

Bringing housing support within local housing strategies

The days of separate Supporting People strategies are over in Scotland.

In the light of ringfence removal there will no longer be a requirement for local authorities to develop separate strategies for housing support.

At the end of June, COSLA and the Scottish Government launched guidance for local authorities on local housing strategies (LHSs).

The guidance confirms that local authorities will be required to include housing support within their LHSs, along with homelessness and fuel poverty (also previously subject to separate strategies). The expectation is that local authorities will submit LHSs from late 2009 up to 2011.

Statutory basis of housing support

The LHS guidance reminds local authorities of the statutory basis to assess and provide for housing support needs.

Under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 local authorities must ensure advice, guidance and assistance is available to promote social welfare whilst under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 local authorities must assess housing related provision and more specifically

assess 'the needs of persons in the area for, and the availability of, housing accommodation designed or adapted for persons with special needs,'.

How this links up with Single Outcome Agreements

In the spirit of the Concordat, the guidance emphasises that LHSs should focus on outcomes rather than process. Paragraph 9 states: 'We envisage the new style local housing strategy having a clearer focus on strategic outcomes for housing and related support needs. It is expected that the local housing strategy will feed into and support the local authority's Single Outcome Agreement.'

It is suggested at paragraph 51 that 'The outcomes and indicators identified in the Single Outcome Agreement relating to housing and support issues will effectively form a core set of outcomes and indicators within the local housing strategy.'

This looks like a clear prompt to local authorities to include indicators about housing support in the LHS and therefore the SOA. This will not impact on this year's round of SOAs but may do for next year's. To view the guidance go to: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/lhs

Single Outcome Agreement

Tracking of housing support

Providers' Questions

Housing Support Outcomes Framework

The Scottish Government



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

Single Outcome Agreement

Each local authority was required to submit its Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) by the end of June.

The first drafts suggest that SOAs will be quite varied in terms of how specific the targets are framed and the actual objectives and indicators a local authority has chosen to focus on.

It is not expected that housing support will feature much in the SOAs so one of the challenges service providers face is to establish how their service contributes to the objectives and indicators laid out in the SOA covering the area they work in.

The Unit has created an area on its website to help you find the SOA for each local authority: www.ccpScotland.org/spunit/info/local_authorities.php

The Unit is in the process of examining each one to look for links to housing support.

Tracking of Housing Support

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is undertaking research to find out:

- If local authorities in Scotland pay the full cost of the housing support services they commission
- If the amount of housing support local authorities purchase changes as the new funding arrangements take effect.

During May and June 2008 the Unit got in touch with all service managers registered with the Care Commission to find out about the funding and service volume of their service.

The findings from this year's survey will be used as a baseline against which subsequent years can be measured.

Over 300 services have responded and the Unit is currently analysing the data gathered. A full report will be available in the autumn.

SP Client Statistics 2006/07

The Scottish Government has produced a report which presents key statistics on clients assisted through Supporting People funding during 2006-07. This is the fourth year for which data have been collected which means it is possible to track changes over time.

The report shows that in 2006-07, 175,934 individuals were assisted through Supporting People funding, 7% more than reported for 2005-06.

Overall, 4% of the adult population received support in 2006-07. This proportion rises to 13% for people aged 75-84, and to 28% for those aged 85 and over which is reflected in the further finding that 46% of clients were older people.

Homeless or rough sleepers were the next largest client group at 20%.

34% of clients received 1-4 hours per week of floating support. This finding reflects the important role that housing support has had in providing small packages of support which prevent larger problems or crisis situations.

The summary report can be found on the Scottish Government website at www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/217159/0058186.pdf and the full report can be found on www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS

Inflationary Uplifts and Contracting Issues

As reported in the April Bulletin, the Unit has been gathering information from each local authority to gain a picture of trends in their funding of housing support this year as well as their approaches to contracting. A table of the information gathered from each local authority is available on the Unit's webpage at: www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/info/FundingofhousingsupportinScotland200809.php. What follows here is a summary of that information.

Funding levels for housing support in 2008/09

A half of all local authorities look set to offer no uplift (a cut in real terms) or reduce funding. This is extremely disappointing given the previous years of standstill funding and drive to make efficiency savings. It is not known at this stage what impact this will have on service levels this year. By contrast, however, 9 other local authorities are offering providers an uplift ranging from 2 to 2.5%.

