



# Navigating the maze

Housing related support:  
A guide on engaging with and influencing local  
governance and commissioning structures

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# Foreword

**Vic Rayner, Chief Executive, Sitra.**

Sitra work on local strategic engagement in 2009/10 was driven by the need to support providers in understanding, engaging with and influencing local decision making structures. With the new Coalition Government the impetus for this has accelerated. Localism is at the heart of many of the reforms of the new Government, and it is clear that there is a drive to further devolve power and decision making away from central government. Localism is underpinned by the idea of 'Big Society' and it is used as a source of driving ambition: to go that step further, and put more power and opportunity into people's hands. The proposition is underpinned by five pillars which include giving communities more powers, encouraging people to take an active role in their communities, transferring power from central to local government and supporting charities and social enterprises. While these are not surprises – they do reinforce the already established need for housing, care and support providers to effectively engage at a local level. There is no indication at this stage that the mechanisms for engagement – including LSPs will change – however whatever the framework it will be vital that the voice of the sector is included.

I am sure that this resource will provide you with a thorough overview of mechanisms and approaches for engagement – and it will also encourage you to share some of the burden of this engagement. What is already clear is that the landscape we have grown familiar with over the last eight years of Supporting People is rapidly shifting. Much of the success of the programme has been predicated on the sharing of good practice, information and peer support. This is not the moment to abandon that approach, and while it maybe the case that central government is not requiring, or indeed funding, the ongoing provision of provider forums and regional gatherings of local authority teams – in order to achieve the widest engagement and understanding of the value and contribution of the sector – this is surely the time to work together. Sitra is pleased that we are able to produce a resource for providers that is both practical and informative at a time when it is most needed.

Sitra would like to thank the following for their contribution to this guide:

**Stuart Nevill** who generously shared his research for his Master degree on the Voluntary Sector Management response to the introduction to Local Area Agreements which has contributed greatly to the findings of our research:

[www.sitra.org/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/Stuart\\_Nevill\\_briefing\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://www.sitra.org/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/Stuart_Nevill_briefing_for_web.pdf)

**The Nottinghamshire Provider Forum** who devoted part of a meeting to establish attendees' awareness of engagement with and influence over the local decision making structures for housing related support.

**The virtual reading group:** Paul Greenwood, Bay Housing; Claire Grainger, HLG; Jake Elliot, National Housing Federation; David Bagnall, Stonham (Home Group); Eileen McMullan, CLG; Rachel Rhodes, NAVCA.

## Preface

In 2009/10, Sitra was funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in order to promote the effective engagement of housing related support providers, commissioners and users in strategic planning and service commissioning. In addition the work, which was known as the Local Strategic Engagement Project (LSEP), aimed to support providers in developing mechanisms for engaging in Local Strategic Partnerships and to ensure that housing related support is understood within Local Strategic Partnerships and that housing related support services<sup>1</sup> continue to be effectively commissioned and provided. For more about the LSEP, visit [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org)

### Who is this guide is for?

This guide is primarily for providers to support them in understanding local decision making structures and navigate where best to engage with these structures. Such engagement should then enable effective influencing of decision making on the commissioning and governance of housing related support services. It can also usefully support local authority personnel and other stakeholders including health (Primary Care Trust, Strategic Health Authority) personnel in providing examples of governance and commissioning structures, effective engagement and demonstrating the value of housing related support services. Members of Local Strategic Partnerships should also find this helpful in understanding their responsibilities in making strategic decisions regarding the provision of services to meet the needs of the people with multiple disadvantages in their locality.

### How can the guide be used?

It is hoped that this guide will encourage all its readers to think about how their locality provides preventative and proactive services for those who have multiple disadvantages, especially those not in receipt of statutory services and alternative ways of approaching this. The guide has been separated into sections to enable the reader to just select those areas that are particularly relevant to the issue they are hoping to resolve. It includes signposting to other useful external resources and links to all the resources produced by the LSEP, some of which comprise living documents. Readers are encouraged to continue to ensure the relevance of these resources by contributing any changes or further information.

This guide will support providers to:

- Engage with and influence local decisions on the governance and commissioning of housing related support
- Develop a strategy to increase their engagement with and influence over local decision making structures for the governance and commissioning of housing related support
- Develop their ability to market their services to raise the profile, increase awareness of the value of housing related support and to raise implications where budgets, cuts and savings are being discussed
- Make full use of second tier and local infrastructure organisations, including CVS, to support engagement and improve their ability to influence those who are responsible for the commissioning and governance of housing related support.



## Signpost

Second tier organisations are bodies that exist to support and advise providers. They are also referred to as membership organisations or umbrella bodies. They can offer support to providers either locally or collectively in responding to the changing environment. They can be:

Local – HLG [www.hlg.org.uk](http://www.hlg.org.uk)

Regional – Rocc [www.rocc.org.uk](http://www.rocc.org.uk) or Space East [www.space-east.org](http://www.space-east.org)

National – Sitra <http://www.sitra.org> National Housing Federation [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk) and Homeless link [www.homeless.org.uk](http://www.homeless.org.uk)

To find out about what local infrastructure (CVS) organisations exist in a locality visit <http://webdb.navca.org.uk/home.aspx>

- Build up positive relationships with their local Supporting People Commissioners<sup>2</sup> to ensure they are abreast of changes in governance and representation
- Continue to be strategically relevant and provide value for money
- Support their local Supporting People Commissioners to evidence the value of housing related support
- Consider how they incorporate involvement in local commissioning and procurement approaches into their strategic policies and processes.
- Increase their awareness of housing related support outcomes and their benefits and links to the National Indicators
- Understand the need to review their strategies, policies and procedures on service user involvement to ensure that service users are able to engage with and influence those who have responsibility for the commissioning and governance of housing related support. This should include how service users voice as part of the local electorate is heard
- Ensure they are aware and understand of national strategies relevant to the service users they work with as well as local priorities. The LSEP project has produced factsheets on demonstrating the value of housing related support for all the major client groups. These can be found at [www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1109](http://www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1109)

# Executive summary

## Introduction

The Coalition document and Queen's Speech herald a radical devolution of power from central to local government, a Minister for decentralisation has been created and a bill for decentralisation and localism proposed. The Government concept of 'Big Society' is expected to encourage people to take an active role in the community and supports the work of charities. Because of this accelerated direction of travel accompanied by the climate of public sector cuts, it has become increasingly clear that a resource is needed to set out and discuss local engagement issues, share current practice, provide directions and signpost to other useful and pertinent guidance and information. It will be no surprise to those in the sector that the future months have the potential to be very difficult. It is hoped that this guide will prove a timely, valuable and much needed resource.

The guide is the culmination of a piece of work, which has examined the planning, commissioning and governance of housing related support, the development of the engagement of providers and the ability to ensure the work and value of housing related support is understood and recognised within local authorities and other stakeholders. The diagram at Appendix 2 highlights the complexity of relationships providers need to appreciate in order to engage most effectively.

The intention of this document is to set out and discuss the issues, share current practice, provide directions and signpost to other useful and pertinent guidance and information.

The Supporting People programme, established in 2003, provided the funding together with the monitoring and review processes for housing related support services. That funding is now an un-ring fenced component of Area Based Grant for local authorities. Sitra utilised a number of methods to identify what were the issues regarding the future of housing related support services. Time was invested in discussing concerns with providers, commissioners and other stakeholders investigating solutions and suggesting directions. To build a complete picture the research included attendance at local and regional provider forums, regional commissioner's forums, a provider questionnaire and local authority interviews.

We came to the conclusion that protecting the future of housing related services depends on three things:

- Identifying and influencing local decision makers
- Evidencing the value of housing related support
- Working collaboratively to achieve maximum impact.

## Local decision making structures

Our local strategic engagement research highlighted concerns regarding the poor profile of housing related support needs and services in the local decision making structures responsible for Area Based Grant and the perception that the service users' voice is moving further away from decision making. These and other issues are examined within the guide with possible directions for providers and signposting to the resources available.

The expertise built up within the role of the dedicated Supporting People teams and the governance structures for the programme may also change. This is part of the devolution of decision making and control of budgets to a local government level to ensure it is at the

centre of providing innovative and better value public services. Our research identified that where Supporting People commissioning shifted into more generic commissioning teams there was perceived to be a loss of housing related support expertise and power being diverted to those who lack such detailed knowledge. Some of the changes already made and their implications are highlighted within the guide.

This guide recognises that the Supporting People programme was a success in providing housing related support to large numbers of people with multiple disadvantage enabling them to maintain or achieve their independence, while achieving accountable and verifiable cost benefit to other agendas. The voluntary sector has made a recognisable contribution to this success providing a major proportion of the support services.

## **Working together**

The project found a huge variance between providers' degree of engagement. While most are aware of their local provider forum, the majority are not aware of how they are represented within the higher governance structure. Some local authorities are making attendance at provider forums a condition of contracts. There is overwhelming evidence of the value of collective action. Providers are encouraged to attend these forums and become involved to ensure there is representation for themselves and service users at the highest level possible, either by providers' representatives or through second-tier umbrella or infrastructure organisations.

## **Showing the value of housing related support**

In the current economic climate, with reduced funding, the recession and expected public sector funding cuts, it is more important than ever that the benefits of housing related services from a financial, social preventative and individual basis are made clear. Providers need to take a strategic approach to publicity, marketing and lobbying and should involve elected and prospective local council members, members of parliament, ministers, commissioners and local strategic partnership members. Press releases, local media and local events can and should be used to highlight good news stories, value of services, threats to services and risk implications.

In being able to show the value of housing related support, there are a number of tools available and providers are encouraged to utilise these to be able to quantify the value of their services. The Cap Gemini model has been used on a national level and shows that for a £1.6 billion investment, savings within other agendas total £3.4 billion. It is now available on a local authority basis. Other tools detailed within the guide include the Care Services Efficiency Delivery model from the Department of Health, and the Social Return on Investment model from the Office of Civil Society.

On more than one occasion, we came across the need for more recognition of housing related support in local decision making structures and examples of how providers can facilitate this by building positive local relationships are detailed in the guide. Within the local authority and also through the local strategic partnership, providers need to be aware of where housing related support is placed and an example structure is in the guide. It will become ever more important as there is increased competition for funding and a presumed precedence for statutory funding that providers ensure objectives and outcomes are aligned to local priorities, meeting local and national targets.

It has been noted that providers are ideally placed to assess future need and propose services or remodel existing services to meet these. It is strongly suggested this is another reason for involvement in close partnership working both on a local level and at a national policy and strategic level. Research showed the use of the Compact was not excellent in the field of housing related support although there was a stronger use within the wider voluntary sector so, again, providers are encouraged to identify how they can be informed and consulted.

The guide is accompanied by checklists for providers outlining action that can be taken at frontline, operational, strategic and collective (provider forum) level. Our research concluded it is critical that staff throughout organisations should understand local decision making structures and how and where staff should be involved in those.

Finally, although there are challenges in the future, providers should be aware and be prepared to capitalise on the opportunities – utilising other budgets and funding streams, coordinating agendas with other commissioners and stakeholders, building stronger and innovative partnerships and ensuring housing related support is understood and valued.

