

Numbers up in Year 2 of Supporting People

Numbers of people using housing support services increased in 2004/05

The Scottish Executive has published its second Supporting People statistical bulletin: Supporting People Client Statistics 2004–05.

The statistics for 2004 / 05 are presented alongside 2003 / 04 figures and show a national increase in numbers from 140,207 to 170,584. On the face of it this means 21.6% more people used SP funded services in the second year of the programme compared with the first.

The report warns, however, that these figures be treated with caution as much of the increase probably stems from more accurate reporting of data now that systems have bedded in locally. The report also suggests that some of the increase in numbers may be due to new projects (pipeline) being completed and becoming operational.

What these figures do demonstrate is that in the second year of the programme there was some capacity to take on new service users despite fears that the standstill funding in most areas and reductions in Argyll&Bute and West Dunbartonshire would make this impossible.

The % of people using services across provider sectors (ie voluntary, private and statutory sectors and RSLs) has remained broadly the same. Older people continue to be the largest group of people using SP services and has grown in number although fallen as a percentage of total clients because other groups have increased more significantly.

The statistical bulletin can be viewed on the Scottish Executive website at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/20105419/0

Impact monitoring

The Scottish Executive has just completed its analysis of local authority October 2005 returns about the impact of funding changes. The returns have been difficult to analyse but some conclusions can be drawn from them.

Savings of £15.7M were made in 2005/06 across 30 councils. These were achieved in 3 ways:

- * 30% of savings through closing or remodelling services found to be lacking in strategic relevance
- * 30% of savings through services absorbing inflationary pressures
- * 30% of savings through reducing service capacity due to budget changes

The Report argues that the first 2 types of scenarios represent 'efficiency savings' though the third scenario is acknowledged to be less desirable and may have an adverse impact on service users.

The report considers how reductions have been distributed between those services provided by councils and those provided by other organisations. There is no strong evidence that external providers or particular client groups have been disproportionately affected but this will be monitored carefully.

The report is on the Scottish Executive website at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/Housing/supportpeople/Page11

Monitoring the impact of funding changes

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Providers' questions



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

The Supporting People Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Community Care Providers Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), funded by the Scottish Executive.

Scottish Executive: SP Evaluation Strategy 2006/07

How are people in Scotland benefiting from SP?

Heather Dall is part of the Supporting People Team at the Scottish Executive. Here she explains the approach being taken at a national level to evaluate the Supporting People programme:

'The Scottish Executive is carrying out a comprehensive Supporting People evaluation in advance of the next spending review which is to take place in the summer of 2007. This is when the Scottish Executive Ministers will consider how money is spent on public services across Scotland.

Whilst there have been budgetary cuts in the Supporting People programme more than £418 million was spent on providing Supporting People funded services in 2004/05 to 170,000 people. This is undoubtedly a significant budget and as such a robust evaluation is required in order to evidence how people in Scotland are benefiting from the Supporting People programme.

The Scottish Executive has developed a strategy which pulls together various pieces of work. Research and evaluation exercises are both underway and further ones planned, so that the effectiveness of the programme can be reported objectively to the Scottish Executive Ministers.

The Evaluation will examine whether Supporting People has:

1. Met the programme's original aims
2. Contributed to the achievement of other national and local policy targets such as hospital discharges and the implementation of 'Same as You'.
3. Made a real difference to people's lives.

Evidence will be gathered by using existing data supplied to the Scottish Executive, including as well as information reported by Local Authorities through the Service Review impact and monitoring process and also Care Commission reporting.

In addition, research is also to be carried out looking at:

1. The Costs and Benefits of the programme, including financial and softer benefits such as quality of life issues.
2. The unit costs of the programme and how these costs compare across Scotland and with England.
3. The development of an outcomes method of evaluation to identify how individuals benefit from services funded through Supporting People.

Whilst the evaluation process is underway the Scottish Executive is issuing the evaluation strategy document for consultation.

