and other agencies focus properly on the needs of this group.

63. For the two groupings described above, the role of housing-related support is principally around sustaining existing independence and preventing its decline. For people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion, its focus is more around preventing or dealing with crisis as well as providing support for a return to stability. Furthermore, many of those within this grouping may be comparatively more mobile, and not necessarily have a direct connection to the area in which they need to receive the service. This is a fact which any locally-focussed model of provision must address, to ensure that vulnerable mobile users are not excluded from accessing services.

64. Against this general backdrop, however, this is a considerably broader and more diverse grouping than the previous two. It includes, but is not limited to, the following key groups:

- Individuals or families who have become homeless, where there is in the first instance an emergency need to provide a place to stay and some stabilisation following whatever has led to homelessness, followed by a longer-term need to build skills and confidence, address the cause of homelessness and support a successful and sustainable return to independent living. There are many causes of homelessness, and in practice this group will therefore contain some individuals who may also be regarded as being within some of the other groups below. The services provided will therefore need to focus on the situation and needs of the individual;

- Women fleeing domestic violence, where there are similar needs around stabilisation following an emergency, and longer-term support to allow safe resettlement into either the existing home or a new one, but with an additional need to properly plan provision for circumstances where the person is likely to need to move outside their current local authority area;

- Ex-offenders, particularly where leaving prison or detention (for young offenders), where there is a need to support the individual to develop the necessary life skills and make the right connections to resettle and reintegrate within the community. Arrangements for providing such support will need to be compatible with, and sit alongside, those put in place for criminal justice supervision, but will form part of a broader package which will, ultimately, contribute to community safety through helping to address the triggers of and thereby reduce reoffending;

- Young people leaving care or otherwise at risk, where there is a need for support around life skills and entry to employment or education. Since the

passage of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, care and support for most young people leaving care is the responsibility of social services, whereas other young people who may similarly be in need of support are not and tend to fall to Supporting People. Given the similarities of need, and therefore also in the types of services required, authorities can generally make common provision focussed around user need, rather than duplicate arrangements based around functions;

- Teenage parents, where there are similar needs around building life skills and entry into employment or education, but where there is an additional need to ensure support appropriate to being a young mother;

- People with substance misuse problems, where there is a need for support in building life skills to be linked to support in addressing the substance misuse itself. Individuals tend to move through a broad range of support needs related to their success in managing their substance misuse needs, with a need therefore for services to be flexible, responsive and to work alongside treatment and other drug or alcohol services;

- Gypsies and travellers, where housing-related support can assist in building effective relations where settling in a local community but where its provision will often need to be within the context of other services, such as in cases where dedicated local authority officers have already built an effective and trusted relationship with the individuals; and

- Refugees, where support can assist in effective settlement and integration into a community, but where there will be a need to link with other arrangements in place following a successful application for asylum.

65. The Government is keen to ensure continued provision of the best combination of support and services for people who are or who may be subject to social exclusion. Through its statutory homelessness and social services functions, local government has historically had some involvement in ensuring accommodation and support for those who fall within this grouping. The introduction of Supporting People has, however, strengthened this involvement and has for the first time given local authorities a clear strategic role in planning and providing services across this grouping. In doing so, authorities have been able to learn from the significant work which VCS and other providers have done to develop existing services, and to work with them to build upon this.

66. As with the other groupings, it is important that the planning and provision of housing-related support is properly integrated with that of other services. In doing so, it is essential that authorities work in an effective, co-ordinated and cross-functional way. For example, local authorities already play a key strategic role in addressing and preventing homelessness. Housing-related support contributes to this, but Supporting People supports, rather than sets, corporate homelessness strategy. It may therefore be more effective to ensure that homelessness teams take the strategic lead here in the commissioning and integrating of relevant services. Similarly, local Drug Action Teams and Teenage Pregnancy Coordinators each provide an expert local lead resource for integrated support for their groups. Going forward, children's trusts provide a

vehicle for integrated commissioning of all services, including housing-related support, for vulnerable young people. And it is clearly true to say that, across all of the groups and functions, providers offer an important knowledge resource which can be used more effectively to develop local strategy and service delivery.

67. Service integration is particularly important, but also more challenging, when dealing with situations of crisis or of multiple or complex needs. For example, someone who has become homeless may have done so because they have substance misuse problems and have a mental health condition. It is recognised that, within finite resources, commissioners cannot plan provision for every eventuality. They can, however, work to ensure the right mix of core provision on the one hand, allied to the flexibility to add to that through, for example, floating support, alongside ensuring appropriate, integrated assessment processes which provide the right pathway into these services. In doing so, they can also draw extensively on the expertise of local voluntary sector organisations, who will generally have experience of developing multi-disciplinary services around the needs of service users.

Good practice example – Supporting People Health Pilots

Two of the Supporting People Health Pilots, which have been established by ODPM to demonstrate effective joint working between Supporting People and health services, provide good examples of integrated service provision through the VCS. In Doncaster, the On Track pilot, created through a joint initiative between the authority and the local NHS, provides integrated support for young people with dual diagnosis (i.e. drug misuse and mental health conditions). In Lambeth and Southwark, THT Lighthouse has been commissioned to provide an outreach service for hard to reach people living with HIV. In each case, the service has been designed around meeting the needs of the individual, rather than seeking to compartmentalise needs according to service function, and each are reporting strong successes.

Further information on the Health Pilots can be found at www.spkweb.org.uk/Subjects/Capacity_building/Health_pilots.