# 1. Local authority structures

## Explanation

Local Government is delivered by local authority structures. It is key that providers understand the structures that are responsible for the governance and commissioning of housing related support in their area. Not least because although the local strategic priorities for any area will be set by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) (see Section 2 on LSPs) the local authority is expected to take a lead within the LSP and for delivering against targets. In fact the Area Based Grant (ABG) is a local authority grant and the council Cabinet must approve spending. Councils decide whether to allow the LSP to influence how all or part of the ABG is spent.

There are two main ways in which local government is organised in England depending on the locality. These are commonly referred to as unitary authorities or two tier areas.

In **two tier areas** there are two levels, a county council and a number of district councils, which in some areas are referred to as city or borough councils. The county council provides most public services, for example social services and education, for the whole county while the district councils cover part of the county and provide local services like housing and waste collection in their own area. In two tier areas ABG is paid to the county council.

**Unitary authorities** are responsible for all local services. In London each borough is a unitary authority but the Greater London Authority has responsibility for London wide services like transport.

In some areas there are also **town and parish councils** who are responsible for very local services, for example parks or public toilets.

The relationship between local authorities and central government is primarily through Communities and Local Government (CLG). CLG is responsible for national policy on how local government is set up, what it is responsible for and how it is funded. Other national policy from other Central Government departments, for example from the Department of Health will impact on how local authorities provide social care services.

A local authority will have structures which enable it to carry out the functions it has been charged with, some of which are dictated by Central Government, for example, local authorities are supposed to have one officer in overall charge of education and children's social services. Local authorities employ staff who have the responsibility for planning, commissioning, delivering and monitoring the public services they are accountable for. In order to pay for services, local authorities are funded by a combination of Central Government grants, local Council Tax and business rates.

Local councils are overseen by councillors, who are elected by people in the local community to represent their views. They are not paid employees of the council but are responsible for making policy decisions on behalf of the community about local services, for example, services for people with multiple disadvantages, agreeing budgets and Council Tax charges. In order to gain the views of their electorate, councillors hold local surgeries that all members of the community can attend. They are also involved in campaigning on local issues and supporting local organisations.

Councils have different ways of arriving at decisions:

- A small number of councils have an elected Mayor
- Most councils have a small executive group or Cabinet that has the responsibility for the overall business of the council
- Very small councils may use a committee system where all decisions are taken by groups of councillors from all parties.

Where councils use the Cabinet system, a group of councillors from different parties may examine these decisions through a scrutiny panel. Members of the Cabinet usually have responsibility for certain activities, for example children and young people, housing or community safety. Whatever structure is used in practice, much of the work of the local authority is delegated to officers. The most important thing is that arrangements should be transparent so it is clear who in the council is responsible for making decisions, how individuals can engage and influence and how decision makers can be held to account. Individuals can attend council meetings but do not necessarily have a right to speak. Each council must publish a list of all decisions that will be taken, papers for meetings and decisions taken. Only in limited circumstances can they exclude individuals from meetings or withhold papers.

## Supporting People commissioners

Supporting People was initially delivered by a dedicated team within the local authority. The composition of the team varied from authority to authority but the usual structure was:

- An accountable officer, usually the assistant director or director of a department or division, who has sufficient seniority to lead the programme strategically, forging partnerships
- A lead officer who was usually a manager responsible for managing the tasks and those responsible for delivering the programme
- A team of staff responsible for commissioning, procurement, contracting and monitoring as well as ensuring service user participation and payments.

Our research has found that increasingly these functions are being carried out by more generalist local authority departments, for example adult social care contracting and commissioning teams. In some cases, the operational element of the governance and commissioning of housing related support is carried out by different departments of the local authority and the Supporting People team has been disbanded completely.



### Signpost

On the Sitra website is an example of how a local authority has absorbed the functions of the Supporting People team into their structures. See:

[www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/resources/wolverhampton\\_structure.pdf](http://www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/resources/wolverhampton_structure.pdf)

The Supporting People team has traditionally been located in different departments or divisions of a local authority, dependent on the locality. In two tier areas it is has been more common to have Supporting People located in the division responsible for adult social care.

In a unitary authority it could be in housing or adult social care. In response to the lifting of the ring fence and the money being part of Area Based Grant, local authorities have been reviewing where best to place the operational functions of commissioning and governance of housing related support. Ninety six percent of providers who responded to our provider questionnaire said there is still a Supporting People team in existence in their area and they are aware of any changes to governance and commissioning of housing related support. Attendees at both the regional provider fora and regional Supporting People lead officer meetings concurred with these findings<sup>3</sup>. Of the local authorities who took part in the detailed research nearly all retained a discrete team although in some cases its name had changed and it had assumed other responsibilities.

In addition to the staff responsible for the operational delivery of the programme local authorities set up a structure to oversee the strategic governance and commissioning.

**The Commissioning Body** is a partnership of senior representatives from organisations with responsibilities and interests in the provision of housing related support services. Social services, housing, probation and health are usually represented. The commissioning bodies have responsibility for strategic oversight of the local Supporting People programme. This involves the strategic assessment of needs, resources and current services, developing a strategy to make the best use of resources, and monitoring and review. Some local authorities have reviewed or are in the process of reviewing the role of the commissioning body to align their function within Local Strategic Partnerships.

**The Core Strategy or Core Steering Group** potentially included all key partners but at an officer level. It usually included provider representatives and often service user representatives too. It has responsibility for ensuring the progress of the programme and for driving improvements. Its representatives should be operational decision makers. It has often included consultation with providers and service users on operational, strategic and policy issues.

Our research identified the majority of local authorities interviewed were continuing the Commissioning Body and Core Strategy Group:

- In one case the body was becoming the commissioning vehicle of an LSP thematic group
- A second authority had the body becoming the thematic sub group partnership board
- In another locality the Supporting People programme was disaggregated across three of the thematic sub groups of the LSP
- We have noted a distinction between the role of the Commissioning Body being absorbed into other local decision making structures and where the Commissioning Body had been enhanced to include other decision making functions in the perception of the profile of housing related support.

### **Practice examples**

Wolverhampton is developing proposals for streamlining the decision making process, involving Supporting People, Social Care and Health services. The current Supporting People decision making process includes a Commissioning Board, at which Service Users, Providers (RSLs and Voluntary Sector) are represented. The Strategy Implementation Group (SIG) feeds recommendations up to the Commissioning Board for decisions to be made. The SIG membership spans a wide range of Local Strategic Partners including service users and

providers in order to ensure key stakeholders are included in the development of recommendations.

In order to ensure service users have a real influence in the decision making process, Wolverhampton is taking part in the 'echo' project. This is a discussion based framework for public agencies and partnerships to assess and increase their openness to influence and potential to respond to communities, groups and networks.

**For more information contact:** [Fiona.Gough@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:Fiona.Gough@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

Portsmouth has just reviewed their governance structure. There was previously a Core Strategy Group (CSG), which included representation from providers, service users and operational managers from partner stakeholders. That reported to the Commissioning Body, but the CSG has been disbanded while extending the Commissioning Body to include representation from the voluntary sector as well as partner stakeholders at a strategic level. The commissioning body reports to the LAA Delivery Board.

**For more information contact:** [Dominic.Dew@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Dominic.Dew@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

The regional provider and Supporting People lead officer meetings (RIGs) included in the research reinforced this position, although people were keen to stress the sector was still in the transitional period. What was also highlighted was the composition of these groups had often changed due to the increased flexibility caused by the lifting of the ring fence in 2009 and the need to align funding to other strategic priorities.

**Provider forum** – Most localities will have a form of provider forum or inclusive forum. The background, history and capability of each do vary as does the effectiveness, attendance and engagement. Some were based on an original form of supported housing forum, which would have had a wider remit, stronger stakeholder base, wider representation and often more diverse funding streams. Some local authorities now include attendance and representation at provider forums as part of their performance monitoring.

**Service user involvement** – in addition to fora for providers local authorities have had different approaches to how service users can be effectively involved in the commissioning and governance of housing related support. In some areas there were service user fora set up with the chair or a representative attending the Core Strategy Group and in some cases the Commissioning Body. There is a concern that service users are losing access to statutory decision making.

Our research sought to establish whether the sector felt that service users have access to statutory decision making. Only a minority felt they did and this was through local provider and service user fora. In some cases however local authority have set up expert working panels or sub groups to ensure that service users' views continue to shape commissioning and governance: see the earlier practice example from Wolverhampton.

## The Compact

The Compact has been developed by central government and is a partnership agreement between government and the third sector which sets out commitments on both sides to improve the quality and outcomes from this relationship. It recognises and supports the contribution of each partner towards better services and opportunities for individuals and communities.

The national Compact identifies commitments for the government, public bodies and the third sector in three areas – involvement in policy development, allocating resources and commissioning and achieving equality. The majority of relationships between the Third Sector and public bodies exist on a local level and Compacts have been rolled out to local areas for adoption and adaption. All areas across England have a Compact which governs relationships between local government and the Third Sector **including** housing related support providers, for example, housing associations and voluntary organisations. The local Compact should be based on the same values and commitments as the national one. Like most national initiatives, however, these vary from area to area in order to reflect the distinct needs and arrangements of the locality.

## **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

Local authorities and Primary Care Trusts are under a statutory duty to produce a wide ranging and comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). A JSNA is a resource that must be used to inform the local Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and Local Area Agreement (LAA), and should also influence commissioning strategies, service plans, and priority setting processes in the local area.

The JSNA is defined by the Department of Health guidance as ‘a process that identifies current and future health and wellbeing needs in light of existing services, and informs future service planning taking into account evidence of effectiveness.’<sup>4</sup>.

The purpose of the JSNA is to provide an evidence base that covers all aspects of the local population including health, mental health, housing, education, deprivation, economy etc, which will allow decision makers to see the current areas of highest need, and how these are likely to change in the future. By identifying these diverse needs in a single resource the JSNA enables local partners to work together and coordinate their planning so that their services are better placed to meet these current and future needs.

The JSNA should be produced in partnership with borough councils in two tier areas, the third sector, independent sector, businesses, and crucially people living in local communities.

### **Case study: Homelessness in Cambridgeshire**

To show how housing support can influence JSNAs, here is an example produced specifically on homelessness in Cambridgeshire reproduced from the Sitra bulletin, August 2009:

After reviewing all relevant homelessness strategies, the team mapped the needs of homeless people and services for them, evidenced the effectiveness of these interventions and highlighted any issues with, or gaps in, the data. It also took on the views of clients.

The JSNA used many data sources. These included council data, such as district homelessness strategies and statutory homeless (P1E) returns but also the Supporting People client record database and needs analysis model. Health data came from the Cambridge Access Surgery, NHS Cambridgeshire secondary care records and the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System. Information on ex-offenders and homelessness, migrant workers and Travellers was also used, plus home repossessions data.

Data sources on homelessness are service-driven and have limitations, the JSNA found. For example, they could not link individuals across the different databases or health outcomes,

and there was limited information on non-statutory groups and ex-offenders. However, the data showed a high level of drug dependence and mental health problems, for example, and that single homeless people make up the biggest group of homeless people in Supporting People services in Cambridgeshire.

Homeless people have huge needs and dreadful outcomes. To improve the situation, the data within the assessment has helped shape the three-year action plan in the homelessness strategy. This includes a theme on access to longer term housing options and another one on sustained, settled lifestyles and tackling social exclusion.

