

AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION OF SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME IN HEREFORDSHIRE

Report By: Head of Strategic Housing Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of the outcome of the Inspection by the Audit Commission of the Supporting People Programme in Herefordshire and the improvement plan.

Financial Implications

2. None within this report as it is for information purposes.

Background

3. The Supporting People programme was launched across the country on 1 April 2003.
4. The programme aims to establish a joined-up policy and funding framework, tailored to local needs and priorities, for the purpose of funding housing related support services for vulnerable people.
5. Although administered by the Council, Supporting People is a working partnership between the Council's Social Care and Strategic Housing Directorate, the West Mercia Probation Service and the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust. The programme has brought together a number of funding streams providing for housing-related support and placed them into a single pot.
6. Within Herefordshire, the Supporting People grant for 2003/2004 is £7.5 million and provides funding to assist a wide range of supported housing services to vulnerable people, including Women's Refuges, sheltered housing, floating support for homeless persons, supported housing for people with learning difficulties, to name but a few of the 20 different client groups.
7. During 2003, the Audit Commission announced its intention to undertake a programme of inspections of Supporting People administering authorities. Herefordshire was inspected during September/October 2003 and was amongst the first to be inspected by the Audit Commission.
8. The Inspection Report was published in December 2003 and is attached at Appendix A.
9. The Inspection assessed the Council as providing a 'good', two-star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement.
10. The summary to the report, contained on pages 3 to 8 provides a good overview of the inspectors' assessment.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Richard Gabb,
Head of Strategic Housing Services on 01432 261902

11. The extremely positive 'two-star' assessment of the Supporting People Programme in Herefordshire can be considered even more positively in the context of an inspection undertaken so shortly following the launch of the Supporting People programme.
12. The Inspectors' judgement that the Supporting People Programme has 'uncertain prospects for further improvement' reflects their assessment of the Council's capacity to move towards an 'excellent' rating. The report highlights the positive work the Council was undertaking to address any issues which could prove a barrier to 'excellence' and a copy of an improvement plan, drafted in response to the report, is attached at Appendix 2.
13. Ironically, in commenting positively on the work being undertaken to deliver further improvements, through the improvement plan, the report suggests it is too early to see the impact of the work. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that a later inspection would demonstrate more positive prospects in moving towards excellence.
14. In summary the very positive assessment of the Supporting People in Herefordshire has also usefully highlighted positive actions which can be taken to further enhance the programme and deliver further improvements. The monitoring of progress towards achieving the improvements outlined within the attached plan should enable the development of an excellent Supporting People Programme for Herefordshire.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT (a) the findings of the Audit Commission Inspection of the Supporting People Programme be noted;

and

(b) the Supporting People Improvement Plan be endorsed and progress reported to the Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None.