

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 20 JANUARY 2015

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Services to support vulnerable people in sustaining their accommodation arrangements grew in an ad-hoc way in the 1980's and 1990's. Services could either be accommodation based (known as supported housing) or provided separately from accommodation (normally known as floating support.) The general aim was to help vulnerable or older people maintain a tenancy to reduce the need for intervention by care services and to prevent homelessness.
- 1.2 The Supporting People initiative was launched in 2003 and brought together all separate housing related support services into one programme, with a single funding stream controlled by county and unitary authorities. From 2003, Hampshire County Council (HCC) had a separate Supporting People (SP) team administering and assessing contracts for all supported housing, floating support and related provision throughout the county.
- 1.3 The SP services commissioned by HCC were split into three categories with support being provided to 17,000 individuals across the county:
- Services for older people (eg sheltered housing, community support and alarm services.)
 - Services for people with disabilities, including people with learning difficulties, physical difficulties and sensory impairments.
 - Services for people considered to be 'socially excluded'. These services included support services for young people, people with mental health problems, single homeless people and ex-offenders.
- 1.4 In 2009, the ring-fencing on Supporting People grants to county councils ended and many local authorities subsequently reduced or re-directed spending, leading to cuts in services. As SP services are non-statutory, they are particularly prone to cutbacks.
- 1.5 HCC has a £102 million savings target to achieve by 2015. In February 2014, the budget presented to HCC confirmed that the whole SP programme would be reviewed with an expectation of savings of £8 million from the £25 million SP budget.
- 1.6 HCC have subsequently confirmed that the remaining budgets from the SP programme will be absorbed into Adult Services or Children's Services, meaning that there will be no separate SP commissioning team at HCC.
- 1.7 The purpose of this report is to brief Members on the changes to supporting people services in Hampshire and to explain the likely impacts for the New Forest district.

2. OLDER PERSONS' SERVICES

- 2.1 HCC SP services for older people includes housing-related support services in sheltered housing, community support services, community alarm services, handyperson and gardening support services. Across Hampshire, following the SP

review, services worth £4.3 million will be brought to an end and alternative services commissioned to the value of £1 million.

- 2.2 Most sheltered accommodation in the social housing sector in the district has been managed by New Forest District Council. Sheltered housing services have, in any case, evolved in recent years, with a move to provide enhanced sheltered housing for tenants with care needs at extra-care schemes, and to decommission other schemes allowing a widening of the age group of applicants able to apply for vacancies. This has led to a better balance of housing stock in the district to help tackle needs (the high need for general purpose one bedroom accommodation and the need for housing with care for older people).
- 2.3 There are still a small number of sheltered housing schemes managed by housing associations in the district. From April 2015, there will be no SP-funded support provided at any of these schemes. However, there are no significant issues arising out of this cut as the housing associations are intending to provide support to tenants on a self-funded basis.
- 2.4 Currently, there are a number of community support services for older people funded by SP. These services provide floating support to people living in the community. By far the biggest provider is Community First, which has a contract capacity to support 700 individuals. All of the community support services will be terminated in March 2015.
- 2.5 A new service to replace the community support scheme has been tendered and this will commence in April 2015. This service will provide short-term (6 to 12 weeks) support services for older people where there is not a suitable voluntary service to meet the support need.
- 2.6 A grant-funded, community-based support scheme will also be developed to enable voluntary sector services to offer support and friendship to older people and help to reduce isolation.
- 2.7 The impact on the local community of the ending of community support services for older people and replacement by newly commissioned and grant-funded voluntary services is not yet known. HCC and providers have carried out mitigation to seek to minimise the impact on individuals. Letters have been sent to all individuals explaining the right to a care assessment to determine eligibility for statutory care services and there has been 'signposting' to alternative voluntary services.
- 2.8 Funding for community alarm services by HCC ended in September 2014. NFDC now manages its own community alarms service and has made strenuous efforts to ensure that all those people who need an alarm would be able to have access to one.
- 2.9 All users in the district who received an alarm service paid for by SP were contacted and offered an alarm on a self-funded basis. Where users have decided not to continue with their alarm on an affordability basis, they have been given advice on ensuring they have an up-to-date care assessment and have been put in touch with local charities which may be able to assist. HCC will still provide a free service for people with critical and substantial care needs and some others are helped by charities such as the Royal British Legion, Dibden Allotments and others.
- 2.10 Of 251 alarm users in the community, 39 have decided not to continue with a contract.

- 2.11 HCC provided county-wide gardening support and handypersons services for older people and these services are ending in March 2015. Community First is seeking to provide a self-funded handyperson service from April 2015. However, this will not be subsidised. The impact on individuals of the withdrawal of HCC services and the commencement of new self-funded services is not yet known.

3. SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- 3.1 Across the county, these services provide support and /or accommodation to 1330 people. The majority of people using these services are young adults with a learning disability.
- 3.2 All individuals will receive an individual assessment and new services will be commissioned to start in April 2015 as existing contracts come to an end. The county is forecasting a saving of £1.6 million from these new contract arrangements, which will be tendered through learning disability commissioning arrangements rather than through the SP team. The impact on users will be mitigated by the individual assessments of need which will be carried out in all cases.

4. SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED

- 4.1 Services in this sector provide short-term housing related support for people with a wide range of support needs. The general aim of these services is to support people towards becoming independent. The sector currently has a budget of £10.8 million and cuts of around £3 million are proposed.
- 4.2 For young persons' services, the budget and contract responsibility has passed to HCC's Children's Services department. Most services in this sector will be brought to an end in March 2015 with commissioning of alternative services currently taking place
- 4.3 There are currently a number of young persons' supported housing schemes in the New Forest and it may be that the newly commissioned services will result in the loss of one of these schemes. This could have a direct impact on New Forest District Council as these schemes assist the Council in the performance of its homelessness duties towards young people. Any loss of accommodation may cause more pressure to use B&B. However, closure of a scheme is not certain; the outcome of the tender process may lead to a different result, or providers may seek other funding to continue to provide modified services.
- 4.4 With regard to mental health services, all Hampshire services are now under review. Current contracts have been extended for a year and new services will be commissioned from April 2016. Some savings will be made, but we do not know what the direct impact will be on the New Forest.
- 4.5 Single homeless services are of significant importance for some local housing authorities in Hampshire as this is the source of much of the revenue funding for night shelters and direct access accommodation. As night shelter provision is very expensive to operate, single homelessness service funding is skewed heavily towards those districts with night shelters (Basingstoke, Winchester, Test Valley and Fareham.)

- 4.6 After cuts, the residual budget across Hampshire for single homelessness services is expected to be in the region of £4 million. Current services have, for the most part, had their contracts extended until April 2016 when new services will commence.
- 4.7 There has been a considerable amount of discussion as to how this funding will be distributed for future services. New Forest District Council (NFDC) has made strong representations that the existing funding formula is unfair and that Hampshire money on single homelessness is being disproportionately spent in districts with night shelters and direct access accommodation.
- 4.8 Discussions between HCC and the district authorities in Hampshire have failed to reach a consensus on the future funding formula for residual single homelessness funds. Meetings of the Strategic Housing Officer Group for Hampshire (SHOG) continue to take place and chief executives are regularly briefed through HLOWLA (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Authorities.)
- 4.9 HCC appears to have accepted the argument that there should be some re-distribution of funds. However, the extent of likely redistribution is unknown. If the existing funding distribution was simply carried forward then, for example, Basingstoke would receive HCC funding for single homelessness projects of around £820,000 and NFDC around £173,000. However, if funding was simply allocated on a per capita basis this would lead to a drastic cut in the funds of those authorities with night shelters which would almost inevitably lead to the closure of those night shelters, many of which have been operational for over a decade.
- 4.10 The discussions are highly complex as there is much history to SP services (many of which were in existence prior to the SP initiative.) Authorities with night shelters argue that they have put considerable capital funding into projects in the past and consider that it would be catastrophic to close longstanding schemes which their housing services rely on. Authorities such as NFDC argue that they have not had recourse to capital funds in the past (authorities that transferred their housing stock had access to significant capital receipts from the sale of their stock).
- 4.11 The likely outcome is that there will be some redistribution of funds with a 'dampening' formula applied to mitigate the impact on existing schemes. Services may also be required to accept referrals from other parts of Hampshire. NFDC is likely to receive an increase in funding for single homelessness, although this will not be enough to pay for night shelter accommodation and the Council will continue to rely on Night Stop for direct access housing. In any case, decisions are not now likely to be made before May 2015.

5. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 5.1 There is a considerable amount of uncertainty as to the future of services formerly funded by the Supporting People programme. There is likely to be some impact on New Forest residents but it is difficult to know what the impact will be at this stage. In the single homelessness area, there may be an increase in funding available for services. In other areas there will be a reduction in funding with different services being commissioned. Officers will continue to provide updates for me as discussions progress and any significant developments will be reported back to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 As part of budgeting cutbacks, HCC has brought an end to the SP programme and is currently working through re-allocation of the residual funds. NFDC will continue to make representations via SHOG and HIOWLA to seek to ensure the best and fairest outcomes for NFDC and HCC residents.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That future updates are provided to COSP as more information becomes available.

For further information please contact:

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Background Papers

None