

Inspection report

December 2003



Supporting People Programme

Herefordshire Council

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Summary

Introduction to the Supporting People Programme

- 1 'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide housing related support services which help vulnerable people live independently. The programme went live on 1 April 2003.
- 2 The aim of the Supporting People programme is to establish a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework, delivered locally in response to identified local needs, to replace the current complex and unco-ordinated arrangements for providing housing related support services for vulnerable people.
- 3 The Supporting People programme brings together a number of funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG) and probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities.
- 4 Herefordshire Council is one of the first councils to be inspected. This report therefore reflects the current context for the council as it moves from implementation to the introduction of the programme and focuses on determining the effectiveness of current service delivery, the prospects for improvement and the outcomes of these for vulnerable people.

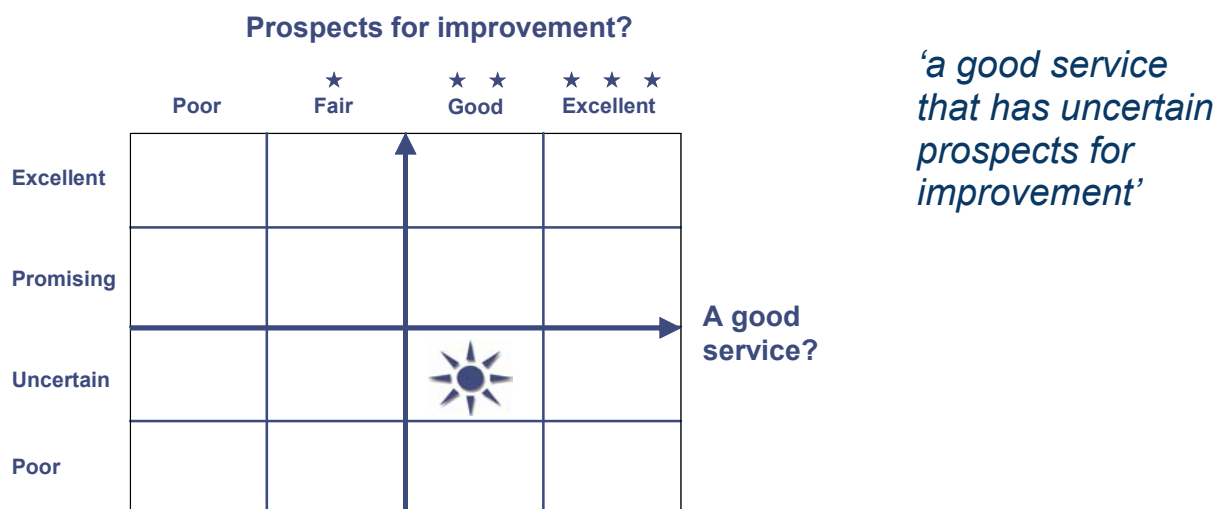
Background

- 5 Herefordshire Council is a unitary authority in the West of England. The population is approximately 175,000 of which 2.46 per cent are from minority ethnic communities.
- 6 The council is conservative led with 21 of the 58 seats. A leader and cabinet model is in place. The council employs approximately 6,600 staff across all services, including teachers. The council's budget for 2002/03 is £150 million.
- 7 Herefordshire Council acts as the administering local authority for the Supporting People programme in its area. The council works in partnership with Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and the West Mercia Probation Service in commissioning Supporting People services.
- 8 The total amount of Supporting People grant available in 2003/04 is £7.5 million. This equates to £42.12 per head of the population. The council receives £194,062 Supporting People administration grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to assist in the costs of fulfilling its role as the administering authority.
- 9 The revenue costs of new housing related support services, where capital funding for new buildings is secured, is described as pipeline funding. The council's pipeline allocation bids amount to £51,916 for projects due to come on stream during the year.

Scoring the service

- 10 We have assessed the council as providing a ‘good’, two-star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Scoring chart¹: Herefordshire Council - Supporting People Programme



What works well

- 11 During our inspection we found a number of positive features in the way that the Supporting People programme has been implemented to date. These include the following:
- ◆ A good understanding of the needs of local people and the gaps in service provision that need to be met in order to provide housing related support services to all vulnerable groups.
 - ◆ An increase in the number of housing related support services provided for vulnerable people. Expanded services have been provided for women at risk of domestic violence, ex-offenders, older people, people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities.
 - ◆ New services have been established for very vulnerable young people, pregnant teenagers, people with mental health problems and people who misuse alcohol and drugs.
 - ◆ Users value the services and the increasing independence provided by housing related support services delivered through the programme.
 - ◆ The council has achieved wide consultation and engagement with service users including consultation with people who are often hard to reach.
 - ◆ There are effective links between the delivery of services under the Supporting People programme and social care services.
 - ◆ There are shared aims that drive the programme and make connections with wider council aims to improve the quality of life and life chances of the people of Herefordshire as incorporated in the Herefordshire plan.
 - ◆ Well established, effective partnerships and close co-operative working with health including joint learning disability and mental health teams are resulting in the improved delivery of services for vulnerable people.

¹ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

- ◆ Effective working with other partners, including the probation service, is beginning to result in improvements in the way that services are planned.
- ◆ An established supported housing provider's forum is providing an effective mechanism for exchange of information in the planning and delivery of the programme.
- ◆ The inclusion of councillors and other staff in the programme is creating shared understanding and ownership of the programme.
- ◆ The knowledge and helpfulness of the Supporting People team has been recognised by health, probation and service providers.
- ◆ A robust, consistent service review process has been developed and is in operation, with a clear role for service users.
- ◆ The housing related support service reviews are focussing on service costs, their cost effectiveness, the quality of services and their outcomes for service users.

Areas for improvement

- 12 However, we found a number of weaknesses with the Supporting People programme that need to be addressed. These include:
- ◆ A lack of performance monitoring, performance management, clear targets and measurable objectives in the aims for the future planning and delivery.
 - ◆ The current lack of written information available that explains the programme and how to access the services it provides.
 - ◆ The lack of involvement of the probation service at an operational level in assessing the gaps in provision and proposals to fill these service gaps.
 - ◆ The lack of development of cross authority services and approaches that will result in a range of services across administering areas to meet specific needs including those for ex offenders and women fleeing domestic violence.
 - ◆ The lack of local performance indicators (PIs) that would enable the council to measure and report on its progress.
 - ◆ The lack of an internal mechanism to collate and feedback common issues and learning from the review programme particularly where service users raise concerns about their services.
- 13 We have judged that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for delivering further improvements. Although the council has responded positively to the inspection and is now undertaking work to address the issues raised, it is too early to see the results of this or the impact that this work will have on the programme.
- 14 There are a number of strengths most notably:
- ◆ the ownership of the programme across the council and with partners including service providers, health and probation;
 - ◆ the awareness of the council to the issues and problems it faces;
 - ◆ the council responded positively to concerns raised by providers over a contract clause which was considered inappropriate by ODPM and have removed the clause from all contracts;
 - ◆ the positive response made by the council in acting upon the recommendations arising from other inspections; and
 - ◆ the knowledge and helpfulness of the Supporting People team.
- 15 There are, however, a number of barriers to improvement. These include:

- ◆ The council has identified too many priorities for the Supporting People programme and action to resolve this has not yet been finalised or agreed.
- ◆ The Supporting People commissioning body has only been meeting as a separate group since April 2003 and is yet to demonstrate how it will ensure effective delivery and shape the direction of the programme.
- ◆ The council has no systems in place to capture and act upon the concerns of service users and providers and cannot ensure that these will influence the future of the programme.
- ◆ The absence of mechanisms to monitor and report on the programme means that it will be difficult for the council to demonstrate what it has achieved.

Recommendations

- 16 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations:
- ◆ Develop a communication strategy to ensure the involvement of all providers in the programme as well as the provision of information to users, their carers and advocates.
 - ◆ Develop objectives and targets that enable the aims of the programme to be measured and monitored.
 - ◆ Carry out further work to secure the active engagement of the probation service at an operational level. Monitor progress in this area and capture positive practice on how this can be achieved from other administering local authority areas where the partnership is working effectively.
 - ◆ Develop and agree terms of reference and necessary protocols for the commissioning body to ensure it is able to shape and direct the future of the programme.
 - ◆ Agree through the commissioning body how the future actions for the programme will be prioritised and develop an action plan that details how these will be targeted, monitored and reported.
 - ◆ Establish local performance indicators and systems to monitor and report on the performance of the programme in the context of the agreed priorities.
 - ◆ Develop an action plan to address other weaknesses as outlined in this report, including how to capture and disseminate the learning from the review process, and provide feedback on outcomes to service users.
 - ◆ Undertake further work on risks and contingencies that includes the assessment of violent and sexual offenders and links to the multi-agency public protection panels.
 - ◆ Protect users, staff and the public by ensuring there are information sharing agreements in place covering all high risk groups, agreed by all relevant agencies, and an updated housing allocation and support policy for offenders to make it consistent with the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).
- 17 We would like to thank the staff of Herefordshire Council, the Supporting People team and particularly Adam Russell and Chris Jones, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

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Report

Context

The locality

- 18 Herefordshire Council is a unitary authority which was created following local government reorganisation on 1 April 1998. It is situated in the southern borderland between England and Wales. Hereford City is the main commercial, residential and administrative centre and the five market towns of Leominster, Ross-on-Wye, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington provide the other principal centres of population.
- 19 The county is mainly rural in character and is the second most sparsely populated county in England. Its population of 175,000 is expected to grow through migration, predominantly by the elderly, but there is a net outflow of young people. People over pensionable age make up 22.1 per cent of the population, compared to a national average of 18.4 per cent.
- 20 Only a small proportion of the population (2.46 per cent) is from black and ethnic minority communities compared to the national average (13.01 per cent). The largest minority group in the area are travellers, who make up approximately 5 per cent of the population.
- 21 The county has few large employers and is dependent upon 'vulnerable' sectors, particularly manufacturing and agriculture. Around 8 per cent of the workforce is employed in farming, forestry and fishing, which is higher than the national average (2 per cent). Tourism and creative industries are seen as growth areas in Herefordshire. Although unemployment is below the national average (3.6 per cent) at 1.9 per cent, average wages are only 84 per cent of the national average and 82 per cent of the regional average.
- 22 There are some pockets of deprivation within the county and significant issues in relation to access to services in rural areas. For instance, 63 per cent of rural parishes have no post office and most have neither a general store (87 per cent), nor a small village shop (82 per cent). Fifty seven per cent of households live more than 2 kilometres from a secondary school.
- 23 The council transferred its housing stock under a large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) to Herefordshire housing, a registered social landlord (RSL), in November 2002. Although housing costs are slightly lower than average and 84 per cent of homes are owner occupied, there is a lack of affordable housing across the area.