Contract values for 2008/09: the overall picture

- 9 LAs offering uplifts ranging from 2% to 2.5%
- 11 LAs offering standstill funding (a cut in real terms)
- 3 LAs offering reduction ranging from -4% to -7.6%
- 6 LAs are negotiating with services, of these 2 LAs anticipate this could involve reduction in funding
- 3 LAs have not yet made a decision

Some local authorities faced large changes in SP funding up to 2007/8 which may help explain funding decisions in 2008/09. There were 9 LAs whose Supporting People grant fell by the maximum amount (18%) between 2004/05 and 2007/08. The information they gave the Unit suggests that in terms of funding housing support this year:

- 6 are offering standstill funding
- one council (Edinburgh) has announced a large cut of -7.6%
- one council (Moray) has decided to offer an uplift (2.5% on salary costs)
- one council is undecided

Not surprisingly there does seem to be some correlation between previous funding changes under Supporting People and a council's general approach to contract values for housing support services this year.

Contract arrangements

Most local authorities are still working with letters of agreement or interim contracts and are extending current arrangements up to 31.3.09 whilst they develop procurement strategies to determine how they will proceed beyond that.

Only 2 have been issuing 3 year full contracts (Argyll & Bute and South Lanarkshire) but 2 others are finalising their full contracts with a view to issuing them later in the year (Glasgow and Inverclyde).

4 local authorities have extended letters of agreements by less than a year (Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, East Renfrewshire and Perth & Kinross). In another 3 cases letters of agreement reached their end date on 31.3.08 and it is not clear that anything has been put in their place yet.

Procurement strategies

It is not clear that local authorities are using the results of the service review process to determine who they will and will not contract with on a longer term basis. This is disappointing given the importance attached to the service review process under SP and the resources used to undertake them both in terms of providers and local authorities. Procurement strategies are being developed by some local authorities but it is not clear yet to what extent tendering will feature in these. A recent letter by the Scottish Government to local authorities stated that 'housing support services can be considered to fall within part B services in the EU procurement regulations, which means that the service may not have to be tendered, particularly where there is an existing provider who is judged to be providing a good service'

www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/info/documents/GuidanceontheendoftheSupportingPeopleprogramme.pdf

Helping providers respond to the prospect of tendering

The Unit is helping providers to respond to the prospect of tendering by delivering a series of one day events to explore some of the background and some of the issues tendering raises. The Unit has also developed an area on its website to make available the information resources used as part of these events and will be adding to it in due course: www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/info/housing_support_plans.php

Questions and Answers

Q. During the time of Transitional Housing Benefit my organisation accepted 4 clients from a neighbouring local authority.

At the time our local authority said it would pick up the entire cost of their support via the Supporting People fund. Since then, the local authority has conducted a service review and it now says that the costs for these four clients should be picked up by their original local authority funder and that they would no longer fund the places.

The original local authority is disputing this and is refusing to make any contribution until the issue is resolved.

In the meantime my organisation is at a loss what to do as on the one hand we simply cannot afford to support clients without funding but on the other we cannot stop the service as without our support our clients would really suffer.

A. In the past these disputes tended to occur at the point when a person moved to another area. This example highlights, that ringfence removal may prompt such a dispute where nothing has actually changed in a person's situation.

The Government is currently drawing up new guidance on 'ordinary residence' which seems to underpin this issue.

I have spoken to staff in the Scottish Government's Community Care Cross Cutting Policy and Finance team about Ordinary Residence and they have confirmed that revised guidance and draft regulations were submitted to solicitors and recently cleared by them so we should be hearing more about these soon.

In the meantime local authorities continue to have a responsibility to resolve disputes about who should fund care and support.

An individual or a provider can seek to address such disputes through formal complaints procedures initially. An individual

can go to the Ombudsman if this does not resolve the situation.

Further information is available on the Unit's website at:

www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/info/crossboundaries.php

Q. My local authority has issued me with a contract which includes some clauses which I simply cannot sign up to.

There are lots of items I have concerns about but the main one is to do with voids. I am worried that if I agree to the local authority's terms I will be jeopardising the financial stability of my organisation but if I don't our service could be stopped all together. I am not sure how to move forward as the local authority staff do not seem keen on negotiating and say that other providers have signed without a problem.

A. The Unit has been contacted by several housing support managers facing the same issue so do not feel that you are alone. I would doubt that 'other providers have signed without a problem' and would suggest making contact with others in the area to compare notes.