The Executive wishes to hear from providers and interest groups about the targets identified, methods of collecting information and the proposed outcomes approach in order that the strategy can be refined.'

Information, including the full strategy document and updates on the findings of the research as it is completed, will be available on the Scottish Executives - Supporting People Website by the end of May 2006 : www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/Housing/supportpeople/Page11

Recent developments

Charging for Supporting People

As reported in the February Bulletin, councils are being urged by CoSLA to adopt the new Charging Guidance. The Unit contacted councils in March to find out how many of them were planning to introduce the changes on 1st April as CoSLA recommended.

Of the 32 councils the Unit received replies from 12. Of these only 1 council was making plans to introduce the changes on 1st April and a further council on 10th April. 7 others are planning to change their policies in the future and a further 5 yet to make a decision. The Unit will follow this up with other councils over the next couple of months.

One of the issues that councils and service providers have been seeking clarification on is the extent to which existing service users are protected from charges. Typically the receipt of HB was used as a 'passport' to free housing support services. The CoSLA Guidance does state that 'The removal of the passport protection will only apply to new recipients of the service.'

The Scottish Executive recently contacted council SP Lead Officers stating that 'It is clear that no protected tenant (ie tenants in receipt of THB or partial THB) can be charged for their service while they remain in the service they occupied at 31 March 2003. This was a ministerial promise. However, if service users accept and agree to additional services they may be assessed and charged for them eg. extra hours of support or new assistive technology.'

Some providers are concerned that service users may be reluctant to agree to additional hours or services because of being faced with charges they previously have not had to consider.

The real impact of the changes to charging policies will emerge slowly as councils gradually amend their policies.

The CoSLA Guidance can be found at: www.cosla.gov.uk/attachments/execgroups/sh/shchargingguidance2006.doc

The Scottish Directory of Housing Support Services

The new directory, called The House Key, was launched earlier this year and is continuing to be developed.

The directory is aimed at service users and carers and those delivering services. The directory now holds information about housing support services across 31 out of 32 local authority areas. To check the details held about your service, go to the website at: www.thehousekey.org You will be able to check your service entries by local authority area and client group. The directory is being developed to enable larger providers to carry out one search for all entries under their name. EAC have advised that this facility should be available later on in May.

If you wish to change or add to the entry you can contact the EAC (Elderly Accommodation Counsel) by email: info@thehousekey.org or by phone Tel 0207 820 3755. There is scope to add additional descriptive information which could help service users differentiate between services and providers.

An advice and information line is to be set up which will provide assistance to people who prefer to talk to someone about what they are looking for rather than simply using a website. This service will be available between 8.30am - 6pm Monday to Saturday.

The contract for this services has just been awarded by the Scottish Executive to The Essentia Group. The service is likely to commence in early summer and its phone number will be announced soon.

Care Commission Update and more

Inspections : Year 2

The Care Commission has reviewed the forms and methods it uses across all registered services. This has resulted in the Pre-Inspection Return being developed into an Annual Return which service providers will be required to update at the beginning of each inspection year. The Care Commission has responded to feedback from providers that forms should be electronic. The Annual Return is now available electronically as is the Self Evaluation Form.

Feedback event in January

Providers and other stakeholders took part in an event organised by the Care Commission in late January. This provided an opportunity to give feedback on all aspects of the inspection methods employed in 2005/06. The Care Commission will collate a summary of the findings of the event.

Fees for 2006/07

As reported in the February Bulletin, the Care Commission's fees for 2006/07 for housing support will remain the same as for 2005/06.

There will no longer be a fee for varying or cancelling registration of a housing support service. If you need to change or cancel registration with the Care Commission there is a standard process to go through which will soon be published on the Care Commission's website.