To improve the JSNA process in future, NHS Cambridgeshire and the county council realise they must improve partnership working and data sharing, to provide a framework for outcomes based commissioning. They also need to engage with homeless people better, such as seeking routine feedback from clients.

## Issue

**In our provider questionnaire the majority of those responding were unaware of where housing related support was represented in local authority structures. This was more marked in smaller providers.**



## Directions

In order to understand and influence local decisions on housing related support providers will need to prioritise time and resources in activities including:

- Identifying a lead for this area of work
- Building on relationships with their local Supporting People commissioners to identify how decisions are made
- Ensuring that those attending the local provider fora understand the context and are in a position or authorised to make decisions
- Researching on the local authority website to identify useful local authority meetings and those who attend them
- Making contact with elected councillors to ask them to support service users in identifying where decisions are made about the service they receive
- Researching the web based resources on the locality, for example, LSP website
- Utilising the resources on the Local Strategic Engagement pages of the Sitra website at [www.sitra.org](http://www.sitra.org)
- Utilising the capacity building and other resources of second tier organisations<sup>5</sup>
- Smaller providers should collaborate (see later signpost on Collaborate) with each other utilising existing fora like the provider forum to share capacity in resourcing this work.



## Signpost

To find out more about your Supporting People or the team responsible for housing related support, their structure and the services they offer the best place to start is your local authority website for example in Newcastle Supporting People have web pages devoted to Supporting People. Visit:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/msp\\_gi?opendocument&CID=msp100](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/msp_gi?opendocument&CID=msp100)

## Funding

One of the challenges facing providers is the reduction in funding for housing related support services. The decrease in monies will be the result of a number of influences. Over the last few years these have included:

- The year on year reduction in the central government Supporting People allocation from the Treasury the original central monies being £1.8 billion in 2003 has been reduced to £1.6 billion in 2009
- The impact of the distribution formula through which central government aimed to address the disparity in the amount of Supporting People funding localities received by reallocating monies between local authorities at the same time as it was reducing the total amount spent nationally. This has resulted in some localities having a year on year reduction in grant while a few local authorities have actually received extra money
- The reduction in the separate Supporting People Administration Grant that funded the cost of its administration locally<sup>6</sup>
- Local authority individual savings and efficiency programmes
- There are obviously increasing concerns that from 2010/11 public sector spending will be significantly reduced.

The Audit Commission review of the Supporting People programme in 2009 illustrated the anxiety surrounding the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2011/14 due after the General Election. In particular, there were concerns due to the lifting of the ring fencing of Supporting People Grant in 2009.

**Supporting People is the largest contributor to Area Based Grant. Any local decision to top slice<sup>7</sup> that grant is likely to affect local Supporting People programmes. Expected future reductions in local authority funding because of the impact of the recession on the public finance and the non statutory nature of Supporting People services puts them at risk<sup>8</sup>.**



## Directions

- Providers supporting the local authority departments responsible for housing related support to demonstrate cost benefits by providing:
  - o data for the Cap Gemini tool
  - o data and information for the Social Return On Investment tool

- providing real life case studies of how the programme has made a difference to individuals and the locality (see Section 4 on demonstrating the value of housing related support).
- Providers should review the allocation of costs between rent/accommodation charge, service charge, housing management, housing related support and care with a view to ensuring costs are allocated appropriately
- Providers should investigate collaborative working with other organisations which could include sharing of infrastructure functions, for example, finance and human resources. Look at collaborating with other providers in order to share costs, expand geographical area and/or client group, and be in a position to bid if your current service is incorporated in a larger tender.



### Signpost

hact has produced *Collaborate*, a reference pack to support providers in adopting collaborative approaches to bidding for housing related support contracts. The project was a collaboration between hact, Sitra and the National Housing Federation. For copies of *Collaborate* contact Sitra at [post@sitra.org](mailto:post@sitra.org)

hact are also producing *Collaborate 2* which looks at resource sharing amongst providers to support in the reduction of costs. See: <http://hact.org.uk/collaborate-2/888>

Providers should aim where possible to:

- Identify opportunities to influence commissioners to look at joint commissioning options for services where service users require a combination of services, for example, services for young people being jointly funded from Supporting People and Children's Services
- Where possible seek to rely on more than one funding stream utilising charitable and grant giving trusts, identifying other avenues of funding for services and diversifying funding.
- Ensure current services are flexible, offer value for money and are strategically relevant. Providers can do this by undertaking their own internal audit and quality assurance monitoring.



### Signpost

There are a number of organisations that can support providers in identifying and accessing funding from Foundations, Trusts and Charities. For example, [www.grantsonline.org.uk/mm\\_trusts.html](http://www.grantsonline.org.uk/mm_trusts.html) or <http://www.fit4funding.org.uk/help-and-advice/funding/trusts/>

Third sector providers can also contact their local CVS or infrastructure organisation. Visit: <http://webdb.navca.org.uk/home.aspx>

- Providers should be collecting information about the people who use their services and any unmet needs they identify. They should pass this information to their commissioners so they are able to determine the level of need
- To facilitate effective service user influence providers should be aware of the local authority statutory duty to involve representatives of communities which came into force in April 2009.



### Signpost

For more on the local authority statutory duty to involve see:

[www.involve.org.uk/assets/Docs-2/20090424-Duty-to-Involve-pager.pdf](http://www.involve.org.uk/assets/Docs-2/20090424-Duty-to-Involve-pager.pdf)

## Governance

### Issue

**The governance structures for housing related support could be absorbed into other structures within the locality. This may not present problems when there is a still a strategic profile for housing related support however if local authorities lose the dedicated housing related support governance structure this could lead to a diversification of the funding amongst a number of strategic priorities.**

The research identified that the removal of the ring fence has resulted in change to the governance and commissioning of housing related support. In some localities it was merging with adult social care, in others merging with broader commissioning bodies and in some areas services for particular client groups being separated out resulting in a redirection of funding to adult social care or children's services for example

The Audit Commission found that respondents to a lead officer survey thought that funding might be diverted to acute social care, rather than the preventative agenda. However, the Commission found that Supporting People services are likely to be protected if the value of the programme is realised in the local area. They also found that some Commissioning Bodies have taken 'specific action to maintain services during the transition period': by extending contracts, agreeing 'virtual' local ring fences and ensuring that the contribution of the services to LAA targets is clearly set out<sup>9</sup>.



### Directions

Providers should be involved in the discussions and negotiations as to changes in governance and commissioning structures that result in commissioning bodies and/or core strategy groups being disbanded and/or absorbed into wider local decision making structures. The way to do this is usually through the provider forum or the core strategy group. While there are risks in the monies being used for different strategic priorities this does represent an opportunity for providers developing relationships with new commissioners. An advantage of this is that it would be seen to attract more money into housing related support services.

## Practice example

A recent House of Lords judgment, **G v Southwark**, outlined that in most cases homeless 16/17 years olds should be accommodated under the Children's Act not homelessness legislation: providers with services for young people could be commissioned by children's services, housing and Supporting People.



### Signpost

For more on the impact of G v Southwark visit [www.leavingcare.org/news/135](http://www.leavingcare.org/news/135) and [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/231269/G-v-Southwark--ChildrenLegalService\\_briefing-Nov09.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/231269/G-v-Southwark--ChildrenLegalService_briefing-Nov09.pdf)

Where the governance structure for housing related support is effective and inclusive providers should lobby using their representatives for this to be used as blue print for LSP thematic groups and wider local authority commissioning.

## Issue

**In the provider questionnaire and at provider fora the increasing move towards the personalisation agenda, in particular individual budgets, was raised as an increasing concern for the stability of the market place for housing related support.**



### Directions

- Providers should find out how local authorities are responding to the personalisation agenda and how they are (anticipating) introducing individual budgets. In some localities it has been reported that they are reserving part of the budget for housing related support to fund individual budgets. In others they are introducing contracts that allow for a percentage of the contract to be utilised by individual purchasing
- Providers should consider both how their engagement with the wider personalisation agenda and in particular how their services are responding or can respond to the challenges of individual budgets
- Providers should be prepared and ready to enter into a dialogue with commissioners on personalisation and individual budgets.



### Signpost

Sitra was funded by the CLG in 2009/10 to work on personalisation in the housing related support sector. Visit the Sitra website at: [www.sitra.org/index.php?id=1045](http://www.sitra.org/index.php?id=1045)

## Commissioning and procurement

### Issue

Providers have valuable intelligence regarding the needs of people with multiple disadvantages currently in receipt of housing related support and unmet needs for housing related support and other services. If commissioning decisions on housing related support are taken by a number of (or more generic) structures for housing related support this can result in a lack of opportunity for providers inputting valuable expertise in the needs assessment required to provide responsive housing related support services in the locality for people with multiple disadvantages.



#### Direction

- Providers need to ensure that they play an active part in the identification of need, commissioning and review of housing related support services together with any consultation opportunities for the housing related support strategy. This can be achieved through attendance and engagement with the local provider forum, through representation to second tier organisations as well as through individual organisations.

Our provider survey demonstrated that a significant number of providers were unaware of the Compact and of those who were aware the majority felt that it was ineffective in their area. The research demonstrated a patchy use of the Compact and adherence to its principles in housing related support services. Some providers reporting that the Compact was being used for smaller voluntary sector commissioning but not larger housing related support services.



#### Directions

- Providers familiarise themselves with the Compact principles and lobby for adherence to the Compact in provider fora, through attendance on local decision making structures e.g. Commissioning Body, Core Strategy Group, thematic group of LSP
- When providers are consulted about commissioning arrangements and any change/review of arrangements, ensure that adherence to the Compact is considered
- Where local authorities are claiming that Compact principles cannot be adhered providers should identify how they can challenge this utilising their local infrastructure organisation (CVS) Compact Voice, Compact Advocacy service.



#### Signpost

To find out about the local Compact in any locality visit:

[www.thecompact.org.uk/information/100024/regions/](http://www.thecompact.org.uk/information/100024/regions/)

Compact Advocacy Project for challenging/strengthening the Compact:

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/compact-advocacy/how-we-can-help](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/compact-advocacy/how-we-can-help)

## Issue

**Our research found that some local authorities are identifying that procurement is more cost effective and flexible by renegotiating contracts as opposed to re-tendering all services. Individually and through the provider fora providers should ask that they are consulted and informed about decisions regarding procurement methods so they are able to challenge individually and collectively processes that are unnecessary.**



### Signpost

Pathways through the Maze a guide to procurement law which specifically examines in what circumstances European Union Procurement Regulations apply and when they don't have to be applied: [www.navca.org.uk/maze](http://www.navca.org.uk/maze)

## Issue

**The research demonstrated that in RIGs, regional and local provider fora a common theme emerged that the structure was less important than the individuals within the structures and their motivation and commitment to the continuance of housing related support services. It did not seem to matter in what department and to a certain extent what level this individual operated at. Providers and Supporting People personnel felt that housing related support services were protected where there was a dynamic individual who was 'batting' for them.**



### Directions

- Providers should invest time in identifying who is able to influence decisions in localities and what level of the governance structure they are able to engage with
- Providers will often have a Board of Trustees or a Management Committee and should ensure they understand the importance of engaging with local decision making structures and play an active role in doing this.

