

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **JOINT HOUSING AND SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2014**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **SUPPORTING PEOPLE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update the Committee on the Supporting People Programme in Flintshire and seek support for the Local Commissioning Plan.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 In 2012, Welsh Government merged the two Supporting People funding streams – Supporting People Grant (SPG) and Supporting People Revenue Grant (SPRG) into one Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG). The new SPPG also introduced a new governance framework for the programme with the establishment of a Supporting People National Advisory Board, chaired by the Minister, and a number of Regional Collaborative Committees (RCCs), with elected member and lead officer membership, to ensure high quality services are delivered effectively and efficiently across boundaries. The North Wales RCC includes all six North Wales councils.

2.02 The Local Authority is required to develop a 3-year Commissioning Strategy that will inform the priorities within the Regional Commissioning Strategy. Local Authorities in North Wales have developed 12-month Commissioning plans to cover the transition period and allow time for reviewing of existing services, new developments and appropriate targeting of reductions. Welsh Government has been supportive of this approach, recognising that the level of reductions in North Wales makes longer term planning at this stage more of a challenge.

2.03 The Commissioning Plan attached at appendix one details the proposals for how the grant will be allocated for the next year. It is important to note this plan is set within the context of reduced funding. This will be replaced by a longer term strategy to be drafted in the summer of 2014 detailing the Supporting People Commissioning intentions.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Supporting People Funding Reductions

The Supporting People Programme Grant is subject to reductions across Wales. The 2013/14 Local Commissioning Plan highlighted that Flintshire was expected to face significant reductions to the Supporting People Programme Grant allocation. Flintshire received a reduction in funding for 2013/2014 of 5% of the grant.

3.02 The reductions for 2014/15 are less than originally indicated. On 29th July 2013 a letter was sent from Welsh Government asking for Regional Collaborative Committee feedback on how reductions should be modelled across Wales, at the time the modelling was being based on an assumed average 10% reduction to the grant. The option chosen would have seen Flintshire's grant reduced by 12% in 2014/15. Later in the summer the Local Authority received confirmation from the Minister for Housing and Regeneration that the grant had been protected from that level of reduction. The statement referenced the important role Supporting People services play in dealing with the government's welfare reforms and easing pressure on other statutory services. The exact level of reductions for Flintshire has not been confirmed but Flintshire has received notification of indicative funding levels for 2014/15 and 2015/16 with a grant reduction of circa 5%.

3.03 The reductions to the Supporting People funding are a concern for the Local Authority. The grant funds services that play an important role in preventing people requiring some health and social services and can reduce homelessness and community safety costs. Managing the impacts from the on-going transformation of the social security system, including the development of the Local Support Services Framework to support the implementation of universal credit and changes to the homeless legislation may all increase pressure on housing support services who play a key prevention role and help people deal with the difficult circumstances they face.

Managing the Reductions

3.04 Flintshire continues to take a pro-active and strategic approach to managing the reductions. Welsh Government suggested that Local Authorities work within some guiding principles when finding savings. Flintshire has committed to these guiding principles and shared them with service providers who have been invited to submit a challenge if they believe the Local Authority is not adhering to the principles.

3.04.1 'A Strategic Approach'

Flintshire has not proposed blanket cuts to services and the LCP demonstrates a commitment to find efficiency savings through housekeeping and innovative approaches that do not see cuts to

services or impact customers, such as remodelling projects or working with providers on leaner processes. Flintshire is aware that some more recently commissioned projects have been through these processes and are in line with Supporting People cost guidelines and could not manage a blanket cut applied across projects.

3.04.2 'Homeless Prevention at Core'

Welsh Government has suggested that the commissioning of services is focussed on homeless prevention in preparation for the changes to the Homeless Legislation in 2015. Flintshire recognises the valuable contribution these services make to preventing homelessness and recently commissioned developments contribute directly to the homeless prevention agenda, such as the two homeless prevention projects described in section 4.2 of the Local Commissioning Plan and 3.07.9 of this plan.

3.04.3 'Quality of Services'

It is expected that Local Authorities avoid commissioning processes that drive down costs and create 'cheap services'. Commissioning should have a clear emphasis on quality services. The supporting people procurement and tendering evaluation process has a strong weighting on quality as opposed to cost. The team need to ensure that this remains a priority within regional and collaborative proposals.

3.04.4 'Exploring Alternative Funding Options'

The Local Authority and Regional Collaborative Committee are asked to consider alternative appropriate funding wherever this is relevant to prevent the need to lose valuable services. There is ongoing work with Social Services to identify appropriate funding streams where it is identified that services are not eligible or not a priority for supporting people funding. The team have successfully realigned ineligible funding and invested in strategically relevant services such as Extra Care and the Promoting Independence Service for people with physical disabilities.