In the past, local authorities have been prepared to discuss the content of contracts with groups of service providers because clauses that concern one provider are likely to be just as unpalatable to others. I know that Glasgow City Council, for instance, has just undertaken a consultation exercise with its providers.

If you would like to discuss your situation in confidence do contact the Unit at yvette.burgess@ccpscotland.org We can help you compare the contract you have been presented with aspects of the model contract developed under Supporting People and we can also help you get in touch with other providers in the area if you wish.

Questions and Answers

Q. I work as a citizen advocate and have recently received a lot of questions about charging for sheltered housing. In a nut shell people seem to have been told by their local authority to expect their charges to be trebled over the next three years. I had thought that housing support clients received protection from big increases in charges. Is this no longer the case?

A. Over the past few years most local authorities have been reviewing their charging policies. Many have been keen to create a consistent approach to charging so that people in receipt of housing support services are treated the same as those receiving other social care services. This had a lot of implications for housing support service users many of whom had not been charged at all for their service so the Scottish Government made a commitment that existing Supporting People clients would be exempted from the new charging procedures. **However, that has changed now.**

When the ring fence around Supporting People funding was removed the Scottish Government's commitment to protection from charging for those people who have used Supporting People services from 2003 was also removed. This means that it is up to individual local authorities to develop their own charging policy which may well mean an increase in charges made to clients.

The Scottish Government, in a letter sent to all local authorities earlier this year stated that: 'Decisions on whether certain categories of service user continue to be protected from charges are again a matter for each council to decide. If it were decided to make changes, these should be communicated to service users in a transparent manner, and the written consent of clients should be secured before any changes in charging are levied.'

The letter can be viewed at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1035/0059194.doc

If a client feels the charges laid upon them are unreasonable they may wish to appeal the decision through the council's complaints procedure. If this does not resolve the issue then going to the public sector ombudsman would be the next step. More information on the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman can be found on www.spsso.org.uk/index.php

Q. Does Supporting People still exist? My colleagues in England are saying that it is still there and still ringfenced.

A. The ring fence around SP money was removed in Scotland in April 2008. This just applies to Scotland though so Supporting People is still operating in England (although pilots are underway to test the impact of removing the ring fence there too).

Q. Can providers of housing support apply to the Voluntary Sector Development Fund to gain assistance with the fees of qualifying managers in preparation for the opening of the SSSC register of housing support managers?

Yes. The criteria for this year's Voluntary Sector Development Fund have been agreed. And this year it includes managers of housing support.

£1million will be available in the financial year 2008-09 to assist voluntary organisations covered by phase two of the Scottish Social Services Council's registration process. Funding this year will support:

- Supervisors in care home services for adults
- Practitioners in care home services for adults
- Support workers in care home services for adults
- Managers of housing support services

More information is available from the Workforce Unit on www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit

Outcomes Framework

The Scottish Government has published its evaluation of the Housing Support Outcomes Framework.

Through the pilot it was found that the principal value of the Outcomes Framework is that it measures the impact of service intervention and can be a useful tool both in service provision and the monitoring of services. There are, however, areas of the framework that do need to be developed. Issues around consistency and counterfactual questioning were particularly highlighted during the pilot.

Consistency

The Outcomes Framework is designed to record what progress a person makes during their time with a housing support service. The way it works is that a service user is asked a series of questions at the beginning of their time with a service. Then they are asked the same questions at regular intervals to find out what if any changes are happening.

The pilot highlighted that for the outcomes framework to have value it must be used in a consistent manner. However, this had proven difficult to achieve. While staff within services tended to score the matrix in a similar way, different services scored the matrix in different ways which meant there was no consistency and results could not be compared.

There was much greater consistency when services received the same training on the matrix which has led to the conclusion that consistency will not be achieved unless there is an external body (such as a local authority) overseeing the implementation across an area.

Counterfactual

Preventative services have often said it can be difficult for them to show evidence about the value of their work as the whole point of their service is to ensure that certain things do not happen. The Outcomes Framework attempted to address this by including questions about what would happen if the service user did not receive the service. These questions all came under the loose heading of “counterfactual”.

The counterfactual question was the area that services had most problems completing. Some service users became upset when thinking about what would happen if they did not have access to services and others found it difficult to answer the question “What would happen if no service was in place?”.

Some providers have said that while they thought it was important to prove the worth of preventative services the pilot showed that the counterfactual questions did not work and it would be best to explore alternatives.