## Issue

**Providers and Supporting People personnel have raised concerns that if local authorities dismantled Supporting People commissioning arrangements they would lose expertise in commissioning, monitoring, tendering, remodelling and strategically meeting the needs of people with multiple disadvantages.**

Providers have also raised concerns that Supporting People commissioning will shift into more generic commissioning teams, which was perceived to result in a loss of housing related support expertise and of power being diverted to those who lack such detailed knowledge. Indeed, the ring fence removal and the greater role of LSPs increase this risk. This also includes decisions to keep the Supporting People brand. One local authority reported conflicting messages given by different central government departments about the importance of the Supporting People brand and the significance of keeping the terminology now the programme officially doesn't exist.



## Directions

- Providers should ensure they understand how housing related support is being commissioned governed and monitored on an operational basis in the local authority. Any decision to absorb housing related support into other departments by a local authority should be planned and ultimately be part of plans that are scrutinised by the elected councillors
- Providers should find out who is the portfolio holder (elected councillor with a specific responsibility and lead on an area of Council activity) in the local authority Cabinet that includes housing related support services and ensure that they have a complete understanding of the programme so any dissemination of activities still results in services being commissioned in a co-ordinated strategic way. Support the inclusion of housing related support needs in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.



## Signpost

To find out who the portfolio holder is for housing related support you will have to do some investigation. You can ask your local Supporting People commissioners but also most local authorities have their portfolio holders for areas of service delivery on their website. You will need to find out where housing related support sits in your authority whether it is in adult social care or housing. In some cases you might find that housing related support is split across portfolio holders.

In those localities where the Supporting People brand is understood and universally recognised, there is merit in providers devoting energy and resources in supporting Supporting People Commissioners maintaining the brand. In other areas it may be more appropriate to redefine to fit in with local priorities. For example if a theme of the Local Area Agreement and/or a delivery group of the LSP refers to socially excluded people or people with multiple disadvantages, it would be pragmatic to adopt this. If the brand continues one of the common themes in the research was the need to embed housing related support into mainstream activities, not placing it in a position where it is vulnerable to being marginalised and thus exposed to funding cuts.

## Issue

**Providers reported anxieties from the lifting of the ring fence that preventative services and in particular those clients groups who are perceived to be lower priority or socially excluded will not be seen as politically attractive by members who may want monies directed to other services. One provider described this as ‘Council members being swayed by electorate ‘nimbyism’.**

The 2009 House of Commons CLG Select Committee inquiry into Supporting People revealed there is a risk of Supporting People losing priority within the new local governance structures. Some witnesses to the Inquiry were concerned that local authority Cabinet

members would make decisions deliberately excluding certain groups of people with multiple disadvantages, who might be 'unpopular' with voters<sup>10</sup>.

The Audit Commission's 2009 report on Supporting People stated that the Supporting People programme has "delivered improvements to the balance of local provision, service quality, and individual outcomes for vulnerable people"<sup>11</sup>. In addition, this has resulted in an increasing focus on individual needs and greater involvement of service users in strategy and service development, as well as value for money.

The Audit Commission recommended that local authorities should continue to promote the "the planning, procurement and commissioning of services under the banner of Supporting People' in order to sustain the identity for service users, commissioners and providers"<sup>12</sup>.



### Directions

Find out who the councillors are for the ward where a scheme is based, invite them to the project for tea, ask them to present an award, open something new and/or make an appointment to see them at their surgery.

### Top tips on selling housing related support

- Invest time and resources in preparing a media/publicity action plan – press releases, building up local and national media contacts to advertise good news stories and possible threats to services
- Ensure a member of staff has the responsibility to read the local paper and identify opportunities to contribute to local awareness of the service
- Work out who you need to get to know, in the local authority Supporting People personnel, commissioners from other departments, for example, adult social care, elected councillors locally and those who hold portfolios which include housing related support, in the locality LSP members where housing related support sits, local press, local infrastructure organisation (CVS), Members of Parliament, community leaders etc
- Know your audience – how much knowledge do they have of housing related support and what information will sway them
- Prepare different submissions ranging from short sound bites on the project to detailed reports
- Use data from applying tools like the Cap Gemini cost benefit tool and the Social Return On Investment tool (see section on demonstrating value of housing related support) with real life case studies of changes for individuals and communities to produce a compelling case for services.
- Think about a range of communications methods from DVDs, awards ceremonies, leaflets as well as traditional presentations.
- Invite elected councillors, LSP members and other stakeholders to visit schemes so they understand what is being achieved and make contact with service users where appropriate.

- Be clear about what you want from the person/organisation you are interfacing with – whether it is increasing their knowledge or awareness, or soliciting their support when a decision is being taken.
- Don't assume your audience will have any knowledge of the funding arrangements for housing related support.
- Draw all the above into a marketing/communication strategy that is disseminated to the whole organisation including having marketing and communications as standard agenda items at managers/team meetings.

## Issue

**Despite the size of the Supporting People programme it still remains little known or understood out of the housing related support sector.**



### Directions

- Providers should support a service user to get to know their elected councillors ensuring they are visible as part of the local electorate, and ensure they are registered to vote
- Providers should prepare real life examples of how housing related support has changed the quality of life of individuals and the local community
- Providers should establish or participate in events and functions where they can invite elected councillors to attend functions, for example, awards ceremonies, Supported Housing Month events, etc. It is more difficult to take decisions to de-commission services when a member has appeared in local paper supporting them
- Providers should attend or submit questions to the council meetings where decisions are being taken and encourage service users to attend or submit questions.
- Providers should utilise the provider forum, recognising there is strength in collective as opposed to individual representation, and such fora can address capacity issues engaging with local decision making structures.
- Providers attending the local provider forum should encourage representation at the regional forum as a valuable forum to address regional issues and an opportunity to share good practice on engagement.

### Practice example

Stoke on Trent City Council Supporting People programme held a Spotlight Awards ceremony which was attended by providers and service users. A panel made up of the CLG and others looked at a range of case studies and there were different awards for service users and providers. The event was very successful and attended by representatives from health, adult social care and probation who were involved in the short listing of nominations. The event was very successful and reported in the local press.

**For more information contact:** [Rebecca.Bowley@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.Bowley@stoke.gov.uk) or visit: [www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/hcp/supporting\\_people/spotlight-awards.en](http://www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/hcp/supporting_people/spotlight-awards.en)



## Signpost

In order to find out about local authority committees, providers can speak to your Supporting People commissioners, visit their local authority website, speak to the elected councillor for the locality or simply ring your local authority and ask to speak to the co-ordinator for the committee that has the responsibility for housing related support. The committee may be for example the social inclusion scrutiny committee or the Health and Adult service scrutiny committee. Local authorities usually have the membership, papers, minutes and agenda on their website.

For an example of the information available on a local authority website visit:

[www.greenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich/YourCouncil/CouncilMeetings/AttendingCouncilMeetings/AskingQuestionsAtMeetings.htm](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich/YourCouncil/CouncilMeetings/AttendingCouncilMeetings/AskingQuestionsAtMeetings.htm)

## Case study

Hampshire had been engaged in a three year review process of its Supporting People services, taking one of three clusters, Homelessness, Disabilities and Older Persons each year. Overall there was a necessity to achieve a 7.5 percent saving across each cluster, across the county. This was done by involving all providers with services together with stakeholders and service users on a district basis, of which there are eleven in Hampshire. In discussion, consultation and by looking at a strategic review, firstly on a district basis and combining these county wide, ensured that the variances by district and by cluster could be taken into account rather than every service having to achieve its own 7.5 percent. This ensured that although the process was difficult all providers and stakeholders were involved, agreements were reached, savings were achieved and in fact money was available both on a county wide and district basis for reinvestment.

**For more information contact:** [Jackie.morrison@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.morrison@hants.gov.uk)



## Direction

Although the current Government has abolished Comprehensive Area Assessments those conducted previously can be a useful source of information on past local performance. Providers can also look at whether their area has a red flag in the area of meeting the needs of people with multiple disadvantages which could assist them in making a case that housing related support services can support the local authority and LSP in improving their performance. If the locality has a green flag providers can identify where any reduction or cuts in services will affect their good performance. Providers should ensure that they keep abreast of the Coalition Governments approach to inspection of localities<sup>13</sup>.



## Signpost

The Audit Commission, Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorates of Constabulary, Prisons, Probation and Ofsted worked together in 2009 to provide an independent overview of the quality of life in localities by carrying out a comprehensive area assessment. One of the themes the CAA considered was how the locality was meeting the needs of vulnerable people. Providers can find out how well a local authority was assessed as performing on meeting the needs of vulnerable people using the 'One Place' website at:

<http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/infobyarea/region/area/Pages/areaoverview.aspx?region=50&area=324>

## Issue

### **Smaller providers reported at provider fora that they had capacity issues involved in engaging with decision making structures.**

A joint Sitra and hact report has found that small providers have an important and particular role to play in service delivery, specifically, with regard to diversity, flexibility, community links and localism<sup>14</sup>.



## Directions

- Smaller providers should collaborate with each other and make use of the provider forum ensuring they are sending a member of staff who understands the context of local strategic engagement, is in the position or has the authority to make decisions. The representative should be given a clear remit on their role including what they are able to contribute in terms of time and resources, the organisation's position on issues, how they will feedback etc
- Larger providers have a part to play in ensuring there is a diverse and specialist housing related support sector by supporting smaller providers, for example, by hosting and servicing the provider forum
- Smaller providers should use their Board or Management Committee effectively as the localised nature of their service means that members will be more likely to be politically engaged
- Providers should recruit members to their Board or Management Committee who are skilled in local engagement or are in positions to lobby/influence locally on the services behalf. The Board or Management Committee might also want to consider making local engagement and marketing/communication standard agenda items, having sub groups devoted to this and identifying champions for these on the Board or Management Committee
- Smaller providers should utilise the services provided by second tier organisations and hact Collaborate and Collaborate 2 guides (see Signpost on page 15) to support them in collaborative working with each other and larger organisations.

## 2. Local Strategic Partnerships

### Explanation

All local authorities are required to have a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) whose function is to bring together representatives from the local statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to collectively identify local priorities and steer the public resources. They are however non-statutory bodies and therefore not the ultimate decision makers. Any targets set and the commissioning required to deliver these must be formalised through the local authority or partner who is the custodian for the money or resource, for example, health, police or fire service who also have the responsibility for the spend of resources.

LSPs go under a variety of names that don't necessarily include the name LSP, for example, Sheffield First, Leicestershire Together, Darlington Partnership, Bolton Vision, etc. The structure of the LSP is decided at a local level which has resulted in a diverse collection of partnerships across the country, both in terms of who is represented and how they work. The maturity of the LSP and their structure determines how effective they are. In two-tier areas there will normally be LSPs at both county and district level, working to fulfil these roles through individual as well as joint activity.