The Council

- 24 The council comprises 58 elected members, 21 conservatives, 17 liberal democrats, 16 independents, and 4 labour. It has operated leader/cabinet arrangements since early 1999. The Conservative group took over the administration after the local elections in May 2003. The cabinet has nine member portfolios covering key service areas and is supported by an overarching strategic monitoring committee and four scrutiny committees.
- 25 To encourage links between members and their communities, there are nine local area forums (LAFs) based on geographical groupings of wards covering the whole county. Each forum includes all the councillors covered by that geographical area. These have been in abeyance since the change of administration in May 2003 but are in the process of being re-started.
- 26 The management structure is based around four service directorates, a commercial services organisation and support services. The chief executive is responsible for the overall management of the council and each of the four

directorates is headed by a director who also has a corporate management role. Each director is responsible for a number of heads of service.

- 27 The revenue budget for the council for 2002/03 is £150 million, an increase of 6 per cent on the previous year. The budget for social services is £30 million. The council is the third lowest spending unitary authority, the second largest unitary authority in terms of area and has the lowest council tax rate in the West Midlands.

Supporting People – ODPM framework for delivery

- 28 The ODPM has set out the following structural arrangements for the development and delivery of the Supporting People programme:
- ◆ Accountable officer and the Supporting People team: drives the whole process.
 - ◆ Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
 - ◆ Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
 - ◆ Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
 - ◆ Elected members: approve key decisions of the commissioning body.
 - ◆ Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.
- 29 Supporting People commissioning bodies are a requirement under grant conditions and must have senior representation from the administering local authority (ALA), the local health services, one representative from each primary care trust, and the area probation service. In two tier ALAs each district council is entitled to one representative. Each named organisation has one vote although the ALA has a veto where it can demonstrate a financial risk to the ALA.

Supporting People – housing related Support Services in Herefordshire Council

Management Arrangements

- 30 The Supporting People team is part of the social care and strategic housing directorate. It comprises a project manager, three project officers, and administrative support. The team is managed by the head of strategic housing. Following the transfer of the housing stock in November 2002, the remaining housing staff are in the process of a re-organisation which will see this team expanded and taking on responsibility for other areas of housing strategy and policy.
- 31 The Supporting People team has successfully met each of the key milestones set by the ODPM as part of the national performance monitoring arrangements. The budget available in the current year meets the funding requirements of existing services.
- 32 The head of strategic housing chairs the commissioning body and the accountable officer is the director of housing and social care.

Strategy

- 33 The ODPM required all Supporting People administering local authorities to submit a shadow strategy in the Autumn of 2002. The shadow strategies were required to demonstrate a clear vision and strategic steer for the programme and to set out the map of existing housing related support provision.

- 34 The shadow strategy sets out the context for Supporting People in Herefordshire and provides guidance as to the intentions of the programme in the first year of operation. The ODPM assessed the Supporting People shadow strategy as good. This reflected the inclusiveness of the strategy preparation process and the involvement of service users and providers.
- 35 The ODPM requires all administering local authorities to produce a five year strategy by November 2004. The council undertook extensive research and analysis in the production of the shadow strategy and will use this as the basis of the five year strategy.
- 36 However, during our inspection a number of partners queried how they would be involved in producing the five year strategy. As yet, the council does not have a clear plan for producing the strategy or consulting on it.

Services and budget

- 37 There are currently 4,805 units of supported housing or housing support in Herefordshire provided by 44 organisations. The majority of the provision, 78.3 per cent, is sheltered accommodation for older people (3764 units).
- 38 The remaining 21.7 per cent is a mixture of provision for people with mental health problems, people with a learning disability, people with a physical disability, ex-offenders, single homeless people, women fleeing domestic violence and young people at risk.
- 39 A floating support scheme for travellers on local authority sites has been established although there are no specific services for people from minority ethnic groups.
- 40 The final Supporting People grant allocation to the council for the financial year 2003/04 is:
- ◆ £7.5 million; and
 - ◆ £51,916 has been awarded to cover the revenue costs of schemes under development (pipeline funding).
- 41 The administration grant awarded to the council by the ODPM to assist in the costs of implementing, delivering and managing the programme is £194,062 for the financial year 2003/04.

How good is the service?

Are the aims clear and challenging?

- 42 Inspectors look to see how a council has agreed the key aims for the service being inspected, how clear these aims are to the people that receive the service and whether these reflect the corporate aims of the organisation as a whole.
- 43 Aims need to be challenging, address local needs and support national objectives. This requires the council to consider and demonstrate how a service contributes to its wider corporate aims and community plans.
- 44 The council's vision for Herefordshire is set out in the Herefordshire partnership Plan, an overarching community plan. It was developed following extensive consultation with partners and the public and takes account of national and local priorities.
- 45 The aims of the service are set out in the shadow strategy and were derived from the aims of the housing investment strategy and the special needs and supported housing strategy. The special needs and supported housing strategy has been a real attempt to try and unify all of the strategies that apply across the needs groups that Supporting People covers and make connections between the vision and the wider council aims as incorporated in the Herefordshire plan.

- 46 These are supported by a local vision for the service that reflects the importance of partnerships and integration to provide services that best meet the needs of local people. The programme has a clear vision that partners, including users, are aware of and share. It is driven by the Supporting People team and demonstrated by the focus of their work in expanding and improving services. A number of providers felt that the aims were 'high and challenging' and would bring about improvements that would benefit service users.
- 47 Despite the challenging nature of the aims, there are no targets linked to them that would show how well they are being met. The council is aware of this and plans to address this in the next housing investment strategy that will be submitted to the Government Office, West Midlands in 2004. In the meantime, the council has started to rationalise the actions it identified for the programme to produce a clear and measurable delivery timetable.

Does the service meet these aims?

- 48 Having considered the aims that the council has set for the service, inspectors make an assessment of how well the council is meeting these aims. This includes an assessment of performance against specific service standards and targets and the council's approach to measuring whether it is actually delivering what it set out to do.
- 49 The assessment was based upon the following key issues:
- ◆ commissioning services to meet local needs;
 - ◆ user involvement and access to services;
 - ◆ diversity;
 - ◆ partnership working;
 - ◆ quality and monitoring including service reviews, value for money and cost effectiveness; and
 - ◆ outcomes for service users and carers.

Commissioning services to meet local needs

- 50 There is a good understanding of the needs of the local community and how the services provided address these. As part of the development of the shadow strategy, a large amount of work was undertaken in supply mapping the existing housing related support services available. This work drew on the data and expertise of other colleagues across the council and the health services. It identified the demography of each client group, the national and local policy context, current provision of services and an analysis of other needs.
- 51 Gaps in service provision have been identified in the shadow strategy and 36 action points developed to address these. This work will be kept up to date through the information that will come out of the review process as well as regular contact with service providers.
- 52 There has been a real expansion of housing related services to vulnerable groups such as vulnerable young people leaving care, teenage parents, older people, travellers and people who misuse drugs or alcohol. Work was undertaken prior to the Supporting People programme to use transitional housing benefit (THB) to fund these.
- 53 There are good links between the existing commissioning managers within social care and the Supporting People team. The Supporting People team has produced clear guidelines on what constitutes housing related support and is therefore eligible for grant.
- 54 Although commissioning managers are aware of the criteria for securing Supporting People funding, there needs to be more clarity about what elements

of a service are housing related support and what are personal care for staff involved in the direct provision of services.

- 55 A representative of the Supporting People team will be sitting on the council's community care panel in the future. This will ensure that decisions on funding (whether it should be from community care or Supporting People funds) are made more quickly and there is no delay for the user in the provision of the service.

User involvement and access to services

Consultation

- 56 There has been wide consultation and engagement with service users. An inclusive forum was established to involve users in the programme but this was found to not be a successful way of engaging everyone in the process. Users and their carers are now involved through other established groups such as those working with people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and drug and substance mis-users. In addition, the Supporting People team has undertaken consultation with hard to reach people such as isolated mental health service users.
- 57 Herefordshire Council is committed to consulting and engaging with users across all aspects of its services. Stafford University was engaged to consult with homeless people, another traditionally hard to reach group, so that their views on being homeless and the services available could directly feed into the development of the homelessness strategy.
- 58 At a more local level, we also saw evidence of services users being consulted about the services they are receiving and changes resulting from this. One particular example of this was a user with learning disabilities who was able to secure a policy change by raising a complaint. The complaint related to a particular element of support which the user felt she should not have to fund herself. One provider of supported housing services for people with learning disabilities has recently achieved funding for a post to set up tenant groups.