Providers' views

The work of the Outcomes Framework pilot was assisted by an advisory group which included a number of providers of services.

Sandra Brydon of Viewpoint Housing Association participated in the group and said of the pilot:

“The Outcomes Framework is a useful tool for some sectors. It seems to work particularly well for those client groups that have made conscious decisions to make changes in their lives such as young people or ex-offenders. It is less useful for other services such as the low level and preventative services provided within sheltered housing. Additionally there continues to be concern about the costs and burden for providers in managing such a tool.

Further thought is needed about whether or not the Outcomes Framework is useful for all sectors. Although I would say all sectors do need to measure their work and if the Outcomes Framework is not the way forward then another way should be sought.”

The full report is available on the Scottish Government's website at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/10111045/0

Scottish Government

The Housing Support Team in the Scottish Government is keen to keep in touch with providers of housing support services. This section contains news from the Team.

The Housing Support Team has been working on a number of issues, including the role of housing support in Local Housing Strategies, which you can read about in more detail elsewhere in this Bulletin.

Single Outcome Agreements

All 32 local authorities in Scotland have now finalised Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs), setting out how they will take advantage of greater flexibility to deliver services focused on national and local priorities. These SOAs have been agreed with the Scottish Government and will be formally signed off by members of the Cabinet and Council Leaders over the coming weeks. This is a great step forward in the new relationship between central and local government, and we also expect to see a strengthened relationship between local government and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in future, when all SOAs have to be formally developed and agreed with local CPPs.

Housing Support Outcomes Framework

The Scottish Government has accepted the conclusions of the evaluation into the Housing Support Outcomes Framework, which was piloted in 7 local authorities areas and involved 33 providers. The evaluation found that in the new world of SOAs and no separate funding stream for housing support, the tool may be less suited to national reporting. However, it should still be useful at the local level in helping both providers and those commissioning services to gather evidence and assess the value of continued investment in housing support. The Scottish Government therefore wishes to develop the tool further and promote its use as a way of evidencing

the effectiveness of services in contributing to some of the higher level outcomes set out in the SOAs. We have asked the Housing Support Enabling Unit to work with us to improve the tool and the accompanying guidance, training and IT platform

Housing statement

On other housing issues, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing made a statement to Parliament on 25 June, setting out the Government's plans to build on support for the proposals in *Firm Foundations* the discussion paper on the future direction of housing policy in Scotland which was published in October 2007. She emphasised the importance of partnership working with local government and registered social landlords. The main points of the statement included:

- Confirmation of the proposed target to increase the rate of house building to 35,000 new houses a year by the middle of the next decade;
- Measures to help homeowners at risk of repossession, including a £25m Homeowners' Support Fund to help those who cannot obtain help from elsewhere to stay in their homes;
- A commitment to help first time buyers with an investment of £250m over the next three years to expand shared equity schemes through LIFT (the Low-cost Initiative for First Time Buyers); and
- A note of the launch of a consultation to give local authorities more scope to use the private rented sector to house homeless households where appropriate.

Contact the Housing Support Team at:

E-mail: housingsupport@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0131-244-5524

Website: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/access/housingsupport

For Your Noticeboard

Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: the Future of Mental Health Improvement in Scotland 2008 2011

The results of the consultation around this national discussion document have now been collated and a report has been posted on the Scottish Government website at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/05/21122124/0

The feedback includes a recognition of the role 'good quality housing and housing support' play in supporting recovery and concerns about the impact that SP ringfence removal will have on services.

Scottish Housing and Support Conference 2008

Thursday 2 October 2008

Hilton Edinburgh Grosvenor
Edinburgh

The Scottish Housing and Support Conference is for everyone involved in housing support as a service provider or a service user. This year it moves to a new one-day format and a new venue in Central Edinburgh. Programme details are available on the Conference's website at www.joa.co.uk/shasc.html

For conference enquiries and bookings contact Edna Milne on mailshasc-conf@yahoo.co.uk.

Publications

One Plus: One Parent Families: A Report from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator under section 33 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005

Author: Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

Date: 2008

This report has been produced by OSCR under section 33 of the 2005 Act. It presents the findings of an OSCR enquiry after the event, into the failure of the charity One Plus: One Parent Families and can be viewed on OSCR's website on

www.oscr.org.uk/NewsItem.aspx?ID=5ac06e85-a96f-41d7-be55-9d7773aac1ef

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