68. Positive examples notwithstanding, there remain concerns about how effectively local government as a whole is fulfilling this aspect of its role in relation to Supporting People, if not more broadly. There remain some who have yet to embrace this element of their role, and instances where certain locally less popular groups – particularly offenders and substance misusers – are treated as a lower priority for support. Where this happens, it is generally linked to those issues around corporate ownership referred to earlier.

69. There has also been a growing tendency amongst authorities to restrict access to services to those who can demonstrate some form of connection to the authority which has commissioned the service. While we recognise the importance of ensuring that there is adequate and appropriate provision for an authority's own local community, we consider that any approach built around restricting access is short-sighted and will not address social exclusion.

70. Authorities should instead seek to work in partnership with each other, as well as with other agencies, to jointly commission and manage provision appropriate to patterns of movement across local boundaries. For some vulnerable groups, such as women fleeing domestic violence or ex-offenders, it will generally be more appropriate and effective to plan and arrange provision on a regional or sub-regional basis.

Good practice example – Regional and Sub-Regional Service Planning

In the East of England region, authorities and the Government Office are working together to review provision of domestic violence support services on a regional basis. Following earlier research into needs and current provision and a conference to discuss its findings, work is now underway to produce a regional strategy for this vulnerable group. This work recognises that people who use these services are those who are most likely to move across authority boundaries. It is therefore a positive example of both looking at services based on the needs of the service user and of ensuring that services are planned effectively and efficiently.

Similarly, within the Value Improvement Projects, the West London group of authorities are working together, led by Hammersmith and Fulham, to jointly commission services for the single homeless within the area. This provides a valuable model for addressing the needs of a potentially mobile group on a strategically planned and agreed basis.

71. Collaboration is not only positive practice, but presents an effective and efficient way forward for local government in ensuring that it is properly providing for the needs not only of mobile groups but also of the community more broadly. It is not only groups who might be regarded as mobile whose needs may require planning across local authority boundaries. There may be geographic reasons, such as location, which would make a service more locally relevant and appropriate to the service user, whilst administratively that provider sits within a different authority. There may also be other circumstances, such as in organising provision of specialist services (such as ones designed for specific ethnic groups), where it is better to make provision regionally or sub-regionally.

72. In the broader context of ongoing work to develop a new performance framework for local government, the aim is for all local services to be designed and delivered to achieve better outcomes for all people, including those subject to or at risk of social exclusion. This will mean authorities working collaboratively with their partners to plan and deliver services which prioritise needs and patterns of service use above the restrictions imposed by administrative boundaries.

73. In addition to the vulnerable groups discussed above, there is a growing recognition of the broader role already played by Supporting People in addressing and preventing anti-social behaviour, and in building sustainable communities. Much of the work described above, around skills building and effective integration and reintegration, can make a significant, but often invisible, contribution to ensuring that anti-social behaviour does not occur. For

example, early work with a young person which helps them to understand and acquire good neighbour skills, together with assistance (such as help in entering education) which helps to ensure a stake in society and remove potential causes of disaffection, can reduce, if not remove, potential causes of anti-social behaviour.

74. There are a small number of schemes funded through Supporting People which directly address and work with people who are at risk of losing their homes through behaving anti-socially. Alongside this, there is a growing recognition of the role which floating tenancy support can play in working with people and families who display early signs of anti-social behaviour to prevent this growing into a more significant problem. This is an area, therefore, where housing-related support can make a significant contribution both to community cohesion and to preventing people becoming socially excluded. We would encourage authorities to explore further how the focussed use of housing-related support can contribute locally to promoting respect and preventing anti-social behaviour.

MOVING FORWARD

75. As has already been discussed, this model provides one articulation of how local authorities might approach better focussing the delivery of its Supporting People and other services to vulnerable people. We would be interested in your views on the model, and some key questions are set out below.

Key Questions

Does the model described in this document provide a helpful approach to providing a new focus for housing-related support? How could it be done better?

What more can Government, authorities and providers do to focus services more effectively on individuals to create better choice and control? What are the obstacles to delivering that? Are there any obstacles specific to integrating care and support services? How might they be overcome?

What more can be done to focus on support to enable people to stay in their own homes? What are the obstacles to delivering that, and how could they be overcome?

What more can be done to ensure that authorities make proper provision for socially excluded groups? How might this be incentivised, including through outcomes and through performance arrangements?

What more can be done to ensure that services for mobile groups are planned across local authority boundaries in terms both of housing-related support and more broadly? What are the obstacles to collaborative working, and how might they be overcome?

What challenges and issues need to be tackled in addressing these issues in two-tier situations? How could this be done?

CHAPTER FOUR
Funding

In promoting an improved focus on and within the provision of housing-related support, it is important that we also ensure funding arrangements support delivery. We need to consider whether we should change how we share out the funding and, if so, how and over what time period. We also need to consider whether we should offer more flexibility around the use of the funding and, if so, how. We would welcome your views.

SETTING ALLOCATIONS

76. We have already committed to the future introduction of three-year funding settlements for local authorities, to provide better planning horizons and, through that, to improve stability and delivery of local services. The same principles and arguments apply for Supporting People, and we intend to move towards putting funding for housing-related support onto a clearer footing. This will provide benefits not only for authorities but also for providers, who also need a stable financial planning horizon.

77. In the short-term, we intend to announce a two-year settlement for Supporting People in the Autumn, setting out allocations for 2006/07 and 2007/08. This sits alongside the intention to announce two-year local government funding settlements, also in the Autumn.

78. However, we also wish to move towards a more equitable distribution of funding across Supporting People authorities. A Supporting People Distribution Formula has been developed for these purposes, and we have committed to consulting on that. A technical paper, setting out the detail of the formula, has been published alongside this initial strategy document. Its development has already benefited from input from local authority and other stakeholders, and we would welcome any further comments[4].