Information

- 59 Although the council produced information for providers and service users, it did not produce any general information on the Supporting People programme during the setting up of the programme. Information leaflets are readily available from information shops in the main towns about general housing related issues and Herefordshire housing have revised a number of leaflets since taking over the housing stock. There are also a number of leaflets from provider organisations about their services, such as careline and women's aid.
- 60 At the time of our inspection, there was no information relating to Supporting People available on the council's website. This was due to a moratorium on information being added while the website was being developed. However, the team has information ready to be added when this moratorium is lifted.
- 61 The team is currently working on a service directory that will list all the services that are on offer and include eligibility, costs, exclusions and how to make a referral. It is envisaged that this will be available both electronically and in hard copy with a commitment that the electronic version will be up-dated every month. It will also be available in other formats as requested. It is planned that the directory will be available on the council's website by the end of November 2003.
- 62 Although the black and minority ethnic (BME) population across the county is relatively small, the council offers translation services and this is advertised in the council office reception areas.
- 63 There is a clear role for users in the review process to feedback on their experience of services. To date, 44 reviews have been initiated and all the users involved will be consulted with. There is no system set up within the team to

collate this feedback on a more general level in order to use it to influence the development of other services.

Diversity

- 64 The council is driving the diversity agenda to ensure that it is responding to the needs of all members of the community, including the relatively small number of minority groups. There are insufficient numbers for the agenda to be driven by the community.
- 65 The figures for BME communities from the 2001 census show Herefordshire as having a population of 2.46 per cent. This figure includes Irish as well as 'white, other'. This compares to a regional average of 13.85 per cent and a national average of 13.01 per cent. The gypsy council assesses Herefordshire as having a higher than average population of travellers, both romany and new age, at 5 per cent. While it is very difficult to verify this figure, it is accepted that Herefordshire has a significant traveller population.
- 66 Because of the low numbers from BME communities, Herefordshire has few council services to offer people from diverse cultures due to the difficulty in sustaining service infrastructures when numbers are very small.
- 67 A race equalities officer has been in post for the past two years and has played a key role in driving this agenda forwards. He is working both internally and externally to raise awareness and ensure the provision of training for staff and communities.
- 68 The Supporting People team identified in the shadow strategy the need to undertake research to identify the housing support needs of BME communities, Travellers and people with HIV/AIDs. This work has not taken into account the role of the race equalities officer and this is a missed opportunity as his work could compliment the aims and objectives of the programme.
- 69 In terms of other groups that make up a diverse community, the Supporting People programme has already included these in its mapping processes and expanded or established services. This includes marginalised groups such as young single homeless, people with mental health problems and ex-offenders.

Partnership working

- 70 Co-ordinated and effective partnership working is key to the success of the Supporting People programme that delivers real improvements to the housing related support available to vulnerable people.
- 71 The council has well established and effective partnerships across the range of its functions. Since the authority was set up in 1998, it has worked closely and co-operatively with the health services and good partnership working is evident here. The primary care trust (PCT) has been an active partner in the setting up of the Supporting People programme. There are two joint teams covering learning disability and mental health. The former is based in the council and the latter in the PCT. Additionally, planning and commissioning managers for both health and social care work in one team.
- 72 Both partners are aware of the role they play in helping each other achieve targets and although the direct involvement in each others services varies, they are both committed to working collaboratively for the benefit of local people.
- 73 Work with the council's other key partner, the probation service, has not been so productive. The West Mercia probation service covers Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Telford and Wrekin. Arrangements have worked well at a strategic level, as the partnership manager has been involved in the Supporting People programmes for all of these authorities and the commissioning body has benefited from his level of knowledge and expertise.

- 74 Over the last two years, the probation service has been undergoing a major restructuring following the amalgamation of two separate probation areas. Because of this, staff have not been available at an operational level to work more closely on the development of housing related support services. A new area manager has recently been appointed to the probation service and it is envisaged that this will improve the situation as she will have more time to be directly involved.

Inclusive Forum

- 75 Initial guidance from the ODPM stated that council's should operate an inclusive forum that would meet regularly and involve all partners in consultation. The council ran one very large inclusive forum in 2001 but did not find this an effective way to communicate the different issues to all the different groups involved in the programme.
- 76 It was decided to use other existing groups to consult with service users and an existing housing provider group. The supported housing forum had been in existence since 2000 and developed into the supported housing provider forum in 2001 to include a wider group of stakeholders. Membership includes all local housing associations, providers of floating support services, managing agents, supported lodging providers, advocacy and voluntary groups. This group is now called the supported housing forum and meets quarterly and is serviced by the Supporting People team. In addition, two sub-groups have been established so that providers of accommodation based or floating support services can discuss issues particular to them.
- 77 On the whole, relationships work well between the council and this group although a few of the smaller providers did tell us that they sometimes found the relationship strained. As one provider said:

'With funders it is never an easy partnership or an equal one – they've got the money and I want it' – a service provider.

- 78 A small number of providers told us that they felt marginalised and the council needs to address this. The main reason for this was that they did not understand the criteria for, or how to, access funding.

Core Strategy Group

- 79 Since 2001, the council had operated a single group called the Herefordshire Supporting People partnership. This covered both the roles and functions of the core strategy group and the commissioning body. Members of the partnership are drawn from the local authority including commissioning service managers, the PCT, the probation service and a representative of the registered social landlord (RSL) forum.
- 80 The decision to have one body covering both functions was a pragmatic one. It reflected the small size and streamlined structures of the partner organisations and the fact that membership of both bodies was often duplicated. The role of this group is detailed in the shadow strategy and includes:
- ◆ the facilitation of the inclusiveness of the Supporting People strategic development process and ensuring participation by a broad range of stakeholders;
 - ◆ ensuring service users have the opportunity to participate in the strategic development process;
 - ◆ agree the allocation of the Supporting People grant;
 - ◆ establish scrutiny arrangements for the programme; and
 - ◆ prioritise housing and support needs by client groups to inform service developments.

- 81 We saw evidence of good partnership working within the council with commissioning managers from social care being members of the Supporting People partnership. Through this, they have been actively involved in the development of the shadow strategy and the implementation of the programme. This was also the case with the councillors we saw who clearly understood the aims and aspirations of the programme and the contribution it makes to the wider strategic aims of the council especially around creating and sustaining balanced communities.

Commissioning Body

- 82 Although the role of the commissioning body had been subsumed in the wider Herefordshire Supporting People partnership, it was decided in April 2003 to establish this as a separate sub-group. The commissioning body is chaired by the head of strategic housing and the other members are the director of social care and strategic housing and senior managers from the primary care trust and probation.
- 83 The commissioning body is now playing a key role in making decisions about de-commissioning and transferring services following service reviews. Although it has met twice terms of reference for this group as a separate entity are still to be confirmed.

Other Partnership Benefits

- 84 All of the partners we spoke to praised the Supporting People team for both their helpfulness and level of knowledge. This was particularly so from smaller providers who have struggled with the number of forms they have had to complete and the different requirements that they have had to become familiar with. All providers and other partners have also valued the training and workshops that the team have organised on various topics to do with the programme.
- 85 Within the programme there are examples of the added value that has been achieved through partnership working. We saw this in the new development of 21 self contained units of accommodation for young single homeless people in what was previously a multi-use hostel with shared facilities. There will also be a resource centre on the premises available to other groups. This has involved close working between the provider, the housing enabling team and the Supporting People team.
- 86 The development of new services has not been without some opposition and we saw where this was successfully overcome, through the skilful engagement of the local community by the council, in the establishment of eight units of accommodation for young people in a listed building in Leominster.

Cross Authority Issues

- 87 The Supporting People team are in dialogue with neighbouring authorities to share best practice and alert each other to common local issues. As yet though, there have been no direct service developments with these authorities or a shared approach to the development of the quality assessments frameworks that are used as part of the service review process. This means that providers with housing related support services in this and neighbouring authorities are struggling with small yet significant differences in the approach taken to the monitoring and review processes.
- 88 However, the council is aware of this and work has started to consider how to share common paperwork. It is also willing to share the work it has undertaken on specifying what are housing related costs and what are social care costs.

Quality and monitoring

Contracts and Payments

- 89 Services across all groups have been commissioned through 44 providers and 122 contracts. At the time of our inspection, 22 of these contracts were outstanding. Seventeen of these are with Herefordshire housing, the registered social landlord that took over the responsibility for council's housing stock. These contracts were in dispute as Herefordshire Housing refused to accept a contract clause relating to financial risk. This clause would pass on to the provider any savings that may need to be made should the Supporting People funding the council receives be reduced.
- 90 The council had submitted this clause to the ODPM earlier this year but had not been informed it would mean that it is outside the ODPM grant conditions for Supporting People funding if implemented.
- 91 Following our time on site the council has discussed the contract clause issue with the ODPM and has taken action to remove the contentious clause from all contracts.
- 92 The council decided not to implement a charging policy for the first year of the programme. There are very few people who will be responsible for their own funding and the costs of not charging in the first year will be covered by the council's own resources. Concern over the robustness of the fairer charging IT system made this a pragmatic decision but this needs to be resolved so that an agreed charging policy can be implemented in the next financial year 2004/05.