The LSP is responsible for:

- Producing two documents a long term 20 year priorities and vision for the area based on locality data and evidence called the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). In order to achieve the long term vision and these priorities LSPs and local authorities produced a Local Area Agreement (LAA) a three year plan for 2008/11 which ensures the locality is on track to realise the SCS. (See Section 3 on LAAs)
- Overseeing and aligning the resources required to achieve the LAA and ultimately the SCS. One of the resources available is the Area Based Grant which is a non ring fenced pot of money that comprises a number of revenue grants including what was Supporting People Grant. It is important however to note that LSPs themselves do not have legal responsibility for the spending of the Area Based Grant as this decision remains with the local authority
- Reviewing and performance management process against the priorities and targets set locally ensuring delivery arrangements are in place. The governance and commissioning arrangements for housing related support should be integrated into the performance structure set up in a locality. In order to fulfil targets the local authority and partners are expected to support LSPs. The local authority is expected to provide a leadership role in relation to the LSP, ensuring appropriate representation across the private, statutory and third sectors as well as involvement of the local community
- LSPs are usually structured into an executive body or board that oversees a number of thematic delivery groups. In some cases these reflect the themes a locality has identified in its LAA, in other areas the thematic groups might take more of a cross cutting approach and support elements of different parts of the LAA.

Our research identified that there were many arrangements relating to governance and commissioning of housing related support within the LSP framework. A number of common approaches emerged:

- The current commissioning and governance arrangements continued and were 'bolted onto' the LSP framework
- The Commissioning Body assumed additional responsibilities and took over the role of a thematic delivery group for those people who are socially excluded or have multiple disadvantages
- The commissioning and governance reported into one thematic group usually health and wellbeing or safer and stronger communities
- Commissioning and governance for housing related support was integrated across all the thematic delivery groups of the LSP.

### **Practice example**

The Be Birmingham summit provides a platform for discussion for representatives from all sectors three times a year.

The Executive Board oversees and co-ordinates the delivery of the city's sustainable community strategy and the LAA. It is made up of key representatives from the family of partnerships and other key representatives, including the City Housing Partnership and Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council, and meets every six weeks.

A 'family of partnerships' has been developed to cover seven strategic themes as well as a Neighbourhoods Board. The seven partnerships include one on City Housing and one on Health and Wellbeing, both relevant to our sector.

Multi-agency collaborations act as support to the executive and programme boards. A network of Constituency Strategic Partnerships deliver the overall strategy for the city and promote the shared vision and collaboration at a more local level.

For more details see the Sitra bulletin article on how Birmingham's Local Strategic Partnership, "Be Birmingham", works (Knight-Markiegi, A., May 2009, "To Be or Not to Be?" *Sitra bulletin*). Adam Knight-Markiegi also demonstrates how it can be influenced by the housing related support sector. This should offer some useful ideas to those working in other parts of the country.

### **Total Place**

Total Place is a central Government initiative that looks at a whole area response to delivering public services. Central Government hopes that this approach will identify and avoid overlap and duplication of services. It looks at all the services provided in response to local need not just local authority delivered/commissioned. There were 13 pilot areas with themes ranging from supporting people back to independence (Bradford) to children's health and development (Croydon). Total Place consists of two processes one referred to as counting which maps the money going into a locality from central and local resources and secondly a culture process looking at the way things are done with a view to improving them.



### Signpost

To find out more about Total place visit [www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/](http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/) and to find out more about Bradford where the Local Strategic Partnership owns the process visit [www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/BDP/Total+Place/](http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/BDP/Total+Place/)

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In a significant number of localities the representation of the third sector on Local Strategic Partnerships is carried out by local infrastructure organisations often referred to as Councils for the Voluntary Service or Community and Voluntary Service (CVS)<sup>15</sup>. CVS differ in relation to their size and scope ranging from large multi-million pound concerns to small rural organisations. Part of local CVS responsibilities include ensuring that the diverse range of local voluntary and community groups is represented on local decision making structures. The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) is the national membership organisation for local CVS. NAVCA’s work includes ‘skilling’ up CVS to ensure they are able to provide the voice of the local voluntary and community sector.



### Signpost

In order to find the local CVS in your area visit <http://webdb.navca.org.uk/home.aspx> NAVCA has also contributed to Sitra and National Housing Federation mapping work indicating where known CVS representation on upper tier LSPs and thematic groups.

## Issue

**Lack of provider ability to engage in LSPs:** Our research identified that less than a third of providers were involved in their LSP and revealed that provider links with the LSP were inconsistent and ‘patchy’. Our research identified the importance of partnership and collaborative working through provider fora and the growing reliance on local infrastructure organisations (CVS) and second tier organisations. The overwhelming finding was that providers felt there was not effective representation of the housing related support sector in the LSP.



### Directions

- Providers should find out more about their Local Strategic Partnership structure by visiting their website, contacting their local authority as they have personnel who are responsible for servicing and reporting to the LSP as well as being members, asking at the provider forum or visiting their elected councillors’ surgeries
- Providers should establish which thematic group(s) has the responsibility for housing related support including National Indicators 141 and 142 and the other National Indicators their service contributes to (see section on Local Area Agreements for National Indicators and section on demonstrating value of housing related support

- Providers should identify who is on the membership of the LSP and thematic group and where the third sector is represented
- Providers should invest in establishing relationships at the appropriate level to influence decisions on housing related support services
- Providers should utilise existing partnerships or fora e.g. the local provider forum to establish representation on the LSP. Where no such partnerships exist, providers should seek to establish them utilising second tier organisations. Where support for partnerships provided by the local authority ceases, providers should still continue to meet and work collectively
- Providers should think about how to make the provider forum more strategic in its approach, make good links with the CVS and generally become recognised as the collective body to be consulted with by the LSP
- Providers should ensure they send appropriate personnel to local provider fora to ensure they receive timely information, have a stronger voice and have opportunities to collaborate to increase capacity to engage and influence.

### Practice example

Reading Borough Council discussed the future of its provider forum with the provider group. One suggestion was the forum should be split to become separate meetings on a client basis to cover all issues rather than just Supporting People. Providers rejected this, becoming instead a Reading based Supported Living Inclusive Forum to include all provision of supported living together with the various funding streams. The Supporting People team has been integrated into the Procurement and Commissioning Team.

**For more information contact:** [lesley.kent@reading.gov.uk](mailto:lesley.kent@reading.gov.uk)



### Signpost

To find out who is on your LSP visit their or the local authority website for example:

[www.newcastlepartnership.org.uk/newcastle-partnership-structure](http://www.newcastlepartnership.org.uk/newcastle-partnership-structure)

Sitra has developed a spreadsheet which has details of the representation of RSLs and housing related support providers on LSPs and details of the website of the LSP or details on the local authority website:

[www.sitra.org/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/Map of LSP SP thematic in England 01.xls](http://www.sitra.org/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/Map_of_LSP_SP_thematic_in_England_01.xls)

Sitra is adding to this spreadsheet a list of CVS and local infrastructure representation where it is known.

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### Good practice example

Bay Housing Association is a small provider which acts as Managing Agent for two large RSLs. They manage (30 bedspaces) in Blackpool. It was formed in 1995 after local people identified a need for supported housing in the area for 16 to 25s. It has its roots in the local churches and the community, and has always seen itself as part of the third sector and has fostered close links with the CVS. The Chief Executive has undertaken a number of functions over the years, including Chairing the National Housing Federation North West Care and Support Group, and working towards setting up Regional and Local Provider Forums. He has been a Board member of the local CVS for six years and line manages the CVS Chief Officer. The CVS Chief Officer has a place on the LSP Board and sits on numerous other bodies and is consulted on a multitude of issues. The Management Committee has supported staff investing time and resources in wider strategic activity, recognising it is critical to the development and survival of the organisation. Bay believes there is a need to educate CVS as housing related support is a new activity to them but this is worthwhile as it should give you a clear line of contact to key decision makers.

**For more information contact:** Paul Greenwood [paul.bayha@btconnect.com](mailto:paul.bayha@btconnect.com)

### Issue

#### There is a lack of LSP priority given to people with multiple disadvantages

In our initial survey we asked what priority respondents felt their local LSP gave to vulnerable people or people in receipt of housing related support services (pie chart 4). 29.4 percent of respondents indicated that the LSP gave high priority to vulnerable people or people in receipt of housing related support services. Another 29.4 percent answered that their LSP gave medium priority; but the largest number (41.2 percent) concerning reported that in their experience housing related support was a low priority for LSPs.

The House of Commons CLG Select Committee inquiry found that although housing related support services can demonstrate value for money, LSP partners may be reluctant to invest in Supporting People services, as the financial benefits of such services are reaped elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> The report also pointed out that LSPs present a risk to Supporting People and service user involvement in some areas.<sup>17</sup>



#### Directions

- Providers need to ensure that LSPs are up skilled on the needs of people with multiple disadvantages in the locality. In order for providers to make this compelling they need to understand what strategic priorities the LSP has set itself and how they can evidence that looking after the needs of people with multiple disadvantages will enable the LSP not only to achieve the LAA targets but also the deliver the SCS. It is important for providers to be bear in mind that the LSP is simply made up of individuals who represent different organisations and interests in the locality
- Providers should be aware when their SCS is being refreshed and the opportunities to feed into this



### Signpost

To find out the Sustainable Community Strategy in your locality visit the local authority or LSP website: for example Hull's can be found on their LSP website ONE HULL  
[www.onehull.co.uk/communityStrategyAndVision.asp](http://www.onehull.co.uk/communityStrategyAndVision.asp)

The website sometimes will outline the members of the Board and who the partners are: for example East Riding's LSP  
[www.lsp.eastriding.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=21468](http://www.lsp.eastriding.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=21468) and  
[www.lsp.eastriding.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=21434](http://www.lsp.eastriding.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/category.jsp?categoryID=21434)

The website/details may also tell you when the strategy is being reviewed and how you can feed into this process, for example, see [www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11600](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11600)

- Providers should ensure they are able to identify and thus inform and influence those statutory partners on the LSP where their services contribute to those partners' outcomes. For example a home from hospital service can clearly show benefits to health budgets even if they are not directly funded by health. It is critical that in any discussion at the LSP those statutory partners are aware of the implications of any reduction of housing related support services that will impact on their targets, strategies and budgets
- Where one of the thematic group members is not recognising the savings made by housing related support investment to the public purse it may be worth providers raising the issue at a higher level, for example, at the LSP Board particularly where the LSP is moving toward a Total Place approach.

### Issue

**Providers are not aware of their local CVS representative and where they are aware they believe the CVS is not effective at representing the needs of the housing related support sector. This role of the CVS is particularly important as it is usually the first port of call for public sector bodies wanting to involve or consult with the third sector.**

Our research identified that housing related support providers are not aware of their local CVS and its role in representing them. At the provider fora we attended, housing related support providers indicated that they did not feel part of the sector represented by the CVS. While small housing related support providers may be in contact with the local CVS larger RSLs are more likely to seek representation in their own right on the LSP. Therefore providers who are not RSLs or small organisations could find themselves without effective representation on the LSP.

Similarly providers felt that even if RSLs are on the board this does not equate to housing related support representation as those representing the RSL may be seeking to influence other areas, for example, regeneration.

The House of Commons CLG select committee inquiry collected evidence demonstrating the difficulties of delivering Supporting People services through LSPs<sup>18</sup>. Their inquiry also found that Third Sector providers are not adequately represented on LSPs. Similarly, neither are third sector providers understood by the CVS, nor do they often have a relationship with

them. A fear of not understanding the full value and benefits of housing related support was also highlighted.