79. Within this document, we would wish to consider and invite views on the strategic use of the formula. We also wish to retain the flexibility to begin any process of redistribution from 2007/08 onwards. For that reason, within the two-year settlement referred to above, we intend to set a guaranteed minimum baseline allocation for 2007/08. In line with the commitment that no authority will receive a grant reduction of more than 5% (or an increase of more than 10%) in each of the next two years, each authority will therefore receive a baseline allocation for 2007/08 which is 95% of their grant for 2006/07. The distribution of the remainder of the funds will then be informed by the consultations on both the technical paper and this initial strategy, and will be confirmed in Summer 2006.

4 For the technical paper and details of the consultation, see www.spkweb.org.uk

80. While we intend to begin any process of redistribution in 2007/08, we will also need to carefully consider the extent of such a process. This would include what limits we should set on redistribution, and over what period should any changes take place. On the one hand, a sustained period of reallocation would allow us to more substantially redress any relative imbalance between size of grant and relative need. On the other, authorities who would expect a reduction in grant through redistribution have identified that locally valuable and effective services may close as a result.

81. This reaction is understandable, given competing pressures and commitments within finite resources. But it should be remembered that it has always been possible for authorities to make additional investment in housing-related support beyond their Supporting People grant. Authorities need to determine their relative priorities across all services, and not just within the confines of their Supporting People budget. Their willingness to do so will relate to the degree of corporate ownership of Supporting People and of the preventative approach more broadly.

82. As was discussed in the previous section, we would wish local authorities to ensure that they are taking a more integrated, user-focussed approach to service provision which includes, but is not limited to, Supporting People. We would welcome views on the appropriate level of redistribution in relation to the necessary level of funding stability that is required.

STRUCTURE OF FUNDING

83. The previous chapter discussed the need to ensure that housing-related support is properly focussed and integrated as part of the broader package of services provided locally. In promoting this approach, we wish to consider whether it remains appropriate and conducive to effective delivery to retain the same degree of control and conditions on Supporting People funding.

84. In looking at this, we have also already proposed a model for how service provision might be approached based around three broad groupings. Given the different contexts and considerations set out for these groupings, we also wish to consider whether it might be more appropriate in future to have different funding arrangements for each:

- Where housing-related support sits alongside a larger package of care services which the authority is providing to the same individual, there would seem to be advantages in providing greater flexibility around the use of this portion of the funding, so as to ensure and facilitate integrated service commissioning. This might include allowing authorities flexibility to decide locally whether social care commissioners should also act as lead commissioners for related support services;

- Where the programme provides low level support, particularly for older people, this supports the delivery of key national priorities for local government. There is little risk therefore around continuing investment in this area of long-term low level support, and greater local flexibility may

again be beneficial. Models - such as individual budgets - which are intended to empower service users to themselves decide which services to commission, would in principle suggest an approach which delivered funds to the individual and not to the local authority; and

- Where there is less certainty that local government as a whole will continue to invest in services, such as around those subject to or at risk of social exclusion, we will want to ensure that the right performance incentives are in place around this aspect of the programme as part of introducing any greater flexibilities. This might, for example, be done through an approach which provided flexibility in return for mutually agreed outcomes, such as the Local Area Agreement model (as described below).

85. We will also need to explore how Supporting People funding best integrates with other service commissioning and delivery arrangements. For example, local authorities should be moving towards commissioning of local services for children and young people through children's trusts. This should include housing-related support for teenage parents and other young people covered by the programme, and we will need to consider whether any changes are required to better enable authorities to pool the relevant funding within the trust arrangements.

HOW MIGHT WE INCREASE FLEXIBILITY?

86. Supporting People has been established and operated to date as a specific grant programme. This has been an invaluable part of the early implementation of the programme. The strategic provision and management of housing-related support has, by and large, been a new area of responsibility for local government. Setting this up through a separate, protected funding stream, together with the requirements to review services and develop a strategy, has ensured that all authorities have focused on, and carried forward, their responsibilities. This has had its advantages in ensuring that traditionally disadvantaged groups have had their needs considered in planning for Supporting People services.

87. Holding the funding as a separate grant can, however, be argued to have had its disadvantages. As has already been discussed, some authorities have tended to regard Supporting People as an add-on, rather than a core function, with the separateness of the grant helping to reinforce this perception. Furthermore, whilst the separation of Supporting People as a ringfenced grant has helped to manage any risks of funds being diverted to other service streams, it seems to have created a perception that this is the only public funding which can be invested in housing-related support. This, in turn, has hindered investment into housing-related support, and seems also to have held back integrated funding of care and support packages. The work on individual budgets and on inclusion of Supporting People within Local Area Agreements seeks to bring together funding streams more creatively to improve and integrate services and increase user choice and control for individual users.

88. Given these issues, we wish to explore how we might give local authorities flexibility to determine how best to invest in, and ensure independence for, vulnerable people, whilst remaining locally accountable for how that is carried out.

89. One option would be for funding for housing-related support to continue to be paid separately but through an unringfenced grant. This is the approach currently taken to funding for local authority homelessness responsibilities. An alternative would be to integrate Supporting People funding into the local government revenue support grant (RSG). In either case, however, we would need to ensure that it is accompanied by appropriate incentives for ongoing local investment in housing-related support and similar preventative services. As referred to in the previous section, we will be considering this broader issue in the context of the overall local government performance framework.