Performance Management

- 93 No local performance indicators (PIs) have been developed yet although the ODPM has set national key performance indicators. These will be reported on after 1 April 2004. Guidance is available for council's in setting local performance indicators. We did not find evidence of work in progress to address the issues around the collation and reporting of PIs.
- 94 Without a robust system of local performance management and monitoring the council will not be able to compare their performance with other administering local authorities and will also be unable to measure the outcomes of their programme for service users.
- 95 In addition, further work needs to be carried out to define the targets against which the work of the Supporting People team will be monitored and a reporting mechanism to the commissioning body needs to be developed and agreed.

Value for Money and Cost Effectiveness

- 96 The cost of services across the county varies enormously from a few pence to over one thousand pounds per week. The Supporting People team has been successful in establishing a number of services for people with learning difficulties so that they have their own tenancies with floating support. Many of these have been at an initial high cost as they are supporting people who were receiving full time care in residential settings.
- 97 At the time of our inspection, the highest cost service was housing related support for a person with learning difficulties who had left residential care. The cost of this support has already decreased as the individual has grown more confident in living by himself and the level of support is expected to reduce even further. The council have not put systems in place that will allow them to clearly assess the cost benefits of this approach for the council and its health partners.
- 98 The programme will continue to pay out on the transitional housing benefit (THB) rates that were agreed as part of the set-up of the programme until the service is reviewed. Some high cost services were established before the Supporting People team was in place. While the Supporting People team did as much as it

could within the guidelines, the level of claims will now need to be assessed through the review process and this has increased the burden of work for the review officers.

Risk and Contingency Planning

- 99 The shadow strategy did not include any details on risks and contingencies although there are arrangements in place as demonstrated by the case study 1 below. Risks and contingencies have been built into the IT plans but overall this remains an area that needs to be more comprehensively addressed to ensure a consistent approach.
- 100 There are no protocols in place with the probation service relating to the multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA). The MAPPA that was in place relating to the housing of dangerous offenders is no longer valid since the council transferred its housing stock. The council is aware of this and is actively pursuing the agreement of a new protocol to reflect the current situation.

Service Reviews

- 101 The ODPM Supporting People grant conditions require all administering local authorities to review all of their contracted services within a three year period from 1 April 2003. Service users are currently providing services under interim contracts and a service review is required before a contract can be renegotiated. The outcomes of service reviews and any associated decisions to reconfigure or decommission a service must be agreed by the commissioning body. The ODPM has published extensive guidance on how service reviews should be conducted.
- 102 The costs of the services and value for money issues are a major consideration in the council's review programme. Initially, the reviews were going to be based around service areas and a number of services that were regarded as having particular levels of risk were included for an early review regardless of client group. However, following guidelines from the ODPM, they are now reviewing the high cost, high risk services first. This includes a number of services where the only information available to the council is that submitted as part of the THB claim including high cost services for people with learning disabilities as well those where there are concerns about the quality of support offered.
- 103 A robust, consistent review process has been developed and has been in operation since April 2003. At the time of our inspection, 44 reviews had been initiated and twelve had been completed. Savings have been realised from a number of the reviews and these will be used to fund shortfalls in existing services as well as new service developments.
- 104 The following case study illustrates the outcome of the review process on a provider where there were concerns about the quality and cost of the service as well as the contingency arrangements that have been put in place.

Supporting People Case Study 1

Herefordshire Council Supporting People Service Review Process & Outcome

Service User Group: 6 adults with learning difficulties

Accommodation type: all 6 tenants, 3 privately rented & 3 housing association

Type of service reviewed: external provider delivering care & support to all 6 adults from spring 2000. All the services were previously funded under THB.

Early review carried out due to client group and high cost.

Council's concerns about provider:

- ◆ housing related support packages contained a significant proportion of care;

- ◆ poor management infrastructure;
- ◆ failed to meet targets for the self assessment phase of service review;
- ◆ support from the council did not result in successful completion of self assessment;
- ◆ pre-arranged meeting with a Supporting People review officer had to be abandoned due to lack of preparedness by the provider;
- ◆ second visit by review officer demonstrated a lack of engagement in the review process from the manager and staff;
- ◆ provider did not facilitate meetings with service users and no support was available to help service users participate in the review; and
- ◆ only two of the six service users were able to communicate without support from a trusted person.

Findings from the service review

In general the accommodation and environment was of an acceptable standard, however, the reviewing officer found cause for concern in respect of the service. Concerns varied from client to client but included:

- ◆ support plan paperwork out of date;
- ◆ service users not permitted to view their own records, a service user punished for not eating a meal by prevention from attending day club;
- ◆ service users totally dependant on support workers for help with all needs, no advocacy service or 'circle of friends' in place;
- ◆ service users told they were not allowed to wake the support worker at night;
- ◆ lack of security of tenure presenting a risk to the accommodation;
- ◆ no notification from provider that one service user had moved house since the interim contract;
- ◆ only one set of client records kept, these were either at the office or at the client home; and
- ◆ health and safety issues.

Outcome of service review:

- ◆ The council concluded that the services being provided were essential to the users and were strategically relevant to the council's agreed approach to, and priorities, for Supporting People. However the provider was judged to be failing to provide services to an acceptable standard.
- ◆ The commissioning body agreed, following detailed discussions with the provider, to cease to contract with the provider by mutual agreement.
- ◆ The council is using the contingency plans that have been prepared to deal with the decommissioning of services to seek an interim provider to take over responsibilities for the eligible parts of the service until a permanent solution can be found.
- ◆ The commissioning body is considering the cost effectiveness and value for money of the service provided currently and the results of these will be used to influence future contracting decisions.

105 The service reviews are seen as a positive process by providers that will bring about more transparency and accountability. One provider told us:

'Examples of poor practice will be 'weeded out' as a result, which is positive for service users locally' – a provider.

- 106 Some providers who have already been through the review process reported it as a positive experience and were happy with the way in which it had been conducted, especially the consultation with staff and service users.
- 107 The review process will also be used to gather comparable information on service costs with a view to bringing these into alignment where appropriate across the different providers. Because of the opportunity that THB funding offered to revise and re-cost services, there are now disparities between the salaries offered to staff providing housing support and personal care.
- 108 While results of the reviews are fed back to individual providers and service users, the team has not yet set up an internal mechanism to feedback more general findings to everyone. This will become more critical as the number of reviews increase and common issues become more apparent.
- 109 Herefordshire decided early on in the process to implement all 17 elements of the quality assessment framework (QAF). Some providers, especially the smaller ones are concerned about how arduous this will be but others told us:

'Once you have completed the first four elements, the rest are a piece of cake' – some service providers.

- 110 However, neighbouring authorities are only implementing the first four elements and providers are confused about this. We feel it would be helpful if the team produced a more regular newsletter to providers that could be used to remind them of decisions and keep them up to date.

Outcomes for service users and carers

- 111 Services in Herefordshire for vulnerable people in need of housing related support have increased considerably as part of this programme. Services have been expanded for women at risk of domestic violence, ex-offenders, people with mental health problems, people with learning disability and older people. This has been in terms of both 'bricks and mortar' schemes as well as floating support services.
- 112 New services have been established for very vulnerable young people leaving care, pregnant teenagers, people who misuse alcohol and people who misuse drugs.

Supporting People Case Study 2

Service User Group: 4 adults with learning difficulties

Previous accommodation: 3 in residential care & 1 with parents

Type of service provided: independent living with housing related support.

Key players: the council's Supporting People Team, social services staff, support provider, housing association and the 4 service users.

Actions taken:

- ◆ The catalyst was a road show by the council to inform various agencies, residential homes, carer groups and other related organizations about Supporting People.
- ◆ The emphasis was not on explaining Supporting People as a regime but on indicating how it could benefit people's lives and present new options.
- ◆ As a result of this the four individuals concerned made it known that they would like to try to live independently with floating support.
- ◆ The support provider began to speak to various housing associations about the individuals housing needs.

- ◆ Within a few months four flats in the same location had been identified and these were refurbished and decorated before the service users moved in. The landlord had experienced problems with anti social behaviour in the area.
- ◆ The parents and families of the 4 people were understandably worried about their ability to cope on their own and initially resisted the move.
- ◆ The council and the support provider worked with the families to help resolve their fears and concerns.

Outcomes for the service users

- ◆ The 4 people were offered assured shorthold tenancies and the landlord reports that these lettings 'transformed the place' from a difficult to manage stigmatised location to one which is now in demand, with model tenants.
- ◆ The housing related support has worked well and the number of hours needed is now reducing as the people settle and become independent.

Learning from this experience:

- ◆ The people themselves still attend day centres and by their word of mouth, other individuals are beginning to come forward for whom independent living could also be an option for the first time in their lives.
- ◆ The council acknowledges that the benefits of this approach need to be captured both in terms of quality of life improvements and cost effectiveness/ value for money.

- 113 Service users we contacted and spoke to were happy with the support they receive and many of them spoke about how it has increased their independence and their confidence to live in the community.
- 114 The probation service sees Supporting People offering opportunities and outcomes for offenders in terms of reducing re-offending:

'If there was ever the chance to stabilise offenders' lives, then Supporting People is it, especially in terms of move-on accommodation' – the probation service.

- 115 However, the lack of available, affordable accommodation overall in Herefordshire is impacting on some services, including the hostel for ex-offenders, as it means that people are not able to move on to independent living in the area as soon as they are ready for it.

How does the performance compare?