### Directions

- Providers should use the fact that the largest component of Area Based Grant is made up from what was Supporting People Grant for housing related support services to make a case for effective representation of housing related support providers on the LSP



### Signpost

Sitra has developed a tool that enables providers to identify the percent of the ABG is represented by Supporting People Grant see: [www.sitra.org/1241/](http://www.sitra.org/1241/)

Field Code Changed

Deleted: [www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1164](http://www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1164)

- Providers should seek to secure a representative from the Core Strategy Group or equivalent to attend the LSP or relevant thematic group and to represent views of housing related support service users and providers; therefore influencing local strategic decision making.

### Practice example

One Nottingham is the LSP for Nottingham City. In the new structure, three places are reserved for Third Sector advocates on each Theme Partnership. The responsibility for the Supporting People programme is with the Neighbourhood Nottingham Partnership (NNP). A CVS partnership officer was invited to attend the Supporting People Provider Forum to update providers about the new structure. Following her meeting with the Forum, the partnership officer recommended that one of the three places on the NNP was reserved for someone from the Provider Forum. The Provider Forum is currently selecting their advocate and this means that housing related support providers have direct input into the Theme Partnership that will have responsibility for the Supporting People programme in Nottingham in the future.

**For more information contact:** [Claire.Grainger@hlq.org.uk](mailto:Claire.Grainger@hlq.org.uk)

- Providers should develop a variety of representation including:
  - through local infrastructure organisations
  - through regional forums
  - through strategic forums
- Providers should develop staff skills so they have the competencies to engage locally at a more strategic level

### Practice example

Hampshire currently has four Thematic Boards within the LSP of which one, the Health and Wellbeing Board, has two representatives representing the third sector and specifically Supporting People providers. They are from umbrella second tier infrastructure organisations, Community Action Hampshire and ROCC.

**For more information contact:** [mike.ballard@rocc.org.uk](mailto:mike.ballard@rocc.org.uk)

- Providers should ensure that they are aware of the representation that takes place on regional provider forums, provider forums, CVS etc. Regional representation is particularly important as providers should be aware of what is happening in other localities so they can seek to influence their own locality with compelling examples of good practice
- Providers should seek the support of second tier organisations to create dialogue that can bridge the gap between themselves and the CVS. Providers should seek to use the services of CVS which may include training and support on representation, facilitating third sector representation on wider fora and networks. For larger organisations that may need less support, they should find out what role the CVS plays in representation, planning and policy making
- Providers should work collectively to try to gain agreement to have more than one third sector representative on the LSP and thematic group.

Providers should ensure that any body/individual that represents housing related support on the LSP or thematic partnership has a clear brief on collecting and collating the views of the sector, representing those views and feeding back to those they represent, for example, by using provider fora. Providers should be prepared to provide evidence to the representative demonstrating the value of housing related support (see Section 4).

### Practice example

Bradford and District Community Empowerment Network Ltd (Cnet) has overseen the establishment of a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Assembly and from this an elected representative will sit on the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board and the overarching Bradford Partnership Board, that is, the LSP. The Chair of the group for providers of housing and homelessness services sits on the Housing Partnership Board. The Housing Partnership Board elects representatives to sit on other Boards and the Chair of the provider group also sits on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Chair of the housing and homelessness providers also chairs the provider group for Supporting People. The Chair has made contact with the Chief Executive of the local CVS in respect of the CVS representing provider interests on the LSP should she be elected to the one position for VCS. The reason for this approach was it was felt that a Supporting People housing provider could not effectively represent all the minority interests that exist within the voluntary sector but that with the right level of support, someone with experience of the whole sector could effectively represent Supporting People interests.

**For more information contact:** [sheila.bamford@hortonhousing.co.uk](mailto:sheila.bamford@hortonhousing.co.uk)

- Providers should establishing the best place to influence as it may not be useful being on strategic board it may be better being on thematic group(s). They can do this by meeting with a member of the LSP board, Supporting People personnel, reading up on the remit of the board and thematic groups on the LSP web pages, and/or reading papers (agenda and minutes) from the Board and groups

## Issue

**Lack of housing related support commissioner involvement in LSPs:** Our research indicated that it was perceived that some commissioners of housing related support were not involved in the LSP. Providers felt that links needed to be made and those in place were weak.

The House of Commons CLG Select Committee pointed out that the maturity of LSPs and consequently their ability to jointly commission services lies in doubt<sup>19</sup>. It also highlighted that the expertise in procurement and commissioning heralded by Supporting People teams could be lost and transferred to more generic commissioning services (see section 2 on local authority structures). The Committee heard evidence illustrating concerns that a specialist knowledge and focus on housing related support will be lost within the Local Strategic Partnerships. This promoted the Select Committee to recommend that Supporting People services are protected as LSPs continue to develop<sup>20</sup>.

### Practice example

In Staffordshire (a two tier authority with a County Council and eight District and Borough Councils) the operational element of the commissioning and governance of housing related support is carried out by a strategic housing unit. The strategic housing team is part of a wider Joint Commissioning Unit which undertakes commissioning of care and support services for Adult Social Care and the Primary Care Trust.

At district level, in South Staffordshire there is a specific Housing Theme Group within the LSP. This is chaired by the LA strategic housing manager and includes key housing associations and social care and health contacts in the district. The Chief Executive of Housing Plus chairs the District LSP Executive Board. At county level providers have traditionally had a seat on the Officers Board (Core Strategy Group) which reported to the Commissioning Body. The representative was the chair of Staffordshire's Provider Network. These arrangements are currently being reviewed and what is being proposed is the establishment of a Housing and Independent Living Partnership Board within the Local Area Agreement structure.

The draft terms of reference for the Partnership Board include a number of provider representatives representing the major client groups and representatives from the Provider Network. The Board will also have representation from the stock transfer housing associations which provide approximately 80 percent of the housing for older people. The Staffordshire Provider Network is currently discussing the best methodology to select representatives and provide effective feedback mechanisms.

**For more information contact:** [tony.price@housing-plus.co.uk](mailto:tony.price@housing-plus.co.uk) for a provider perspective or [helen.trausdale@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.trausdale@staffordshire.gov.uk) for the local authority view.



## Directions

- Providers should utilise and be prepared to engage with the CLG's transition package of measures for example using the Cap Gemini local cost benefit tool, feeding into the Transition Board, attending round table events etc.



## Signpost

The CLG transitional measures can be found on

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407120701/communities.gov.uk/housing/supportandadaptations/supportingpeople/>

Deleted: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/supportandadaptations/supportingpeople/>

Providers should work collaboratively through provider fora to support new and existing commissioners of housing related support to understand best practice in commissioning.

Where appropriate, providers should seek to influence local authorities to retain the commissioning and governance structures developed under the Supporting People programme and integrate them into the LSP commissioning and governance structure. Providers should do this by making representations collectively through provider fora, through representation on local authority decision making structures, for example, Commissioning Body/LSP and individually. Representations should be made to those individuals responsible for making decisions on commissioning, at the local authority meeting where this decision is taking place or where this decision is scrutinised by elected councillors.

- Providers should support the members of the LSP and relevant thematic group understand the nature and value of housing related support and enable them to appreciate the specialist skills required to commission these services. Providers can do this through this through their representation on the LSP and/or thematic board, meeting with members of the LSP and thematic board or by identifying opportunities to submit papers or agenda items to the LSP/thematic board. The chairs of provider fora should attend regional meetings where information on the approaches of different localities can be discussed and good practice then taken back to localities to present compelling examples of positive models.
- In localities where the commissioning and governance structures developed under Supporting People are effective, providers should collectively through the provider fora and individually through representation lobby for these to be used as a 'blue print' for LSP commissioning activities. Providers can also use their representation on the LSP and/or thematic group to highlight this issue or seek to influence by contacting members of the LSP/thematic group.

## 3. Local Area Agreements

### Explanation

Unitary authorities and County Councils have to produce a Local Area Agreement (LAA) under the 2007 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, and their partners are under a duty to cooperate within the framework. LAAs are three-year agreements, currently from 2008/11, between Central Government and the local area, that set out the priorities for the community and how these are to be addressed. Central Government is represented by the Government Regional Office and the local area by local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

The LAA is expected to support the local area in achieving the priorities set out in the longer term (20 year) Sustainable Community Strategy. They are expected to support the reduction in bureaucracy by simplifying areas of central funding, joining up public services more effectively and allowing greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances.

Communities and Local Government expects that LAAs will:

- Ensure organisations such as public service providers and community groups work in partnership to achieve common solutions and objectives for the community
- Recognise that 'one size does not fit all' and local services should reflect what local people want
- Give more flexibility to local authorities and other public sector organisations in the ways they deliver services for local people
- Make local authorities and other public services more accountable to local people
- Reduce red-tape and improve value for money
- Enable local people to get more involved in decisions about local services.

When they were first introduced (as early as 2004 for the pilots) there were four main blocks or thematic headings; Children and Young People, Healthier Communities and Older People, Safer and Stronger Communities, and Economic Development and Enterprise. As LAAs have developed, in some areas different thematic headings have emerged dependant on the needs of that locality, which have been identified through consultation with the community.



#### Signpost

For more information on LAAs visit: [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=1174195](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=1174195)

The local themes have also identified the targets the locality has set itself. Each unitary authority or county council working with the LSP had to identify a set of priority outcomes including prioritising up to 35 of the National Indicators (NIs). In addition to these, the locality could set itself local targets. For priority NIs, targets are agreed with and monitored by Government through the Government Regional Offices.



### Signpost

The selected or designated indicators for any local area can be found on the CLG website [www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/](http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/)

Performance on the current 189 National Indicators was monitored by the Audit Commission through its Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) and local authorities still have to report on all of the National Indicators. The CAA was part of the performance assessment of how local authorities along with their partners meet the needs of local communities. The inspection body comprised Audit Commission, Ofsted, Care Quality Commission and the Inspectorates for Prisons, Probation and Constabulary.

There are two National Indicators specific to housing related support services:

- **NI 141** Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living, and
- **NI142** Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living.



### Signpost

Information on CAAs can be found at:

[www.youtube.com/user/AuditCommissionTV#p/u/1/S12613qMSJU](http://www.youtube.com/user/AuditCommissionTV#p/u/1/S12613qMSJU)

The LSP is responsible for identifying which of its local partner agencies will lead on delivering outcomes and targets. All LAAs have to be approved by the Secretary of State, once this is achieved the LAA targets have a statutory status and the partner agencies have a duty to work towards their achievement.

### Practice example

In 2008/9 Leicestershire 'revamped' Governance structure over last year to fit in with the Local Area Agreement and Local Strategic Partnership. The Vulnerable People Partnership Board (VPPB) delivers part of Leicestershire performance framework. The framework comprises seven themes which include improved life chances for people and places. The VPPB delivers targets for that theme including housing related support and has responsible for priority targets NI142 and 145. The VPPB have identified all the National Indicators and local outcomes into three areas, those they are responsible for delivering, those they have a direct contribution to and those they have an interest in. The VPPB delegates responsibility for commissioning to Leicestershire Housing Support Commissioning Group (LHSCG) which replaced the Core Strategy Group, and is responsible for delivery housing related support under broad direction set by Partnership Board also for monitoring the financial soundness of the Strategy and Annual Plan and receiving regular reports on expenditure and income for the housing related support programme.

The Chairs of Members Panel and of the Commissioning Group have a seat on the VPPB as does the chair of the providers' forum and service user group 'resonance'. Housing is represented on VPPB through the chair of the County Chief Housing Officers Group – other members include a voluntary sector representative and a job centre plus representation. A representative from VPPB is a member of Leicestershire Together Strategic Board Executive. It is believed that the establishment of a vulnerable people theme was possible as those working the LSP had knowledge of the Supporting People programme.