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

90. A further approach, which is already being developed in some areas, is through the use of Local Area Agreements (LAAs). LAAs are a new way of working to build a more flexible and responsive relationship between central government and local agencies, including local government, on the priority outcomes that need to be achieved at the local level. It in particular allows national objectives and targets to be made real and meaningful at the local level and in the context of Community Strategies. By integrating funds, the LAAs also support and facilitate the better integration of local services.

91. In the context of Supporting People, LAAs provide a potentially attractive route towards integrating services and setting programme outcomes. By pooling Supporting People funds within a Local Area Agreement, an authority would effectively be allowed greater flexibility over how it spends this and potentially to integrate with expenditure on other local services. But this would be enabled within a managed structure where they have agreed to deliver certain outcomes in return for those freedoms. In the longer term, this sort of approach would permit structured unringfencing of the funds whilst also ensuring an appropriate focus on local delivery.

92. This approach is already being tested through the inclusion of Supporting People within 5 of the first LAAs. We will also be encouraging authorities to include Supporting People within LAAs as they are rolled out over the next two years, and ODPM will be providing material in the LAA toolkit to support them in doing so.

93. In taking this further forward, we will need to consider how Supporting People might best fit within the LAA framework. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Supporting People covers a diverse range of needs, alongside important differences in the context within which support may be delivered. It is therefore unlikely to be realistic for authorities to meaningfully set one overall outcome target for their local programme, and we would expect it to be more fruitful to encourage a more focussed approach. The model set out in the previous chapter would provide one way of doing so, with authorities

identifying outcomes based around either individual client groups or the broader groupings previously mentioned. In some cases, these may be existing national or local outcomes to which Supporting People contributes, but work may need to be done to develop appropriate outcomes where none currently exist. If an authority is successfully able to set outcomes for all of the groups or groupings, this would in practice allow them to have integrated all of their Supporting People funding into their LAA.

94. Within the current framework for LAAs, some of what Supporting People does already sits within the Healthier Communities and Older People block. Certainly, where it is provided to older people, the provision of both ongoing low level support and support together with care would fit within the aims of this block to ensure and improve quality of life. Four of the five first round authorities are aiming to carry forward LAAs around this aspect of the programme. We would encourage other authorities to do similarly in their LAAs, but would also welcome coverage of people with learning difficulties and physical disabilities.

95. One other LAA – that developed by Kent – is already exploring improving services for socially excluded people within the context of the Safer and Stronger Communities Block. We would welcome and encourage this in more LAAs, including coverage of cross-authority provision for mobile, socially excluded groups.

INDIVIDUAL BUDGETS

96. As was discussed in the previous chapter, work is ongoing to develop models of individual budgets for piloting. The point of individual budgets is to put the individual in control of specifying what services they want. Indeed, under some models the individual would directly purchase the services for themselves. We see this as a vital means to improving user control and choice. In the longer term, their rollout could sit either alongside or within any of the approaches set out above, depending on the role of local authorities within the individual budget framework.

A MIXED APPROACH

97. Each of these approaches has its individual merits. When looked at in the context of the three-grouping model, however, it may be better to take a mixed approach. Funds for care with support and support only could either be unringfenced or integrated into RSG as a means of providing flexibility. A more managed, LAA approach would incentivise improved services and outcomes for the socially excluded. And, as they are developed further, funds could increasingly be paid out through individual budgets.

98. On the other hand, taking different approaches for different groupings might make it more difficult for local authorities and providers to ensure effective

delivery. Supporting People has brought a valuable focus to the role and provision of housing-related support. We would not wish to see that lost, but are rather seeking to ensure an improved focus on effective delivery.

99. Furthermore, the model we have set out is a simplification and masks movement of vulnerable people across groupings. Someone receiving low level support only may later become more frail and need a package of care and support. A young person leaving care may initially need intensive support to prevent social exclusion, but may also need longer-term low level support. And a person reducing and controlling their substance misuse may move from being at risk of social exclusion to needing care and support, and later just support. It may therefore be preferable to retain a single funding stream, in which case an LAA approach may be preferable across the piece. We welcome views.

FUNDING FOR NEW INVESTMENT

100. In looking at options for the future funding framework, we will also need to consider how to best ensure that available revenue funds continue to be used to develop new services.

101. At present, Supporting People provides an important source of revenue funding for the housing-related support elements of new supported or sheltered housing developments. This sits alongside other revenue funds, generally for housing management and for care services, all of which will need to be in place before capital funding for the development is finally confirmed and released.

102. Given their broader role in commissioning care and support services, it is important that local authorities continue to hold and determine priorities for revenue investment. This is particularly valuable given their role in commissioning floating support services which, through enabling people to be supported in their own homes, may reduce the need for capital investment in sheltered or supported housing options.

103. We therefore expect local authorities to work with those responsible for capital investment, particularly the Regional Housing Boards and the Housing Corporation, to agree priorities for both revenue and capital. At present, this is done by expecting all parties to ensure that Regional Housing Strategies and Supporting People strategies are complementary and aligned. This will necessarily require some partnership working and negotiation.

104. None of the options discussed above preclude local government continuing to fulfil this strategic role for new investment. We will, however, explore further whether additional measures and incentives need to be put in place, including any strengthening of the links with the Regional Housing Boards.

105. We are also aware that, within the existing framework, it is perceived to be difficult to secure revenue funding where a development is considered to be a regional or particularly a national priority. In general, we consider that the funding of regional priorities should not be a problem. As has already been set out, we expect authorities to work together in determining the need for, and

then commissioning, services. The Supporting People regional groups already provide a framework for doing this, and some have approached this through the development of regional Supporting People strategies. Work of this sort is also required to ensure proper and effective work with the Regional Housing Boards. It is therefore for authorities collectively, and in partnership with the RHB where capital is also required, to determine and then fund regional priorities.