- 116 In order to judge the quality of a service, it is important to compare the performance of that service against other suppliers across a range of sectors. The aim is not exact comparison, but an exploration of how similar services (or elements of services) perform in order to identify significant differences, the reasons for them and the extent to which improvements are required.
- 117 The details of the data used to inform comparisons are included in the data appendix of this report. Where possible, we have compared the council with other councils in its Audit Commission family group (councils with similar general characteristics). We have also compared the council with the best and worst performing 25 per cent of unitary councils for that indicator.
- 118 The current funding profile (outlined in the data appendix) shows that investment in community alarms is significantly lower in Herefordshire than other councils and higher in terms of the grant to home improvement agencies. There is an average level of investment in supported accommodation and much higher levels of investment in floating support schemes. These spends reflect the local issues

of a higher than average number of owner occupiers and the dispersed rural nature of the area.

- 119 The performance assessment framework 2001/02 identifies that the council performs well in terms of adults with mental health needs and adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home. Areas of weak performance relate to low numbers of adults with a physical disability helped to live at home, the provision of intensive home care packages and delayed discharges.
- 120 Although the target for delayed discharges was met at 31 March 2003 the pattern of delays has been volatile and otherwise above the target. This pressure has its roots in the council's low level of investment in services for older people.
- 121 The best value performance indicators 2001/02 show that the council is in the top 25 per cent nationally in terms of tenants satisfaction with the overall service and tenants opportunities for participation. Performance is average in terms of speed of response when processing homeless people's applications and processing housing benefit claims. The council has comparatively weaker performance with regard to the numbers of housing benefit renewal claims processed on time.
- 122 The council's level of provision of Supporting People accommodation services is generally average when compared to other councils. The provision of floating support services is significantly higher, reflecting the sparsely populated and rural nature of the area.
- 123 The commissioning body will need to decide on its performance management and monitoring arrangements and further work is needed to develop shared targets across agencies and develop local performance indicators that show the impact of the Supporting People programme in Herefordshire.

Summary

- 124 Overall, we judge that Herefordshire Council is delivering a good, two-star service. There are clear aims that are strong and unifying and that integrate the programme into the wider corporate agenda. Services have been commissioned to meet local needs and gaps identified.
- 125 There is close work between the Supporting People programme and social care commissioning. Partnerships, and particularly the one with health, are overall working well and for the benefits of the programme.
- 126 Users have been consulted and involved in the development of services which are producing positive and valued results. Reviews of services have started and as well as identifying savings, have been seen so far as largely a positive process.
- 127 The council is driving the diversity agenda forwards and is taking steps to ensure that the needs of minority and marginalised groups are considered in the delivery of services.
- 128 However, the council's aims for the Supporting People programme lack targets and measurable objectives. This means that it is hard for the council to quantify how well they are working.
- 129 There is no written general information available on the programme or regular communication about the programme with partners, including users. A number of high cost services have been established through transitional housing benefit and the value for money and cost effectiveness of these services will need to be rigorously addressed through the service review process.
- 130 The current working arrangements with the probation service are not strong enough to ensure that operational housing related support service delivery issues for ex offenders and those at risk of offending, are adequately addressed. There are also some service providers who do not feel fully informed and are unsure about how to access grant funding.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 131 Inspectors have judged the Service's prospects for improvement based on its capacity to improve using the four building blocks for effective improvement:
- ◆ ownership of problems and willingness to change;
 - ◆ a sustained focus on what matters;
 - ◆ the capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement; and
 - ◆ integration of continuous improvement into day to day management.

Ownership of problems and willingness to change

- 132 It was clear to the inspection team that there is ownership of the Supporting People agenda by senior managers and councillors. To illustrate this, the accountable officer is the director of housing and social care, who sits on the commissioning body, the Herefordshire Supporting People partnership and a number of key inter agency groups. Representation from the other key partners is at an equally high level.
- 133 Conflicts over spending and funding have not yet been an issue for the Supporting People commissioning body to deal with. However, in other areas the council and the primary care trust have regularly had to make difficult decisions around funding and we could see that agreements had been made that focus on the service user rather than the organisations. An example of this is, the agreement to pool funding from the social care, education and health budgets for children who need placements outside of the authority.
- 134 Neither has the commissioning body had to make any difficult or contentious decisions. It is aware of the likelihood of these needing to be made in the future, especially relating to the outcomes of some service reviews and that it will need to develop joint working protocols to deal with this. However, to date, these are not in place.
- 135 The commissioning body is clear that poor performance in relation to Supporting People services will be tackled through the review process and we have already seen from the previous case study of de-commissioning a learning disability service that they are prepared to do this.
- 136 Throughout the inspection, the council and the Supporting People team have been open to the feedback from inspectors and have started to take action on these areas. An example of this is the work that the commissioning body will soon be considering on rationalising the priorities for the programme.
- 137 There is also an ownership across the council of larger issues. The corporate performance assessment (CPA) carried out in 2002 found that the council has made significant strides in strengthening key services such as education, social services and housing which are priority areas.
- 138 The council's social services were reviewed, as part of the programme of joint reviews, in 2002. They found that there was an impressive level of political leadership and a clear sense of purpose and direction within the management team.
- 139 In relation to services for older people, the council has shown its continued commitment to improve these by specifically allocating budget increases, improving services through re-focusing provision and increasing management capacity. However, due to the underlying low level of investment in these areas it is likely that these improvements will realise only modest gains in the short to medium term. We saw clear political determination to improve these services, but as one senior councillor told us, achieving the level of funding required will mean:

'Tough decisions will have to be made' – a senior councillor.

A sustained focus on what matters

- 140 The council has focussed on getting the Supporting People programme in place and increasing the supply of housing related support services and this is evidence of its ability to focus on what matters. The shadow strategy outlines 36 areas for action and although the council is confident it will deliver on all of these over a five year programme, it does not have an action plan showing how this will be achieved and by when. The first year of the programme has identified 10 priority areas, again with no action plan. We consider there are too many priorities for the council to focus attention on and the council has acknowledged this and is now considering how to rationalise these.
- 141 The approach the council's Supporting People team has taken so far in establishing and driving the programme forwards has been positively received. Providers told us that the team has a clear vision and aims for the services. However, while they all agreed with these currently, there is concern about the future if opinions start to divide and providers are not sure how dissent will be managed. It is now an appropriate time for the commissioning body to consider how it will work at sustaining the effective partnerships it has established and developing effective communication mechanisms.
- 142 The review process is seen as a key driver in improving performance across the Supporting People programme. It will also ensure that services are cost effective and value for money through ensuring the provision of eligible housing related support services, rather than subsidised expensive packages of care that should be funded from other budgets.

The capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement

- 143 The Supporting People team is focused and committed to expanding and improving services. Membership of the team has been drawn from staff seconded from across the council. One member of staff was seconded from the primary care trust. Many of the organisations and groups that we spoke to praised the team's knowledge and helpfulness.
- 144 Although this is a strength, the temporary nature of the secondments may also be a potential weakness as it may present a risk to staff retention. This, coupled with the delay in implementing the plans to expand and widen the team, has resulted in some uncertainty about the future. During our inspection, arrangements for recruitment were being finalised but the delay has meant the team have been stretched. No more so than in the area of reviewing services, which are of considerable importance to the future of the programme, and at the moment are all being undertaken by one member of staff.
- 145 Although the commissioning body, as a separate group from the Supporting People partnership, has only been meeting since April 2003, we see this as an opportunity for this body to take over the leadership of the programme and shape its direction. The commissioning body has separated from the core strategy group to enable it to take a strategic overview and ensure all the necessary governance arrangements are in place.
- 146 The lack of performance management across the council was seen as a major weakness in the CPA process and this was echoed in the findings of the joint review. The council is now addressing this and has appointed a performance manager as well as identifying 'performance champions' in each directorate. New performance management arrangements have been in place since April 2003 but it is still too early to see the success of this.
- 147 We did not see evidence of performance management in the Supporting People programme and have already identified areas such as the lack of targets in the

aims of the programme and no local performance indicators that make its achievements hard to quantify.

- 148 The focus on developing new services has meant less emphasis on some practical issues that would have ensured the provision of a more comprehensive service. Examples of this include the lack of a communication strategy which has resulted in no written information being available and no regular newsletter to keep everyone involved, informed and up to date. The council has acknowledged this and the team is now including Supporting People information in an existing regular newsletter that goes out to providers.
- 149 There is a system in place to share information between Supporting People and housing benefit staff to ensure the correct charges are applied in the future. In terms of IT, the Supporting People local system has been robustly developed, is fit for purpose now and has a specified and resourced development plan which will ensure it will continue to support the delivery of the programme for the foreseeable future.

Integration of continuous improvement into day-to-day planning

- 150 The council has responded constructively to the CPA and taken action to address the weaknesses it identified. This has also been the response to the joint review of social services functions.
- 151 New arrangements have been put in place since the CPA for project management, risk management and performance management across the council. Improvements to services are being managed and monitored corporately and the council is now considering if these plans are sufficient. This is a dynamic process, as a senior officer told us:

'Is the [improvement] plan sufficiently comprehensive to get us to where we want to be? Is it still fit for purpose?' – a senior officer.

- 152 Councillors are also clear that there is a culture of improvement that comes from knowing what the council wants to achieve and having plans to get there.
- 153 For the Supporting People programme, improvements will come about through the service review processes, this includes the accreditation of providers and the quality assessment framework (QAF). The programme is clearly mainstreamed into the day to day work of housing and social care and integrated with health through effective partnerships. The difficulties in the probation service mean that it has not yet achieved a similar level of integration here.