**For more information contact:** Dianne Esmond on [Dianne.Esmond@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Dianne.Esmond@leics.gov.uk)

## Issue

### **A number of providers still lack enough of an in depth understanding of the local LAA framework to ensure that housing related support services are prioritised.**

Our research found that some providers are still unaware of the LAA framework of what understanding there is this is greater at strategic (senior) levels than at operational and frontline levels. Knowledge and understanding of the LAA framework varies between the size of organisations with the research identifying that smaller organisations have less knowledge about local governance changes than larger ones.



## Directions

- Providers need to ensure that understanding of local decision making structures is throughout an organisation from strategic through operational and by frontline staff. All staff need to understand their role in identifying and engaging with decision making structures and different agendas within a locality. In particular frontline workers have an appreciation of the needs of service users and are often best placed to identify unmet needs. Frontline staff are also best placed to support service users in becoming part of the local electorate and participate in local opportunities to influence local priorities. Operational and frontline staff will also attending local meetings with other stakeholders. Providers need to include in their communicating strategy the systems in place to ensure that intelligence garnered is shared amongst the organisation, for example team meetings, email briefing of meetings, shared drives for papers of meetings
- The demands of an environment where services are locally driven needs to be coordinated at a senior level. Providers should ensure that all staff are conversant with the context within which services to people with multiple disadvantages are delivered. Operational managers need to be empowered and informed by senior staff to play their role in local engagement and to support and direct frontline staff as they are likely to foster relationships with personnel involved in local decision making structures, for example, Supporting People commissioners.
- Providers might want to consider having a local engagement champion or ensuring a member of strategic, operational and frontline staff has a specialism in local engagement or set up an engagement sub group comprising of service user, frontline, operational, strategic Board/Trustee members.

## Issue

**Our research identified that providers believed that the introduction of LAAs represents a risk to housing related support providers which increases when NIs 141 and 142 have not been chosen as priority indicators in the LAA.**



### Direction

- Providers should align their local service aims objectives and outcomes to all the relevant priorities identified in the LAA framework. The research found that a significant number of providers had undertaken this activity and had been excellent in aligning their organisation mission and service offering to the LAA framework.
- Providers should use the tools available to identify the contribution of their service to the National Indicators in particular the ones chosen as priorities in their LAA (see section on demonstrating value of housing related support).

## Issue

**Providers believed that there were resource implications related to the introduction of LAA framework.**

Our research found that the vast number of providers felt the introduction of the LAA framework had significant resource implications for providers, for example, staff time spent re-aligning priorities and seeking to engage and influence a wider agenda. A number of providers felt that organisations were not coping well with resource implications.



### Directions

- Providers should work collaboratively to map outcomes for client groups as this is resource intensive work and smaller organisations are less likely to have the capacity to manage this. An approach would be for the provider forum to form a strategic response to engaging with the LAA. Providers can form sub-groups which can be based on the blocks or themes of the LAA or client group specific to ensure that housing related support services are acknowledged in the delivery of the LAA and needs led in LAA particularly in any new or refreshed LAA. Once this activity is completed providers should
- Establish from the Supporting People commissioners how data is established to monitor performance of the LAA and how providers can contribute to this
- Identify which part of the LSP (Board or thematic group) is responsible for overseeing the block/theme of the LAA and use the methods identified in the marketing/communication strategy to influence them. For example in South Tyneside where NI 6 participation in regular volunteering has been chosen inviting a member of the LSP to give out certificates to service users who have completed a successful volunteering placement

- Use the third sector/housing related support representation on LSPs and within local authority structures to get the message across that housing related support services have an important contribution to localities realising their LAA
- Providers should think about how staff can be trained in the competencies required for strategic liaison. Smaller providers should collaborate to ensure that staff are up skilled in strategic liaison, utilising skills in their management committee/ board of trustees where appropriate. Second tier and local infrastructure organisations can also support providers in this work.

## Issue

**Those indicators that have not been chosen as LAA priority targets will become less of a commissioning priority and this increases the pressure on demonstrating how non-statutory services are valuable.**

Providers at the local and regional and fora reported concerns that commissioning activities in localities will be determined solely by those indicators that have been chosen for the LAA. This adds pressure to non-statutory services that are already perceived to be at risk over statutory services when savings have to be made. One provider commented in our questionnaire that the perceived loudest voice of the stretch targets getting the Supporting People money as a challenge.



### Directions

Providers should adopt local strategic language when demonstrating the value of their service and the outcomes it achieves for individuals and communities. For engagement with the LAA this language needs to reflect how their services contribute to those National Indicators prioritised in the locality. Given the wider strategic priorities in the LAA providers should invest time in identifying how housing related support outcomes can be translated into language relevant to Primary Care Trusts etc. Undertaking this exercise will enable providers to identify what outcomes they hope to achieve, how these are monitored and how success can be evidenced. The individual outcome recorded for service users should demonstrate the service strategic relevance, how this is described should be carefully aligned to strategic local priorities and the language of those who are driving these.

## Issue

**Our research identified that there was a perception from providers (and local authority personnel responsible for housing related support) that there could be conflicts present between the LAA framework and other policy drivers.**



### Directions

Areas for providers to consider:

- Work with their local authority colleagues responsible for housing related support to raise the profile of housing related support, demonstrate how housing related support can add value to the local priorities in the LAA, avoid other costlier interventions and make a real

difference to the lives of individuals and the community. (See Section 4 on demonstrating value on housing related support)

- Capitalise on the opportunities to work with new partners and forge new partnerships
- Utilise the support of second tier organisations, local infrastructure organisations (CVS) and provider fora to support collaborative working
- Use opportunities to integrate themselves as a part of a local partnership, which is being collectively driven by LAAs as a framework for solving local problems
- Ensure that frontline staff empower service users as members of the community to participate in opportunities to talk to commissioners and those making strategic decisions
- Utilise the opportunities LAAs present to work with different commissioners; this may support building even stronger strategic relevance to the priority targets
- Be aware that LAAs meeting local priorities rely on input from a range of stakeholders in the locality. LAAs can only be achieved if there is joint commissioning, pooling of resources to ensure that a more holistic set of services can be provided. This represents opportunities for providers to meet clients' needs more holistically and move away from providing specific services dictated by individual funding streams
- Invest resources in understanding how LAA are agreed, delivered and monitored in their locality. Providers should place themselves in the position of promoting their services as contributing to the achievement of LAA, highlighting where lack of pooling of resources and joint commissioning pose a threat to achieving the LAA using the Total Place model as a way of reinforcing joint working between statutory and other stakeholders
- Respond to changes in priorities at a local level as LAAs are being refreshed, prepared to re-align their service offering to new priorities. For example, if a locality might want to prioritise activities on getting people into employment and a service can look at their support planning outcomes in this area, developing staff skills, forging stronger partnerships with Job Centre Plus etc
- Become more focused on demonstrating the return on funding utilising tools like the Cap Gemini cost benefit tool and the Social Return on Investment model (see the section on demonstrating the value of housing related support).

## 4. Demonstrating the strategic relevance and value of housing related support services

### Explanation

Housing related support services make a significant contribution to the quality of the lives of the most people with multiple disadvantages in the community. Providers will be aware that it is increasingly important that preventative services are recognised in the wider strategic setting agenda. Housing related support should continue to be prioritised and valued in the new structures that govern and commission local services.

One of the most effective ways of doing this is making a compelling business case for the continued provision of these services. There are a number of ways in which providers can do this and Sitra has produced fact sheets that can support providers including appendices that relate to the major client groups specifically visit <http://www.sitra.org/1238/>

Deleted: [www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1109](http://www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1109)

Local authorities, through the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), will have a number of targets, chosen on a local basis from the set of National Indicators. The fact sheets referred to above identify those National Indicators that housing related support services contribute to either significantly or partially, the attached appendices identify further specific indicators for various client groups e.g. mental health, young people etc. Local authorities and LSPs have identified up to 35 indicators with their Government Regional Office for their Local Area Agreement. The full list of national Indicators and guidance as to their rationale and definitions can be found at

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators)

To find out the priority National Indicators agreed between each local authority and the Government Regional Office visit [www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/default.aspx](http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk/default.aspx) and [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/10958567](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/10958567)



#### Signpost

Homeless Link has developed a toolkit to support providers in profiling their work against the NIs prioritised in their locality with case studies of services for homeless people. Visit: [www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/issues/laacurrent/laaform](http://www.homeless.org.uk/policyandinfo/issues/laacurrent/laaform)


ROCC has an on line tool which is a guide to the NIs chosen by local areas in the South East. The tool enables providers to see which NIs specific client group services contribute to: [www.rocc.org.uk/static/documents/Local percent20Area percent20Agreements percent20Indicators percent20Tool.xls](http://www.rocc.org.uk/static/documents/Local%20Area%20Agreements%20Indicators%20Tool.xls)

There are a number of resources available to providers and commissioners on evidencing the cost benefit, social return and savings that housing related support services contribute to a locality.

**CLG** has commissioned a tool to enable local authorities to evidence the **financial benefits** of housing related support. National research has demonstrated considerable savings as the provision of housing related support services can prevent the use of most intensive costly

public services. The national net financial benefit of the Supporting People Programme is **£3.4 billion** on an investment **£1.6 billion**. The tool can be found at:  
[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/financialbenefitsguide?view=Standard](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/financialbenefitsguide?view=Standard)

The (then) **Office of the Third Sector** funded a partnership to develop an agreed model of **Social Return on Investment (SROI)** programme that enables commissioners and providers to calculate the social return that investing in services providers.



**Signpost**


Information on the SROI programme and tool can be found at:  
[www.sroi-uk.org/component/option.com\\_frontpage/Itemid.65/](http://www.sroi-uk.org/component/option.com_frontpage/Itemid.65/)

Sitra has developed a spreadsheet that can be used by providers to demonstrate social return on investment in housing related support services with a worked example:  
[www.sitra.org/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/SROI\\_template\\_01.xls](http://www.sitra.org/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/SROI_template_01.xls)

Charities Evaluation Service also provides resources on outcomes and SROI at:  
[www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)

Field Code Changed  
Deleted: [www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1087](http://www.sitra.org.uk/index.php?id=1087)

The **Department of Health** in its **Care Services Efficiency Delivery** programme has produced case studies demonstrating savings made by investing in what it calls support related housing services.




**Signpost**

CSED Case studies are available from:  
[www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/csed/supportRelatedHousing/?parent=5322&child=5324](http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/csed/supportRelatedHousing/?parent=5322&child=5324)

Deleted: [www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/csed/Solutions/supportRelatedHousing/?parent=5322&child=5324](http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/csed/Solutions/supportRelatedHousing/?parent=5322&child=5324)

The Audit Commission also proposed including the Supporting People Outcomes within its proposed budget reduction risk tool (BRRT).



**Signpost**

Visit the Audit Commission website: [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx)

Despite the agenda of localisation there continues to be a number of national policy initiatives from central government. There is an expectation that local authorities will commission and deliver services that enable central government to achieve its policy agenda.

In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of their services providers will also have their own real life case studies of the changes that have occurred for service users they can rely on.