106. We accept that central government may need to take a role in providing revenue funding for new developments to meet national priorities. We are also conscious, however, that any support for individual developments, at least in the short term, would need to come from within existing Supporting People funding. We would be grateful for views on how we might best approach this.

INCENTIVES

107. We are also keen to explore the possibility of introducing incentives within the Supporting People framework. In doing so, there are two areas we particularly wish to look at.

108. The first area is the setting of incentives around the delivery of outcomes. As has already been discussed, we have been developing proposals for the inclusion of outcomes within the grant conditions for the programme. The setting of national outcomes would, in principle, allow us to establish an incentive framework to reward authorities in terms of their relative contributions to achieving those outcomes. This might focus on the performance of local Supporting People programmes as a whole, or alternatively might focus on key client groups where authorities are felt to be underperforming.

109. The second area is the setting of incentives around effective cross-authority working. As has been noted, we wish authorities to work collaboratively and to plan and provide for cross-authority services where that best reflects the needs and wishes of the service users. We are also concerned that authorities have increasingly sought to restrict, rather than to improve and manage, cross-authority access to services. One option would therefore be to ensure that authorities are incentivised on the basis of how effectively they manage this aspect of the programme.

110. As for new investment, we are conscious that any performance incentives would need to operate within the existing framework for the programme. In the short term at least, any incentive framework may therefore do no more than inform allocations, with underperforming authorities at risk of losing funding to higher performing authorities. It is also acknowledged that a framework of this sort would only be effective where Supporting People operates as a separate grant programme. It may therefore be more appropriate to consider the issue of performance incentives within the context of the broader local government performance framework. We welcome views.

Key Questions

What approach should we take to the future allocation of funding for housing-related support?

To what extent should we carry out redistribution of funding between authorities, and over what period?

How can we most effectively strike a balance between providing flexibility and ensuring ongoing investment in housing-related support, including for more mobile vulnerable groups?

What more can authorities do to fund schemes which are regional priorities? How might Government approach funding schemes which meet national priorities?

How might we approach the introduction of incentives within a future Supporting People framework?

CHAPTER FIVE
Administering the Programme

Given the need to work effectively within finite resources, it is important that authorities and providers continue to make sure that the management of the Supporting People programme is carried out in an efficient and effective manner. We need to consider whether a specified administrative framework is still required for Supporting People. We also need to look at how we can improve joint working between county and district authorities.

Authorities have the opportunity to consider how to take forward effective management and monitoring of contracts. In doing so, we expect them to ensure that the administrative cost to both themselves and to providers is understood and minimised. We also expect authorities to apply best procurement practice, and to ensure appropriate support for the voluntary and community sector.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE

111. At present, the administrative structure for Supporting People is overseen by ODPM through the grant conditions. Authorities are expected to establish a Commissioning Body to take strategic oversight and leadership of the local programme, and a broader Core Strategy Group to bring key stakeholders together.

112. The partnership approach which these arrangements reflect and embody is important in ensuring the informed and effective commissioning and delivery of services. However, that is true not just of Supporting People but of all local public services. Authorities are expected to, and generally have, strong partnership and joint working arrangements with the broad range of local agencies and service providers.

113. We wish, therefore, to revisit whether the current administrative framework is necessary and appropriate for the future. It could be argued to be unnecessary and duplicative, given the other arrangements already in place, such as Local Strategic Partnerships. Some authorities have absorbed the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group roles within these existing fora and thereby prevented any unnecessary duplication. A move towards an LAA-based approach would point towards a stronger role for the LSP in steering and commissioning housing-related support. And Government is looking to strengthen the role of Local Strategic Partnerships, particularly in regard to service commissioning. It is also only practicable to retain a mandatory framework if Supporting People continues as a separate grant programme. But for those authorities where there remain issues about corporate ownership of the programme the existing

framework provides an important focus which might not otherwise exist. We would therefore welcome views on what framework might be best put in place for the future.

114. There are particular issues about arrangements where Supporting People is administered in a two-tier situation. Here the Commissioning Body provides an important forum to bring together the districts, as housing authorities, with the county, as social services and Supporting People authority. But, while there are positive examples of how this can work, the county-district relationship within Supporting People remains an area where further work is needed. We would welcome views on how these issues can be addressed.

115. We have already made clear that we expect Supporting People authorities to look strategically beyond their own boundaries, planning at the regional and sub-regional level particularly where this is needed in order to meet the needs of mobile groups. The same expectation applies to district authorities. While they bring important local knowledge about the needs and expectations of their own local population, their role within Supporting People also requires them to take a broader strategic view. However, as they are not the administering authority, this can often be harder for Government to address and incentivise. We would welcome views on what more might be done on this issue.

116. One option would be to consider giving districts a more direct role in the provision of housing-related support. As was discussed in Chapter Three, there may be an advantage in the strategic lead on provision of housing-related support for certain vulnerable groups sitting with those within the local authority who already have the overall policy lead. This includes some functions, such as around homelessness, which lie with the district; in this case, as housing authority. This could be done within the existing arrangements, with the district acting as lead commissioner on behalf of the administering authority and the county ensuring a coordinated and strategic view across the districts as a whole, and could be developed and formalised at the local level through Local Area Agreements. Alternatively, more effective integration might be achieved by allowing the district to take direct responsibility. We would welcome views.