3.04.5 'Savings through Collaboration and Regional Approaches'

The Regional Collaborative Committee has now been fully implemented. There is recognition that partnership working and regional collaboration can achieve efficiencies without reducing or affecting service delivery. Over the last twelve months, Flintshire has achieved savings through collaborative working on a sub regional basis. The LCP proposes further plans for collaborative projects in 2014 including a sub-regional older person's service and sub-regional work on grant administration efficiencies.

3.04.6 'Equality Impact of Reductions and Involvement of Providers'

Flintshire will carry out a comprehensive equality impact assessment of its Local Commissioning Plan. Flintshire held a well attended provider forum in September 2013 to consult and seek feedback from support providers. There is also senior level representation on the

regional provider forum and the Regional Collaborative Committee. The team invites providers to present their proposals for service improvements and efficiencies throughout the year.

National, Regional and Local Developments

Regional Collaboration

- 3.05 The Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC) has a role in delivering a fair and consistent approach across the region and identifying opportunities for savings through collaboration. The RCC has been in place since September 2012. During this transitional period the RCC has implemented a number of work packages (such as consistency, information sharing and a young people's work package). The RCC has also endorsed the development of jointly commissioned projects.
- 3.06 Following a review of the success of the RCCs across Wales, a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed and is currently out for consultation to strengthen the existing governance arrangements of the committees.
- 3.07 On a National level, we know that Welsh Government will continue to review the overall provision through the Supporting People Grant. The reduction for 2014/15 was less than originally indicated, but clearly this position remains subject to change. In this context, there is an ongoing need for regular view of Supporting People provision in light of the changing overall financial position.

Flintshire Developments over the Last Twelve Months

- 3.08 Flintshire Supporting People Team has led on a number of successful local and sub regional developments over the last twelve months
- 3.08.1 **Flintshire 'Nightstop' Service** – Supporting People has joint commissioned this with Housing and Children's Services. The project provides a safe alternative to emergency B&B accommodation in a family home for homeless 16-18 year olds. The project commenced in April and up to December 2013 provided 511 nights of accommodation. The homeless prevention and move on outcomes for young people have been outstanding and the project has saved approximately £5,000 for Social Services for Children and Housing in accommodation costs.
- 3.08.2 **The Service User Engagement Project** – This project has been delivered by Us UnLtd who have been carrying out focus groups and engaging with a range of customers who have used supporting people and homeless services. The project will submit a report by the end of March which will be used to shape future service delivery.

- 3.08.3 **Llys Jasmine Resettlement Officer** – Supporting People funding provided additional support whilst residents moved into Llys Jasmine and funds an ongoing activities co-ordinator which will build on the success of the post in Llys Eleanor.
- 3.08.4 **Supported Lodgings** – Flintshire has been delivering a successful Supported Lodgings Project in the county that provides a supported environment for young people to develop independent living skills in a home environment. This year the team worked with Denbighshire County Council to develop the scheme into a sub regional scheme with additional capacity.
- 3.08.5 **Body Positive** – Flintshire has led on the commissioning and review of the North Wales Body Positive Service which is a floating support service for people with HIV and AIDS. The Regional Collaborative Committee has committed to continuing to fund this project based on the positive performance reports and review outcomes.
- 3.08.6 **Regional Domestic Abuse Project** – The Supporting People team has achieved cost efficiencies by decommissioning two domestic abuse floating support projects and commissioning one single sub regional project working across Wrexham and Flintshire.
- 3.08.7 **The Support Gateway** – The support gateway has been in development over recent months and was launched as a central referral gateway in January 2014. The work to date has already realised some positive outcomes including reduced duplication of services, reduced waiting lists and empty spaces on support projects. The investment in the gateway has been an important development to ensure best use is made of resources including better matching of service users to projects, reduction in vacant places, improved turnover in projects and reduced risk of people with complex needs falling between gaps in services.
- 3.08.8 The project now intends to work with third sector providers and the Department for Work and Pensions to see if the benefits of the gateway can extend to advice services. Community Support Services are keen to develop and pilot a combined Advice and Support Gateway. The aim is to simplify and increase resident's access to advice and support services. Within the Gateway, advice referrals will be triaged, ensuring that the most effective service provider is requested to assist the resident in a timely manner. The Gateway will also maximise the effective use of available resources by identifying (and reducing) duplication of effort and assist advice providers by only referring through to a particular service residents who meet any eligibility criteria.
- 3.08.9 **Homeless Prevention** – Supporting People Programme Grant is a ring fenced grant. Flintshire has committed to investing in valuable short term projects to make use of money while it is available for the

benefit of the community and to support other statutory services. In the past six months Supporting People funding has funded support officers to complement the work of the homeless prevention services.