Summary

- 154 Overall, we judge that the Supporting People programme has uncertain prospects for delivering further improvements. This is due to the fact that although the council is in the process of responding to and addressing these issues, it is too early to see the outcomes of these actions or the impact they will have on the programme.
- 155 There are a number of strengths and these include the ownership of the programme across the council and its partners. The council has an awareness of its problems and has taken action to address these as well as responding positively to other inspections. A new performance management system has been set up and while this will contribute to continuous improvement, it is too early to see outcomes from this.
- 156 We found a number of barriers to improvement. There are too many priorities for the council's Supporting People team to be working on and although the council is now considering how this will be addressed, this work has not been completed or agreed. There is some uncertainty amongst key partners, most notably

providers and service users, as to how they can be involved in the development of the five year strategy.

- 157 There are no systems for monitoring and reporting on the programme and no locally developed performance indicators. These are serious shortcomings as they mean the council is unable to quantify what it will be focusing on and to report on what it has achieved.
- 158 The commissioning body needs to take over the leadership of the programme and work at sustaining the partnerships it has established with providers. A number of practical issues, including those around conflict resolution, have not been resolved and although the council has recognised the need to action these, it is too early to see how these will be addressed.

Appendices

The purpose of a best value inspection is to make two judgements. The first is how good is the service being inspected? The second is what are the prospects for improvement? We carried out a range of activities to enable us to reach our judgements. We have also included key demographic and performance information.

Documents reviewed

Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. These included:

- ◆ Herefordshire Shadow Strategy 2003/04.
- ◆ The Herefordshire Plan.
- ◆ Corporate Plan 2003 – 2006.
- ◆ Housing Investment Strategy 2003 – 2006.
- ◆ Homelessness strategy for Herefordshire 2003 – 2008.
- ◆ Learning Disability Housing Plan 2003 – 2006.
- ◆ Joint Review Position Statement 2002.
- ◆ Joint Review Report 2003.
- ◆ Corporate Performance Assessment Report 2002.
- ◆ Herefordshire Strategy for Older People 2000 – 2003.
- ◆ Various minutes of the Herefordshire Supporting People Partnership Meetings.
- ◆ Minutes of the Herefordshire Commissioning Body August 2003.

Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. We also followed up on issues relating to the management of the review and the improvements flowing from it. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ Visits to projects involved in Supporting People and meeting with service users, including supported housing for people with mental health problems, supported housing for ex-offenders, sheltered accommodation for older people and a women's refuge.
- ◆ Focus group with supported housing providers.
- ◆ Focus group with the Supporting People team.
- ◆ Focus group with frontline staff involved in Supporting People.
- ◆ Focus group with social care commissioning managers.
- ◆ Meeting with the Commissioning Body.
- ◆ Meeting with the Herefordshire Supporting People Partnership.
- ◆ Telephone calls to various user and carer groups.
- ◆ Visits to council offices, libraries and health centres to find information on Supporting People.
- ◆ Search of the council's website to find information on Supporting People.

List of people interviewed

Sue Fiennes	Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing
Richard Gabb	Head of Strategic Housing
Adam Russell	Supporting People Project Manager
Jane Thomas	Housing Needs Manager
Neil Pringle	Chief Executive
Chris Jones	Supporting People Project Officer
Julie Holmes	Head of IT Services
Carol Brown	IT Project Manager
Kevin Griffiths	Systems Implementation and Support Manager
Alison Bowen	Housing Benefit Manager
Anne Silley	Finance Manager, Social Care and Housing
Simon Hairsnape	Director of Health Commissioning, Herefordshire PCT
Cllr Terry James	Chairman Strategic monitoring Committee and Vice Chairman Health Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Marcelle Lloyd-Hayes	Chairman Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Roger Phillips	Council Leader
Cllr Olwyn Barnett	Cabinet Member for Social Care and Housing
Denise Shuker	Director, St John Kemble (Hereford) Housing Association
Malcolm Thompson	Partnership manager, West Mercia Probation
Antoinette Cowling	Mencap – Manager for Herefordshire
Jill Farmer	Aspire – Service Manager
Rosemary Cartmell	Manager, Harling Court, Ledbury
Vicky Connaughton	Herefordshire User Group
Philip Pankhurst	Herefordshire user Group
Maurice Mohan	Regional manager, Stonham Housing
Tanya Dobbs	Community Support Manager, MIND
Dave Hider	Scheme Manager, St John Kemble (Hereford) Housing Association
Ruth Easton	Team manager, Drug Action Team

Andrew White

Team manager, Youth Offending Team

Jan Francis

Hereford Women's Aid

David Carr

Herefordshire Home Improvement Agency

Demographic information

This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting People, comparing the Council with its nearest neighbours² and with England.

Measure	Herefordshire	Nearest neighbours	England
Population (mid-2001)	174,900		
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2001)	22.1	17.0	18.4
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British 2001)	2.4	5.0	13.01
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate April 2003)	1.9	-	3.6
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) ³	166	-	-
Multiple deprivation - wards in the most deprived 10 per cent ⁴	0 of 44	-	-
Access to services - wards in the most deprived 10 per cent ⁵	20 of 44	-	-
Households accepted as homeless and in priority need (2001/02) ⁶	356	-	-

² A comparator group of similar councils.

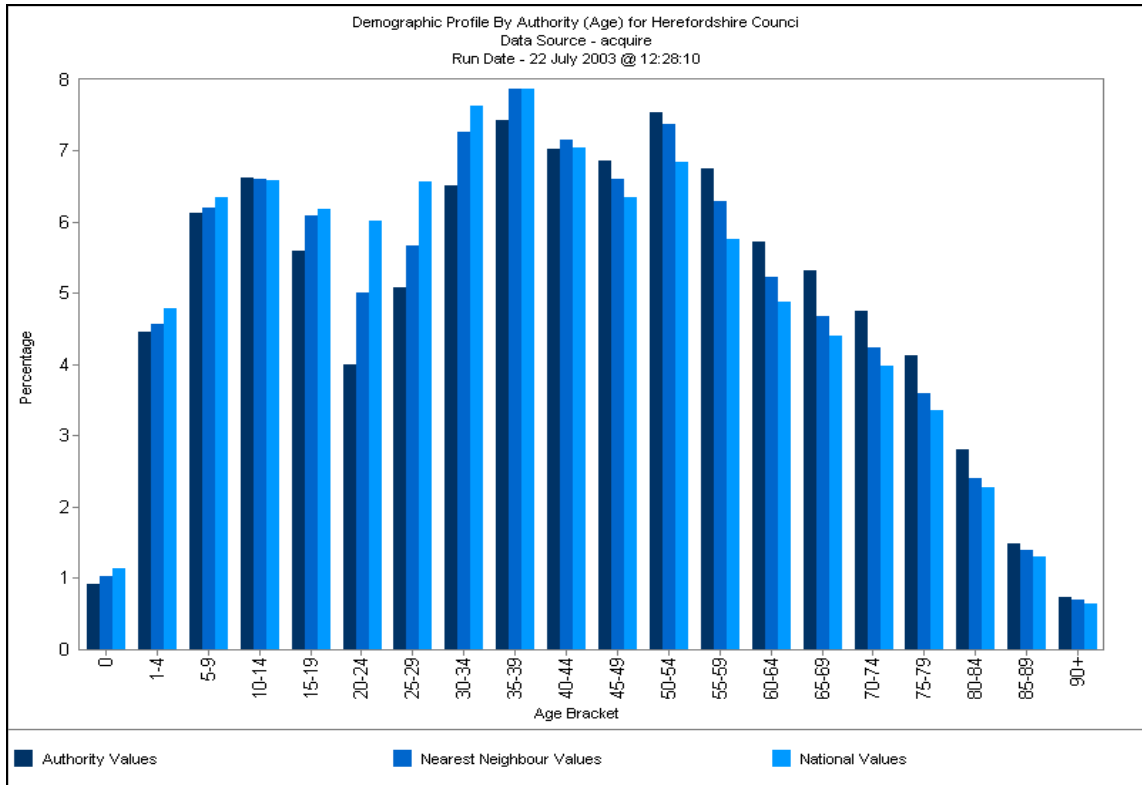
³ Indices of Deprivation 2000, average ward score for the authority.

⁴ Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of index of multiple deprivation rank (out of 8414 wards).

⁵ Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of access domain (out of 8414 wards).

⁶ Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2002.

Percentage of the population in each age group compared with the Council’s nearest neighbours and with England



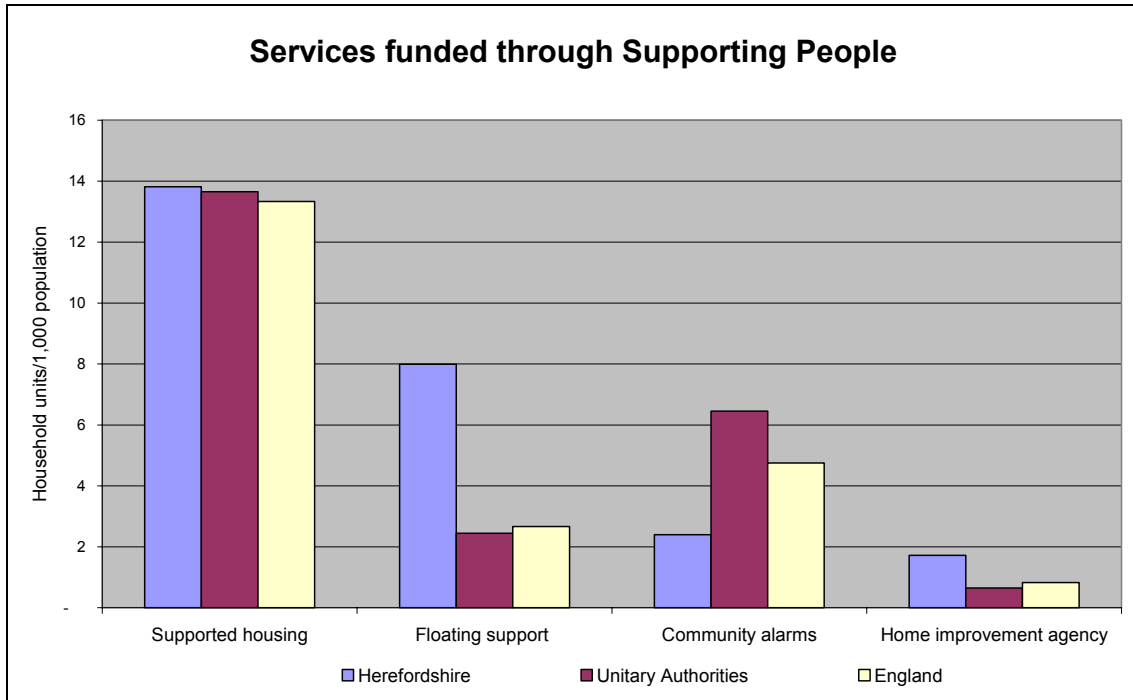
Performance information

This section highlights strong and weak areas of the Council’s performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements:

- ◆ data for services funded through the Supporting People programme;
- ◆ star ratings for social services;
- ◆ performance assessment framework indicators for social services; and
- ◆ relevant best value performance indicators.