MANAGING AND MONITORING CONTRACTS

117. We have already signalled to authorities that we do not intend to require a further round of service reviews. Rather, we wish to give authorities greater freedom to design their own arrangements for contract review and performance management. In doing so, they will be able to build upon the knowledge and experience developed through the service review process. But they will also be able to ensure that their approach best suits their own local context, is appropriate to the nature and size of the contract in question, and fits with their organisation's broader corporate practice.

118. Many have embraced this opportunity and are thinking creatively about how best to take their management of the programme forward. Others, however, have asked for a steer from ODPM as to how they might best approach this. We

do not wish to be prescriptive, but will be issuing, alongside this document, advice on the issues which authorities may wish to consider in taking forward their local administration and giving some pointers on positive practice. This is intended to assist authorities in developing solutions, and we would very much welcome and encourage sharing of ideas.

REDUCING BUREAUCRACY

119. Efficient management of the programme includes not only managing the costs to the local authorities themselves, but also those which are passed on to the providers.

120. The ODPM Supporting People team carried out a series of discussions with individual providers earlier in the year to further investigate concerns about the administrative impact of the programme. While only a small snapshot, this did suggest a mixed picture and room for improvement. Some authorities clearly do understand and seek to manage the cost and time implications of administration. But others do not. In particular, many authorities appear to take a blanket approach to information requests, rather than taking a proportionate approach based on the nature of the organisation affected.

121. Going forward, authorities should be careful to understand the cost implications of the requirements placed on providers. The introduction of steady state contracts, and the flexibility to design an appropriate contract management framework, provide opportunities to revisit this, and to also make sure that providers are being clearly remunerated for the work which they will be required to do. Given the need to work within finite resources, it may in some cases be appropriate to scale back administrative requirements and release a greater amount of funding for direct service delivery.

122. Authorities also need to consider the need to support providers, and particularly voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers, to develop their skills and capacity to fulfil any requirements placed upon them. Around two-thirds of Supporting People providers are VCS organisations, ranging from large housing associations to very small local voluntary organisations, and they therefore make a substantial contribution to the effective delivery of the objectives of the programme. Furthermore, Supporting People is often a significant funding stream for VCS providers, particularly those working with the socially excluded. Authorities should ensure that they apply best practice in working with the VCS, including maintaining and observing their local Compact.

Good practice example – LB Haringey Support for VCS Providers

During the early stages of Supporting People, LB Haringey identified a need to improve routes into providing support to BME communities (given the significant cultural and language diversity in the borough). The most effective and appropriate route identified for the latter was to work through existing organisations who had the trust of these often hard-to-reach communities as well as the cultural sensitivity and language skills.

Out of this, there was an identified need to provide sustained support to small BME providers. There was also a broader need identified to help providers come to terms with the requirements of working within the interim contract. The Supporting People team therefore agreed to fund a post within the authority's central VCS team, based within the Chief Executive's Office, to provide support for small BME providers (as well as some broader support for Supporting People providers). The VCS team then holds the contract with the provider and manages it on a lead funder basis (monitoring therefore not only on behalf of Supporting People but also any other authority functions and the PCT); and works closely with the provider to provide capacity building support and develop service quality. The postholder works closely with the Supporting People team to ensure a properly informed dialogue with providers around SP issues. Support is also provided from within other parts of the authority – e.g. procurement training by the procurement team.

LB Haringey's assessment is that this has been a very successful approach, which has delivered significant benefits for Supporting People as well as for the authority more broadly. This has included some BME providers having developed to the point where they can now provide mentoring support for others.

123. There are particular opportunities to both reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency through further work in introducing common processes across authorities. Where providers work across more than one authority, they generally face local variations in how they are expected to format and supply information. This will normally add to their own overhead costs, and therefore to administrative costs within the programme as a whole.

124. We are aware that Supporting People officers have done considerable work to address this, normally at the regional level, but sometimes then lack corporate support to implement it. We strongly endorse the work which has already been done, and expect Chief Executives to provide support in taking forward its further implementation.

125. Similarly, there are already opportunities to reduce bureaucracy and regulation by not duplicating existing regimes. ODPM has already made clear that compliance with certain regulatory regimes and standards, such as the Abbeyfields Standard and the requirements of the Housing Corporation, should be accepted as passporting providers through requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework. But we are aware that not all authorities are yet doing so. In looking at future management and monitoring arrangements, we expect all authorities to prevent duplication and streamline their own regulatory requirements.

EFFECTIVE PROCUREMENT

126. Our discussions with providers also raised concerns about how some authorities have reportedly approached the procurement of new Supporting People contracts. In particular, anecdotal evidence has suggested instances where authorities have sought to put very low cost contracts out to competitive tender, with the costs of doing so disproportionate to any potential benefits. Similarly, concerns have been expressed where providers have been expected to tender for contracts without support being in place to assist them in developing the skills to do so.

127. As we have already made clear in our position statement on the procurement of Supporting People services, decisions on how a service should be procured are a matter for the individual authority. Procurement is, of course, not something which is done for Supporting People alone. Supporting People teams will, therefore, need to take forward procurement within the context of their own standing orders, as well as of national and EU legal requirements.

128. Against that backdrop, however, there is a clear expectation on local government to ensure the effective and efficient use of procurement in all areas of local public service delivery. The National Procurement Strategy for Local Government, issued jointly by ODPM and the LGA, encourages this and sets out guidance on how local procurement should be approached. Supporting People teams should ensure that they are familiar both with this and the OGC / Home Office guidance *Think Smart, Think Voluntary Sector*, which sets out advice on working effectively with voluntary sector organisations.