STANDARDS and THEMES for 2006/07

These can be obtained from the website at: www.carecommission.com/documentuploads/216.pdf. In summary the standards being inspected are:

Housing Support services: 2, 3, 4 and 6 from Housing Support Standards

Combined Services: 2,4, 6,& 8 from Care at Home Standards plus 6 from Housing Support Standards.

The Themes for both types of service are Safer Recruitment and the SSSC Code of Practice for Employers.

Inspections of national service providers

The Care Commission has published a schedule of inspections of the national service providers (ie Those providers that operate in at least 2 Care

Commission regions).

The schedule is on the Commission's website. The role and remit of the Contact Managers at the Care Commission along with a list of who they are will be posted on the website soon.

Benchmarking in England

In England providers are starting to use a benchmarking system developed by SITRA and the National Housing Federation. The system is managed by SITRA using ODPM funding.

The aim of the system is to produce anonymous comparative information across 6 to 25 similar services. These services are ideally: 1. in the same region, 2. service the same primary client group, 3. have the same cover arrangements (eg 24 hour cover with waking staff) and 4. classified as the same type of service

In this initial launch of the system 2,500 services across England have signed up. Providers taking part are being sent bar charts which show how their costs compare with other similar services. No information provided by the system can be traced back to specific organisations.

SITRA and NHF have written to providers to advise that there is scope for organisations to extend their use of the system to making comparisons across services within one organisation, as well as developing benchmarking clubs to actively discuss results of the comparative exercise.

SITRA reports that some providers have found it useful to show local authority commissioners the results of the benchmarking exercise - though this is not its main purpose.

The benchmarking system requires an organisation such as SITRA to gather and process information from providers and then generate reports. Whether or not the exercise is repeated will therefore depend on SITRA and its funders. For further information go to www.sitra.org.uk

Housing Support Seminars

The SSSC Council met in March 2006 and confirmed that the housing support register will open towards the end of 2009. It is anticipated that managers and supervisors will be registered first with support workers being invited to register from the end of 2010.

In February and March 2006 the Supporting People Enabling Unit (SPEU), Voluntary Social Services Workforce Unit and the Scottish Social Services Council jointly hosted and organised a series of seminars which encouraged providers of housing support to come together and discuss the issues. Each event included:

- Update from the SSSC on registration matters
- Information from Care Scotland about qualification and training
- A presentation from a provider who had gone through the process of qualifying staff.

The time spent in group discussion gave providers an opportunity to share concerns and also items of good practice/solutions. Providers identified a number of concerns and ideas about registration.

Finance

Providers who attended the seminars expressed concern about the financial impact of registration and qualification particularly as Supporting People funding is being cut back in many areas and funding beyond 2007/8 is uncertain. There was a lot of discussion about the costs of training staff in preparation for the opening of the register but there was some difficulty in coming up with a reliable estimate of costs.

The costs of an SVQ can be hard to determine. It was suggested that in general an SVQ costs £1500 to £2000 to complete. However, this does not include the cost of covering for staff while they undertake training. In addition some colleges receive funding from central government or the European Social Fund which means they are able to offer subsidised placements. In this case the employer may only have to pay around £350 for a staff member to undertake the qualification.

Following on from the seminars Wendy Johnston of the SSSC agreed to undertake collaborative work to assess costs.

Some providers were keen to develop joint initiatives with other small providers and colleges with the hope of producing a tailor made course and spreading costs between the group

Availability of training

Providers agreed that cost was a major factor in the qualification of staff but providers were clear that the quality and availability of training is a key issue. Providers expressed the view that any training of staff should be done to raise organisational standards and work practice and not be done merely to comply with SSSC requirements. The standard of assessment can greatly affect an individual's experience of completing SVQs and there was concern from some providers that the training provision in their area was of poor quality. Some providers do not have a choice in training centre as there is only one in their area. Other providers had in house training departments that act as Learning Centres for SVQs. However, there was concern that the in-house departments would struggle to cope with the volume of housing support staff that need to undertake qualifications.