One temporary post has been working with families and individuals in interim accommodation to reduce the length of time people remain in B&B accommodation. Another temporary post has been supporting people placed in private sector accommodation to reduce the level of tenancy breakdown and repeat homelessness. Both initiatives have been successful and the reduction in B&B usage is reflected in the housing quarterly performance reporting data.

The Local Commissioning Plan

- 3.09 The Local Commissioning Plan (LCP) details the strategic priorities for Flintshire and focuses on ensuring that the programme funds the most appropriate housing related support services for local people, in order to maximise the outcomes achieved by service users. The LCP also covers a summary of the current need, existing supply and service gaps. Consultation on the Supporting People Programme is an integral part of the work of the team. The LCP details good examples of partnership working and consultation. The Supporting People Team has been supporting customer engagement across a number of other services.

Local Commissioning Plan Priorities 2014/15

New Investment

- 3.10 As funding is reduced year on year, there remain opportunities for some short term developments to make best use of funding that is available now but cannot be committed long term.
- 3.10.1 **A two year Mental Health Low Level Floating Support Service –** The LCP provides the background information which demonstrates the need for this service. Flintshire has a shortage of support outside of Social Services for individuals with mental health needs. This service will work closely with Social Services for Adults and be able to provide support to those individuals who do not meet the threshold for social services and provide a service to meet the demand in Flintshire.
- 3.10.2 **One year additional funding to Age Connects -** This funding is being allocated for one year to allow time for a gradual reduction to the service following the withdrawal of BCUHB funding from April 2014. This funding will prevent a negative impact for existing vulnerable people in receipt of support by preventing a sudden and significant reduction in service.

Reductions

3.10.3 The Supporting People Team have been working with providers to identify the necessary savings.

3.10.4

- A reduction of £211,000 from Adult Social Services from services which are not eligible to be funded by Supporting People Programme Grant.

- A reduction of £98,280 from BCUHB Learning Disability Services which are not eligible to be funded by Supporting People Programme Grant.

- The plan details the ongoing efficiency savings from external projects, formerly funded via SPRG tariffs, in order to demonstrate value for money.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 Committee notes the reductions to the Supporting People Grant and supports the proposed approach to managing reductions.

4.02 Committee notes the progress of the Supporting People team in the last twelve months.

4.03 Committee supports the Draft Flintshire Local Commissioning Plan

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The Supporting People Grant is a specific grant for funding housing related support services. For 2014-2015 Flintshire County Council have been informed of a reduction to the grant of 5% with further reductions expected in the following years as a result of redistribution.

5.02 The LCP highlights new services for priority development. However, services will only be developed according to available funding.

5.03 The LCP has identified a need to reduce funding to some services which are deemed ineligible for Supporting People funding. This will have an impact on Adult Social Services and as such Adult Social Services have planned to manage this reduction.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 There are no specific anti-poverty implications within this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 There are no specific environmental implications within this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The Supporting People Programme was established to provide low - level accommodation support services to people with an assessed need for support. Access to these support services should be available to all people who need them.

8.02 At present, some services are delivered as part of Social Services core services. Releasing SPPG funding from these 'core' services will provide the opportunity to develop services in the community. This will enable equality of access to accommodation support services amongst those in our communities who have a need for such support.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 Flintshire County Council expects the sub-regional collaboration project reviewing the administration of the grant to create circa £40k savings.

9.02 All necessary consultation will take place with staff that may be affected.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 A joint Supporting People and Homeless Forum which includes a range of stakeholders was held in September 2013 to consult on the Flintshire Supporting People Commissioning Strategy. The Commissioning Strategy will be presented to the Regional Collaborative Committee. The Supporting People Team will meet all providers individually to discuss their projects and explore opportunities to make best use of resources.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Flintshire Supporting People have had a three year commissioning strategy up to 2013 which was developed in partnership with stakeholders and providers. Flintshire Supporting People Team hold a provider forum annually to keep providers informed about local, regional and national developments and consult on changes within the annual plans and this transitional plan.

11.02 Information on need, supply and gaps is collected through information provided from service users, providers and wider stakeholders through the needs mapping exercise, the annual supply return, quarterly monitoring meetings and formal reviews.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1: Flintshire Local Commissioning Plan

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

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