Key Questions

What framework should be in place for the future administration of Supporting People? Is a mandatory framework necessary and / or useful? If a specified framework is required, what changes might be made?

What arrangements should be in place to ensure the effective engagement of district authorities within a two-tier structure? Should districts be given a more direct role in commissioning and managing housing-related support for vulnerable groups where they hold broader statutory and policy responsibilities?

What approach should local authorities develop for future performance and contract management?

What more is required for authorities to implement common administrative processes?

CHAPTER SIX
eSupporting People

Technological solutions, such as the new Directory of Services, have always been an important part of the delivery of Supporting People. We want to consider how we might build on Directory as a means of supporting user choice of services. We need to look at how technology might support authorities and providers in most effectively tracking service outcomes, and also in enabling effective exchange of information between organisations. We would also welcome views on what additional support tools might be developed to assist authorities and providers.

129. The use of existing and emerging technological solutions has always been an important part of the effective delivery of Supporting People:

- The Supporting People Local Systems (SPLSs) have assisted authorities in managing and reporting on their local programme;

- The Supporting People website – the SPKweb[5] – provides a knowledge and communication resource around the programme; and

- The new online Directory of Services[6], draws together information about services and service providers which was previously held separately by local authorities. Directory now provides an important and direct route for vulnerable people and their advocates to identify, choose and access support services. It also enables professionals to more quickly and easily access information about appropriate accommodation and support options where they are seeking to settle or support vulnerable people.

130. We want to build upon this. In the shorter term, there are a number of functional improvements which could be made to improve Directory and SPKweb. We could make more of the information held on Directory directly available to professionals. We could improve the links from Directory to other sources of information. And we can introduce new features for the SPKweb where that will be of assistance to site users. We would welcome your views, and will issue a separate paper asking specific questions on this shortly.

131. There are also some longer term, strategic issues which we need to consider. These are set out below.

5 www.spkweb.org.uk

6 www.spdirectory.org.uk

SUPPORTING CHOICE

132. The Supporting People Directory of Services is already an important resource in supporting and promoting choice. It allows vulnerable people, and also any professionals making referrals to services, to see what housing-related support services are available, not only within their immediate local authority but also in other areas. This broader choice is particularly important for people who, due to the nature of their needs, move across local authority boundaries, but is also valuable to others. The Directory also provides information about services, to assist in deciding which of the available options someone may prefer.

133. The Government is keen to promote and support choice across the range of public services. As has already been discussed, new approaches such as individual budgets are being developed which will increasingly allow the service user to decide which of the available services he or she wishes to use. Knowledge resources need to be available to reflect and support this, and to make it as easy as possible for service users to draw together information on the range of different service options.

134. In support of this, the Directory of Services could provide the basis for a more integrated gateway to local services, thereby informing and supporting wider user choice. We would, however, need to consider how such a system is developed or maintained. For Directory, we have a commissioned a national system in recognition of the benefits which that brings in allowing people to look at services beyond their local authority area and of the economies of scale compared to the separate development of local systems. In building upon this, options would include:

- Expanding the existing Directory to cover other service areas, thereby moving towards a single national service database with central government coordinating on behalf of local government;

- Developing separate national directories for other service areas – e.g. social services, health services – which can then be linked through Directgov or similar portals; or

- Encouraging local development of integrated service directories, which again can be linked through a portal.

135. Each of these options has its pros and cons. A national solution may be more cost effective and easier to integrate, but a single national database would be complex to deliver. Local solutions may better allow joining up of local services, but be more difficult to integrate with each other. We would welcome your views.

OUTCOME TRACKING

136. As has already been discussed, we wish to ensure that the programme moves towards a clearer focus on outcomes. We will consider this at the national level, but also expect authorities to consider this at the local level and, with providers, at the level of individual services.

137. Tracking and capturing outcomes, particularly outcomes for individual service users, will have implications for the work of providers and authorities in collecting and collating information. In introducing requirements around outcomes, ODPM also therefore needs to consider what support should be in place to assist and simplify the data collection process.

138. Workbooks, such as are currently provided for reporting on Supporting People Key Performance Indicators, provide one approach which might be followed. Alongside this, however, we will need to consider the link between tracking outcomes and tracking service users. Where the individual is receiving a long-term service, such as an older person within supported accommodation, this is relatively easy. But this is more difficult for short-term services, particularly those where the objective is to move the individual to full independence. In such circumstances, a measure of success will be that the service provider is ultimately able to withdraw. However, this withdrawal is not necessarily a confirmation of long-term success and stability. It may be that, for whatever reason, a crisis occurs or re-occurs – for example, repeat homelessness, or a return to substance misuse. This is more difficult to track, particularly if the individual then engages with a different service provider. But without this knowledge it is not possible to properly measure the long-term value of many support services.

139. From an early stage in the development of Supporting People, there has been consideration of some form of service user information system. We now want to revisit this issue in the context of tracking outcomes.

140. Where individuals are receiving longer-term support services, there may be less of an advantage in setting up a system which tracks outcomes of services provided to them. Such individuals are less likely to be mobile, and there is less likelihood of their ceasing to receive and then restarting support services. Tracking may also be felt by such service users to be an unjustified intrusion, particularly given the increasing focus on providing services to them in their own homes.

141. For some service areas, such as around people coming out of homelessness, there is a stronger case in favour of a system which is able to identify people as they return to support services. There is already some evidence of people either disengaging from support only to later seek it elsewhere or of people needing further support at a later stage when problems recur. User tracking will better enable understanding of how services are used and so permit better evaluation of the outcomes of the programme.