Encouraging staff members

Providers reflected on the important role service managers have in approaching registration with a positive attitude and encourage their staff to do the same. There was concern that some staff members may be nervous about undertaking a qualification but most providers believed they would be able to support and motivate their staff to do so. One delegate said that she had held an event where all the housekeepers in her organisation came together to discuss the lead up to registration. This had been very positive and had helped staff come to terms with the registration process.

Future development

The events highlighted how much providers want information about registration as well as the need for further discussion about implementation. Providers demonstrated the really meaningful contribution they can make to the preparation for registration. More information on the housing support seminars is available on the Unit's website at www.ccpScotland.org/spunit/info/sssc.php#5. More information about registration can be found on the SSSC's website at: www.sssc.uk.com

Question Time: Supporting People Issues

Q. I work as an advocate for people with mental health problems. Recently I was approached by a gentleman who has been in hospital for sometime but is now going home on a regular basis and is keen to return home permanently. Prior to admission to hospital my client had a care and housing support plan some of which was paid for through SP. I am trying to work out how to secure the previous package again. So far I have been told by the social worker that it is down to the SP Team. The housing support provider has advised me that they have not been paid for the hours that have been provided in the interim let alone having gained an agreement to fund additional hours in line with the original package.

A. It is down to each council to decide how to approach spells in hospital though it is common for councils to agree to reinstate SP funding to help progress hospital discharge. The local authority should have a policy for making decisions in such situations so you could ask the SP Team to explain the decision making process. Once you know the process and timescale you could find out if there is scope for you, as the person's advocate, to be involved and at least kept up to date with progress.

It is also a good idea to alert the consultant at the hospital that there have been difficulties getting the support back in place and that attempts to secure funding have so far failed.

Q. Can a local authority insist that I remove a member of staff from their post because they have concerns about a criminal conviction that was openly declared and was considered fully by my organisation before an offer of employment was made?

A. Local authorities do not have control over whether or not you end a person's employment. They do, however, have the power to insist that an individual does not take part in delivering a service they commission you to deliver. They can alert you that this will jeopardize the continuation of their contract with you and therefore the funding of the service. This leaves you, as an employer, having to decide whether or not you can find another role within the organization for

that person to undertake. If this is not possible you will have to consider making a person redundant on the grounds of '3rd party pressure'. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations' website includes a section on different agencies that can give advice on employment matters at www.scvo.org.uk/scvo/InformationCrawler/ViewInformation_C531.aspx

Q. My local authority has told me that it expects us to collect charges from service users but I have heard from other providers that they cannot make us do this and that it is the local authority's responsibility to do this.

A. Yes, under the SP Guidance it is clearly the local authority's responsibility to collect charges. A local authority is at liberty to ask its providers if they would agree to carry out this task on their behalf but providers are under no obligation to comply. Where such a request is made and turned down there must be no attempt by the local authority to penalize or put pressure on the provider to take on this task. For further information go to the Scottish Executive's SP Guidance on the website www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/Housing/supportpeople/Guidance

Q. I have been told by my local authority that they wish to sit in on the Care Commission's feedback meeting with us. I thought that it was down to providers to invite council officers to these meetings. Can you clarify this for us.

A. Yes, it is you, as the registered manager, that decides who might be invited to the Care Commission's feedback meeting. A letter has been sent round councils by the Care Commission alerting them to the fact that they can sit in on these meetings but only at the invitation of the service provider. Councils do not have the right to attend. If you find that your local authority continues to insist you can refer them to the Care Commission's letter at www.carecommission.com/publications/pubDocDownload.php?docid=209&docname=document/209.doc

Training on Contracting

Preparing for Supporting People Full Contracts

The Supporting People Programme requires that councils commission external housing support services within a contractual arrangement. Most external housing support services are still working under a Letter of Agreement or Interim Contract but by April 2007 it is expected that services will be moving towards full contract.