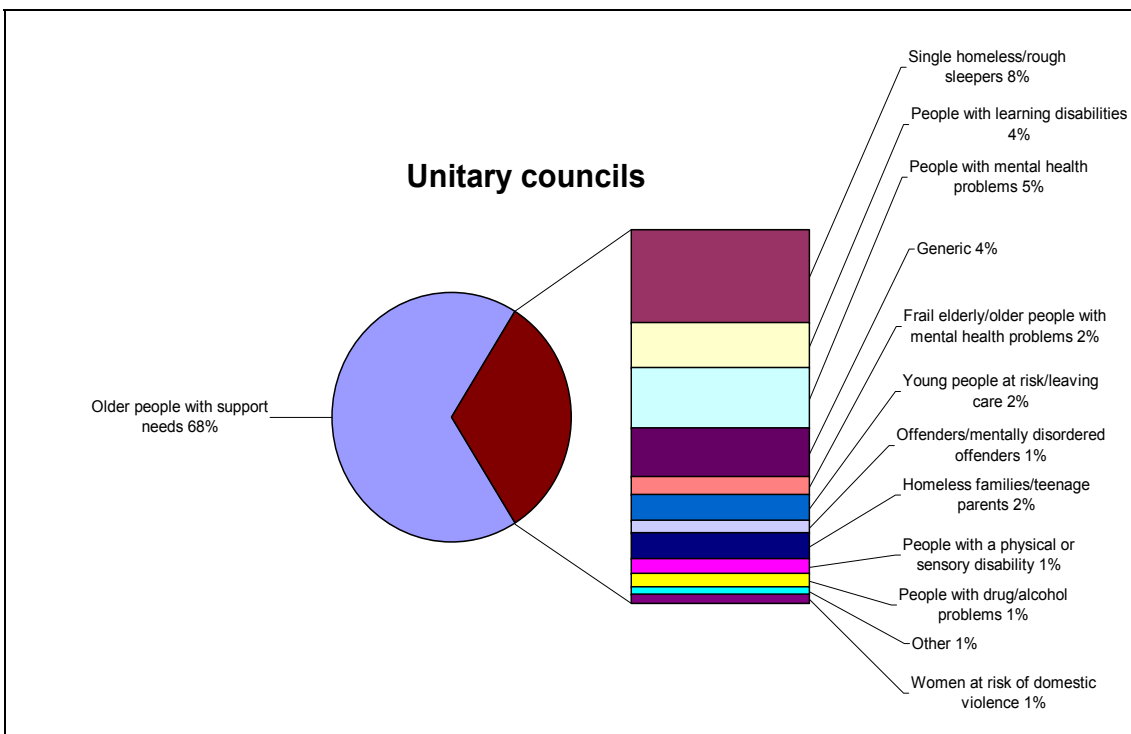
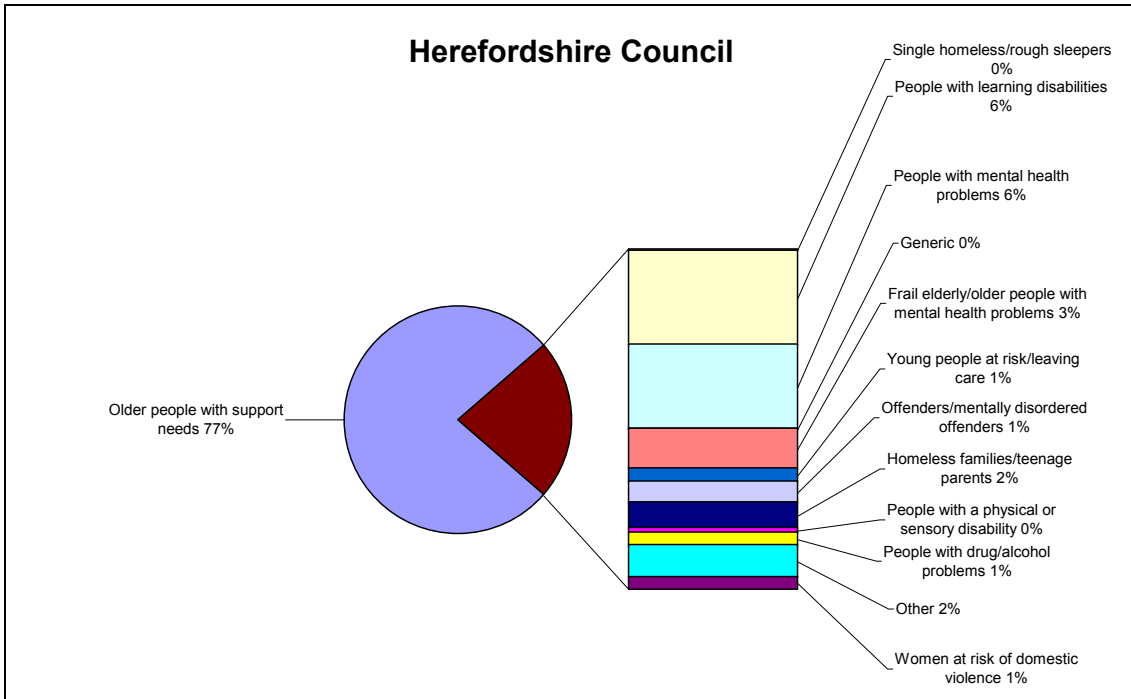
Supporting People data

Service provision funded through Supporting People⁷



⁷ Source: ODPM December 2002 supply reporting data, tables 1a, 3, and 4. Floating support includes resettlement and move-on support services.

Percentage of Supporting People-funded provision for specific user groups compared with unitary councils⁸

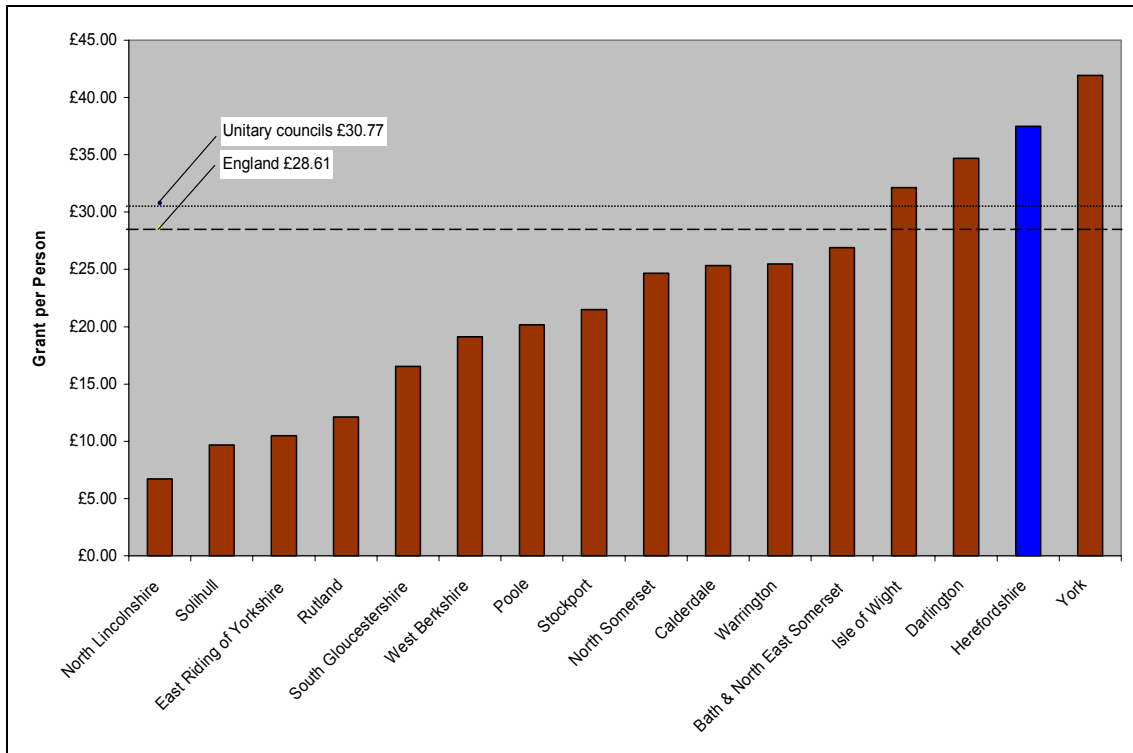


⁸ Number of household units. Source: ODPM December 2002 supply reporting data, Table 1: Total provision of services (SP funded) excludes pipeline, home improvement agency and community alarm services.