142. As the benefits of a tracking system relate principally to people who are likely to move between services, and potentially also local authority areas, any system

put in place for these purposes will most logically need to be a national one. This would point to ODPM taking a lead role in commissioning and developing a system which can be accessed and used by authorities and providers at the local and service levels. But we would only wish to do so if that would be of benefit. We may also need to consider it being a system which can be used more broadly than just Supporting People services, in which case this would need to be approached as a cross-Government initiative which takes account of existing systems. We would welcome views.

INFORMATION KEEPING

143. A key component of the Government's drive to improve and modernise public services is to improve the use of information held by the public sector and reduce the need for individuals to resupply the same information. In terms of Supporting People, there should be no need for a potential service user to have to provide again information which the local authority already holds.

144. Various initiatives, such as Citizen's Accounts, are already being taken forward to develop ways of ensuring that information is able to move across different services and therefore also across different information systems. We would expect authorities to ensure that Supporting People services and information are included in such initiatives, but are also conscious that to be effective this may need to include information gathered by the provider. We would be grateful for views on what we may need to do to better facilitate effective exchange of information for service users.

SUPPORT TOOLS

145. We are also keen to ensure that the right support is provided for authorities and providers to assist them in effectively managing the programme and individual services. The Supporting People website provides one mechanism for doing so, as it can both host and link to knowledge resources and tools which authorities and providers can then use for themselves.

146. We have also supported the development of e-based support tools for the Supporting People sector. This includes the workbooks, as referred to earlier. It also includes support for a benchmarking tool for providers, which is being developed by Housemark, SITRA and the National Housing Federation (with earlier support from PriceWaterhouse Cooper) and which will allow providers to exchange information and benchmark against one another. Further information on this work can be found on the Supporting People website7.

147. We are happy to consider the development of further support tools, and would welcome views on what might be valuable.

7 www.spkweb.org.uk/Subjects/Capacity_building/Provider+Benchmarking+Initiative

Key Questions

How could Directory be used to help people access a wider variety of public services in a more integrated way? Which services might also be included – e.g. social services, health, education, transport, voluntary?

How can Directory be used to help local authorities work collaboratively to support mobility across boundaries?

How can Government most effectively support and facilitate outcome tracking and reporting? Might this require some form of service user tracking system? If so, for which vulnerable groups?

What more might we do to facilitate exchange of information between Supporting People and other services?

What additional e-based tools might be developed to assist Supporting People authorities and providers?

ANNEX A
Code of Practice on Consultation

The Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. The criteria below apply to all UK national public consultations on the basis of a document in electronic or printed form. They will often be relevant to other sorts of consultation.

Though they have no legal force, and cannot prevail over statutory or other mandatory external requirements (e.g. under European Community Law), they should otherwise generally be regarded as binding on UK departments and their agencies, unless Ministers conclude that exceptional circumstances require a departure.

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.

2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.

3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.

4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.

5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.

6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

The full consultation code may be viewed at:

www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Introduction.htm

Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not, or you have any other observations about ways of improving the consultation process please contact:

Adam Bond
ODPM Consultation Co-ordinator
Room 2.19
26 Whitehall
London SW1A 2WH

or by e-mail to: adam.bond@odpm.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX B
Questions for Consultation

SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN ITS STRATEGIC CONTEXT

What more can Government and authorities do to ensure that Supporting People sits within an integrated approach to the strategic planning and commissioning of local level services?

How could we ensure appropriate and useful outcome measures for housing-related support at the national level? What more might authorities and providers do to set outcomes at a local level?

How might Government encourage the provision of housing-related support and other preventative services within the broader local government performance framework? How might this be approached in a two-tier situation?

What more might central and local government do to build upon, and transfer more widely, the steps already taken to create a user focus within Supporting People?

FOCUSING AND INTEGRATING SUPPORT

Does the model described in this document provide a helpful approach to providing a new focus for housing-related support? How could it be done better?

What more can Government, authorities and providers do to focus services more effectively on individuals to create better choice and control? What are the obstacles to delivering that? Are there any obstacles specific to integrating care and support services? How might they be overcome?

What more can be done to focus on support to enable people to stay in their own homes? What are the obstacles to delivering that, and how could they be overcome?

What more can be done to ensure that authorities make proper provision for socially excluded groups? How might this be incentivised, including through outcomes and through performance arrangements?

What more can be done to ensure that services for mobile groups are planned across local authority boundaries in terms both of housing-related support and more broadly? What are the obstacles to collaborative working, and how might they be overcome?

What challenges and issues need to be tackled in addressing these issues in two-tier situations? How could this be done?

FUNDING

What approach should we take to the future allocation of funding for housing-related support?

To what extent should we carry out redistribution of funding between authorities, and over what period?

How can we most effectively strike a balance between providing flexibility and ensuring ongoing investment in housing-related support, including for more mobile vulnerable groups?

What more can authorities do to fund schemes which are regional priorities? How might Government approach funding schemes which meet national priorities?

How might we approach the introduction of incentives within a future Supporting People framework?

ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAMME

What framework should be in place for the future administration of Supporting People? Is a mandatory framework necessary and / or useful? If a specified framework is required, what changes might be made?

What arrangements should be in place to ensure the effective engagement of district authorities within a two-tier structure? Should districts be given a more direct role in commissioning and managing housing-related support for vulnerable groups where they hold broader statutory and policy responsibilities?

What approach should local authorities develop for future performance and contract management?

What more is required for authorities to implement common administrative processes?

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How could Directory be used to help people access a wider variety of public services in a more integrated way? Which services might also be included – e.g. social services, health, education, transport, voluntary?

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