A national Full Contract Framework has been produced by the Scottish Executive in conjunction with a group of local authority solicitors. Consultation events with providers took place in 2004 as part of the framework's development process. It is expected that many local authorities will use this model as a basis by adopting the core clauses and negotiating variable clauses within the framework.

The Supporting People Enabling Unit is organising training on contracts for service managers across the voluntary, private and Registered Social Landlord sectors.

The course will provide an opportunity to get to know the SP Model Contract Framework and to think about the implications of negotiating and entering into such a contract. The course will be delivered by Alison Thompson from TC Yong solicitors and by a local authority SP Commissioner.

The day will therefore be an opportunity to discuss contract related issues from a legal and a commissioning perspective.

Learning objectives

By the end of the course, delegates will:

- have reflected on the link between the Service Review process and the Full SP Contract
- understand the purpose and framework of the SP Full Contract
- have an understanding of the scope of the contract
- have begun to think about service management and delivery issues within the context of a full contract

Each training day costs £50 to attend.

The training sessions are being held as follows:

- 25 May 2006 Dumfries
- 8 June 2006 Edinburgh
- 15 June 2006 Edinburgh
- 20 June 2006 Dumfries
- 27 June 2006 Glasgow (few places left)
- 11 July 2006 Glasgow (few places left)

To book a place please complete the booking form which is available on the Unit's website at www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/events and email to Maira.Weir@ccpscotland.org

VSSS Workforce Unit

Changing Times, Changing Context: The future of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland

Voluntary sector social services operate within a landscape of social, political and demographic change. The Voluntary Sector Social Service Workforce Unit Roadshows will offer you the chance to hear about current policy initiatives, such as the National Workforce Strategy and the 21st Century Review of Social Work, and will consider the implications for your organisation.

Workshops will enable participants to discuss and share good practice ideas on the following topics:

- Collaboration & Partnership contributing to the Sector Skills Councils and Learning Networks agenda

- Lifelong Learning from induction to Continuous Professional Development
- Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning

The dates of the road shows are:

- 8 May 2006 Glasgow
- 16 May 2006 Shetland
- 26 May 2006 Aberdeen
- 9 June 2006 Dumfries
- 15 June 2006 - Edinburgh

You can download a booking form for these events from www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit/events/documents/RoadshowBookingForm.pdf

For Your Noticeboard

Publications

People Assisted Through Supporting People Funding 2004/05

This bulletin presents key statistics on people assisted through Supporting People funding during the period 2004-05. Summary information has been provided at both national and local authority level. This is the second year for which data have been collected.

Authors: Scottish Executive
Publication date: February 2006
ISBN: 0 7559 2969 1
Product description: 19 pages

The whole document is available on the Scottish Executive's Website at
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/20105419/0

Steadying The Ladder

Social and emotional aspirations of homeless and vulnerable people.

Author: Gerard lemos
Publisher: Lemos&Crane in association with ThamesReachBondway
Publication date: 2006
ISBN number: 1-898001-79-0
Product description: paperback, 156 pages

The book can be ordered via the internet on
www.supportactionnet.org.uk/lookinside.php

Employment rights on the Transfer of an Undertakings A Guide to the 2006 TUPE Regulations for Employees, Employers and Representatives.

Changes in service contracting can be made easier for all concerned if they know where they stand. This guide tells you about the provisions of the new regulations that came into force on 1st April 2006. It is not a legal document but does provide contact details for further advice.

Author: Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
Publication date: 2006
Product description: 35 pages
This document is available on the DTI's website only at:
www.dti.gov.uk/er/individual/tupeguide2006regs.pdf

Supporting Vulnerable and Older People The Supporting People Programme

This report examines aspects of the Government's Supporting People Programme, in England and includes evidence from providers. The report was commissioned in response to some concerns that the Robson Rhodes report had been commissioned too early in the SP programme.

Author: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Publisher: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Publication date: 21 July 2004
Product description: Governmental report, 28 pages

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