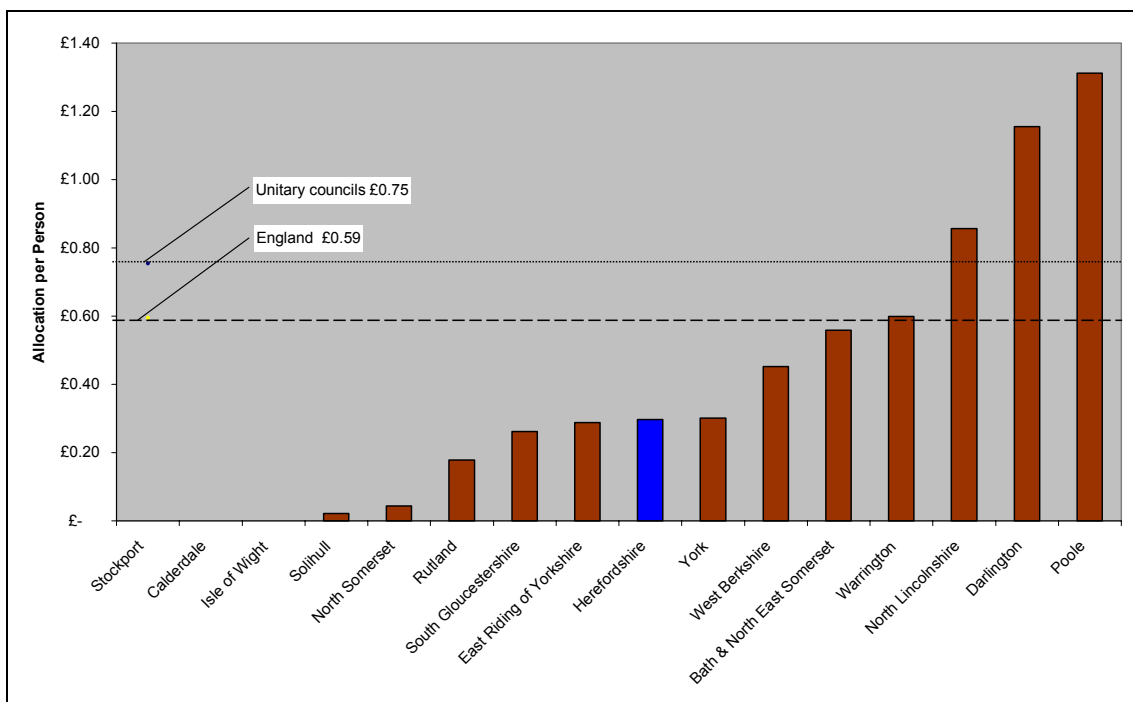
Funding for Supporting People in 2003/04

	Estimated Supporting People grant 2003/04	Pipeline allocation June 2003	Administration grant 2003/04
Herefordshire Council	£6,553,398	£51,916	£194,062

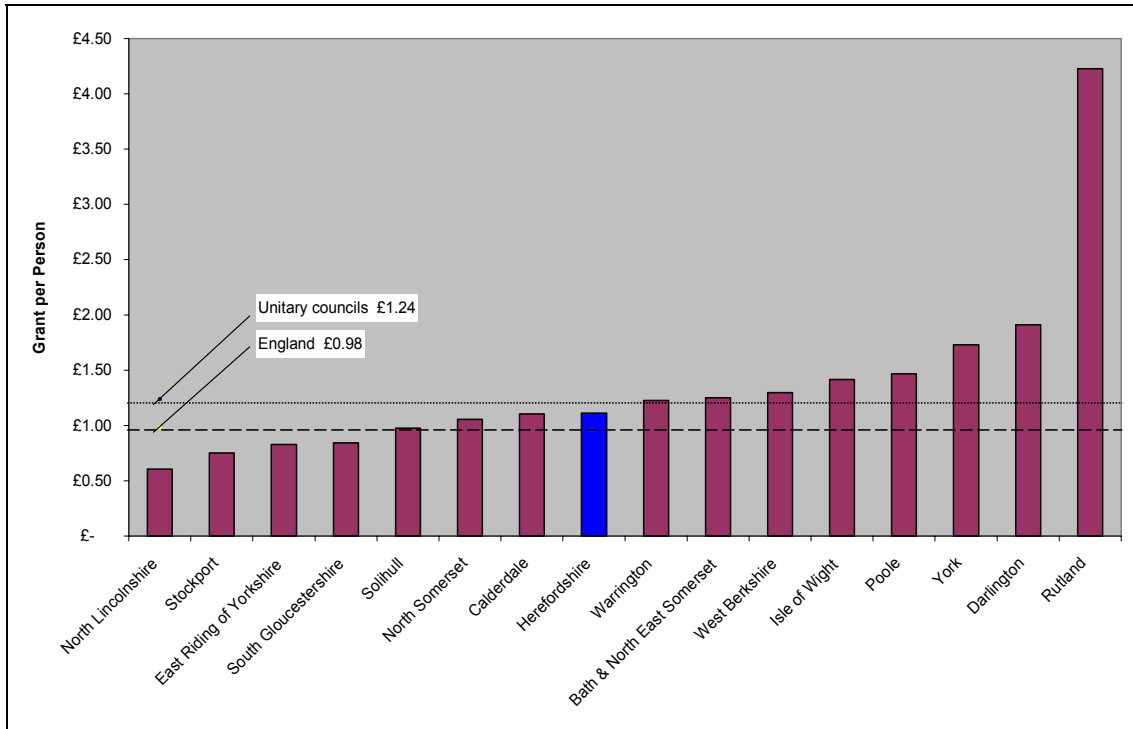
Estimated Supporting People grant per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all unitary councils and all English councils (2003/04)



Estimated pipeline allocation per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all unitary councils and all English councils.



Administration Grant per head of population compared with nearest neighbours, all unitary councils and all English councils (2003/04).



Social services performance indicators

Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2001/02

The table below shows how the Council's social services performed on indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Significantly above average (*****)	<p>Employment, education & training for care leavers</p> <p>Admissions of supported residents aged 65 or over to residential/nursing care</p> <p>Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home</p> <p>Emergency psychiatric re-admissions [interface]</p>
Above average (****)	<p>Admissions of supported residents aged 18-64 to residential/nursing care</p> <p>Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home</p> <p>Waiting time for care packages</p>
Average (***)	<p>Older people helped to live at home</p> <p>Avoidable harm for older people (falls and hypothermia)</p> <p>Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations costing less than £1000 delivered within 3 weeks</p>
Below average (**)	<p>Intensive home care as a percentage of intensive home and residential care</p> <p>Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home</p> <p>Users who said that matters relating to race, culture, or religion were noted</p> <p>Delayed discharge (all ages)</p>
Significantly below average (*)	<p>Intensive home care</p>

Best value performance indicators

Performance on relevant indicators in 2001/02 compared with unitary councils

The table below shows how the Council performed on best value performance indicators relevant to Supporting People.

Within the best 25 per cent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy efficiency of local authority owned dwellings Tenant satisfaction with overall service Tenant satisfaction with opportunities for participation
Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of the Commission for Racial Equality's standard to which the authority conforms Buildings accessible to disabled people Homelessness decisions within 33 days Local authority dwellings renovated (£5,000 and under) Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice in rented housing Average time for processing new claims Average time for processing changes of circumstance Domestic violence refuge places
Within the worst 25 per cent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished Local authority dwellings renovated (over £5,000) Renewal claims processed on time Racial incidents recorded by the authority Racial incidents that resulted in further action

Supporting People – Housing related support services

'Supporting People' is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide support services which help vulnerable people live independently.

The Supporting People programme brings together significant funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase; the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG) and probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities (ALA).

Unitary and metropolitan authorities and counties are designated as an administering authority with the county taking the lead in most cases for the districts in their area.

Administering local authorities work in partnership, with districts where this is relevant, to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for support services with housing, social services, health and the probation service. Negotiation and consultation is also required with all housing and support service providers, other statutory service providers, the private sector and voluntary organisations to plan and commission support services to meet identified needs.

The programme allows for greater diversity of provision tailored to individual needs and delivered in a local strategic context. For example:

- ◆ support services for people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities whose needs have previously not been met in an appropriate or timely manner;
- ◆ support services for vulnerable older people who wish to live independently, including those in sheltered housing;
- ◆ temporary hostel accommodation – including probation hostels and those providing support for women fleeing domestic violence;
- ◆ support services for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties;
- ◆ floating support to a range of vulnerable people including young people leaving care; and
- ◆ Home improvement agency services whose work includes providing practical support to older owner occupiers to enable them to live independently.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local Authorities would need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: www.spkweb.org.uk

Positive Practice

'The Commission will identify and promote good practice. Every inspection will look for examples of good practice and innovation, and for creative ways to overcome barriers and resistance to change or make better use of resources.' (Seeing is Believing).

Positive practice is something which makes a service more effective and, ultimately, more able to deliver what the customer wants. This appendix summarises areas of positive practice found during the inspection of the Supporting People programme at Herefordshire Council in October 2003.

Partnership working with health

- ◆ The positive partnering arrangements between the council and Herefordshire PCT that has resulted in more 'joined up' services for local people

Strategic implementation of the programme

- ◆ The strategic approach in the implementation of the programme that has ensured the engagement of all the key partners.