## Issue

**There is still a lack of use of the tools available for demonstrating the contribution of housing related support by providers and not universal use by local authorities. Providers and local authority personnel have reported through the research that although Cap Gemini does provides useful information especially with regard to financial benefits, it does not however provide a complete picture.**



### Directions

- Providers should:
  - look at the full range of tools and resources to ensure they provide a robust business and social case for the value of their services.
  - ensure that they are mindful of their audience when making cases for example real life case studies will be more compelling to elected councillors whereas the LSP will be more convinced by contribution to performance on priority local targets set and a health audience may be more convinced by the CSED case studies.
  - look at how they would apply the tools available and ensure they are collecting the fullest data required to evidence the impact on service users which contributes to a cost saving or a social value. For example if the service claims it is avoiding more costly interventions, for example visits to accident and emergency, is there data to support this?
- Providers should invest time and resources in identifying the following and how their services contribute to:
  - The National Indicators prioritised in the Local Area Agreement
  - Any local indicators
  - Any national initiatives, especially those that it is anticipated that local authorities will be delivering.

**Providers reported that there was little understanding of the value of housing related support services either locally and in the national political arena beyond those directly involved in the sector. Despite what was Supporting People Grant being the largest component of the Area Based Grant and the annual national programme being in excess of £1.5 billion.**



### Direction

At times of local and national elections there is an ideal opportunity for providers to capitalise on those members seeking election interest in their electorate. Providers should identify and seek to influence:

- Relevant Ministers
- Existing and prospective Members of Parliament
- Existing and prospective elected councillors.

### Practice example

Liverpool Supporting People team held an event to celebrate the work, services and successes of the Liverpool Supporting People programme. A DVD was launched, entitled 'Making a Difference' and demonstrating in graphic terms the success stories of Supporting People for a number of individuals and is available at [www.goved.co.uk/video/local-authorities/liverpool-sp](http://www.goved.co.uk/video/local-authorities/liverpool-sp)

The event was supported by the CLG and Audit Commission, together with the leader of the Council, assistant director from Adult Care and Learning services and the Director of Liverpool First, all promoting the importance of housing related support services in achieving results within the CAA.

**For information contact:** [Sara.Naylor@liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:Sara.Naylor@liverpool.gov.uk)

### Issue

**Some providers commented in their responses to the questionnaire and at provider fora that the Supporting People programme was not placed on a statutory footing and therefore people have no statutory entitlement to services, Providers can demonstrate the value of housing related support services across outcomes and priorities but in the increased competitive funding environment it is likely that statutory services will take precedence.**



### Directions

- Providers need to ensure their organisational objectives and those of services provided on a local basis are aligned with the local priorities set by the LSP and other local strategic decision making bodies
- Providers should show how they contribute to as many targets as possible in the National Indicator set – ensuring they appeal to a wider stakeholder audience including those who are responsible for statutory services
- Providers should use and support their Supporting People commissioners to use the Cap Gemini tool to demonstrate the savings to statutory purse. Providers should ensure that influence those who are making decisions about funding priorities by evidencing that a significant number of those currently in receipt of non statutory housing related support services would draw on statutory resources if not adequately supported.

## 5. Conclusion

Our work has identified that the new landscape for the commissioning and governance of housing related support posed both threats and opportunities to providers.

The new commissioning and governance environment with the flexibility of the removal of the ring fence offers providers opportunities as well as challenges. Providers reported:

- the potential of joining budgets together
- improved relationships between adult social care and housing related support
- the focus on outcomes of housing related support not eligibility
- Potential to much better co-ordinate other commissioners – especially health and social care with the housing related support agenda.
- Opportunity to put together innovative partnership bids and extend existing services to other clients
- Chance to build stronger partnerships and the value of housing related support can be seen to the benefit of the wider community and commissioners.

The new environment is not however without threats: one provider summed up the concerns of many the changes bringing a clear danger to the concept of housing related support. **It is clear the pressures of local Government finance are significant, and the need to protect statutory services is likely to take precedence regardless of evidence of the benefits of non statutory services.**

How providers are able to manage the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities will depend on how well they understand the change in environment and thus are able to engage and influence. This is not an impossible task. A number of organisations demonstrated that they had both embedded their services into the new strategic decision making framework and had made valuable links with key personnel in the LA and on the LSP. It is fair to say however that it does require a strategic response and a willingness to invest time and resources into this as a core part of the business. A number of key themes came out of the research.

### Common themes

- Invest time and resources in garnering intelligence about the decision making structure in your locality
- Providers should support service users in becoming part of the local electorate ensuring their voice is heard in an environment of '**electoral nimbyism**'
- Build stronger partnerships both with statutory partners, stakeholders and other providers. The impact of relationships with other bodies **provides greater opportunity to share information - target response - provided multiplayer support - manage outcomes - provide greater scope for SU support and feedback<sup>21</sup>**
- Ensure attendance at the provider forum by the right personnel who can participate in collaborative working. The importance of the provider forum cannot be stressed as **it keeps everyone in the loop about what is happening and alerts service providers and clients about developing changes. Another reported on the opportunity to have good practice and advice, as well as 'mutual support'. Can lobby more effectively**

- Ensure that links are retained to the national agenda and how these impacts locally use various ways: **some funding opportunities, commissioners increasingly asking for links to PSA16 in tender documents.**
- Utilise tools in demonstrating the value of housing related support
- Develop a marketing strategy for your service including a media publicity plan.

# Appendix 1

## Methodology

The project sought to capture as many provider views as possible: and a representative selection of providers was contacted, ranging from:

- Large national to small local specialist
- Rural and urban
- Two tier areas and unitary
- Those who work in one locality and those who work in a number of localities
- Those who work with one client group and those who work across client groups<sup>22</sup>.

In order to produce this guide the following research was undertaken:

- Sitra compiled a web survey utilising the Sitra website between July and August 2009 to establish how housing, support and care providers, commissioners and service users are involved in or represented in their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This survey comprised of multiple choice and open ended questions. A full report of this survey can be found at [www.sitra.org/1237/](http://www.sitra.org/1237/).
- Sitra and the National Housing Federation carried out a desk-based survey of unitary authority and county council LSPs during July and August 2009. The research accessed local authority and LSP websites and looked for evidence of housing association and care and support provider<sup>23</sup> representation on the executive board or top tier of the LSP.
- Sitra also then examined the involvement in thematic partnerships or committees sitting below board/executive level where this information was available. NAVCA also contributed to this asking their members to indicate CVS involvement on the LSPs and thematic groups This information is now available on the Sitra website [www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/Map of LSP Supporting People thematic in England.xls](http://www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/Map_of_LSP_Supporting_People_thematic_in_England.xls)
- In the period September 2009 to February 2010 Sitra disseminated a provider questionnaire through its website, internal and external articles<sup>24</sup> in sector magazines, provider fora, regional Supporting People strategic groups (e.g. Regional Implementation Groups RIGs) and through contacts. The questionnaire comprised of multiple choice and open ended questions seeking a provider's perception of what is happening on the ground with the governance and commissioning of housing related support, their awareness of Local Strategic Partnerships, the representation of housing related support in local decision making structures and the impact of any changes relating to the removal of the ring fence and the monies going into Area Based Grant. 71 providers responded to the survey from 28 local authority areas. The questionnaire can be found at [www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/Information and good practice/Questionnaire for providers.doc](http://www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/Information_and_good_practice/Questionnaire_for_providers.doc) and the report can be found at [www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/Navigating the maze/Report on providers local strategic engagement 120510.pdf](http://www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/Navigating_the_maze/Report_on_providers_local_strategic_engagement_120510.pdf).

Deleted: [www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra\\_user/2009/LSEP/Information and good practice/Report on Local Strategic Partnership survey.pdf](http://www.sitra.org.uk/fileadmin/sitra_user/2009/LSEP/Information_and_good_practice/Report_on_Local_Strategic_Partnership_survey.pdf)

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- In November 2009 to March 2010 Sitra and the CLG worked together to identify a snapshot of local authority responses to the lifting of the ring fence and the monies going into Area Based Grant. The research consisted of a series of questions regarding the changes that were taking place in localities in the commissioning and governance of housing related support. 11 in depth questionnaires were completed either face to face or by telephone interview with personnel responsible for the administration, strategic direction or commissioning of housing related support within localities. The work was initially rolled out in the East and West Midlands with the intention of covering the whole of England. While this work is still ongoing the results gathered to date have been included in this guide.
- Sitra attended regional fora and regional strategic groups (e.g. RIGs) in six of the regions giving a presentation on the project and garnering intelligence from those attending. Subjects discussed included the profile of housing related support in their locality, the engagement of providers and local authority personnel in the governance and commissioning of housing related support services, what changes were planned or had occurred and what challenges faced the sector as a result of the removal of the ring fence in 2009 and the funding becoming part of the Area Based Grant in 2010. Sitra also attended 23<sup>25</sup> local provider fora to ensure that the research encompassed a full reflection of the perceptions of providers including smaller local and private providers. On the governance side Sitra staff also attended a selection of Commissioning Bodies, Core Strategy Groups, and LSPs, and interviewed members of LSPs. Sitra has met with or had telephone contact with individual providers ranging from small local providers (e.g. Bay Housing Association in Blackpool) to larger national ones (e.g. DepaulUK and Centrepoint) who contributed to identifying the challenges facing the sector and some possible directions.
- On the 18 February 2010 Sitra and Local Government Information Unit held a joint seminar on the 'New horizons for housing related support'. The seminar was attended by representatives from the Fire Service, PCTs, and local authorities including Supporting People, finance and community development. Some of the participants do sit on their Local Strategic Partnership and the themes raised are included in this guide. Full details of the day including the presentations are available at [www.sitra.org/1236/](http://www.sitra.org/1236/).
- As part of the project, Sitra attended an event to celebrate the work, services and successes of the Liverpool Supporting People programme. A DVD was launched, entitled 'Making a Difference' and demonstrating in graphic terms the success stories of Supporting People for a number of individuals and is available at [www.goved.co.uk/video/local-authorities/liverpool-sp](http://www.goved.co.uk/video/local-authorities/liverpool-sp) The event was supported by the CLG and Audit Commission, together with the leader of the Council, assistant director from Adult Care and Learning services and the Director of Liverpool First, all promoting the importance of housing related support services in achieving results within the CAA.
- In addition to attending regional and local provider fora we met with individual 3<sup>rd</sup> sector providers and had telephone contact with others throughout the life of the project to talk in depth about their experiences of local strategic engagement. During the meetings and contact providers outlined the issues local strategic engagement raised for them and what processes they put in place to address the challenges presented to them. Providers included DepaulUK, Haven, Centrepoint and Bay Housing.
- In order to raise the awareness of the importance of LSE regular articles have been submitted in our members the **Sitra bulletin**, e-news and external publications. We also

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contributed articles to external publications in order to raise the awareness of the importance of housing related support services, for example NAVCA Bulletin, LGIU's C'llr, NCAS' Keynotes, ROCC's Monthly Briefing. These articles were also designed to garner the views and intelligence of a wider audience by soliciting responses.

## Appendix 2

### Glossary

ABG – Area Based Grant

CAA – Comprehensive Area Assessment

CVS – Council for Voluntary Service

JSNA – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

LAA – Local Area Agreement

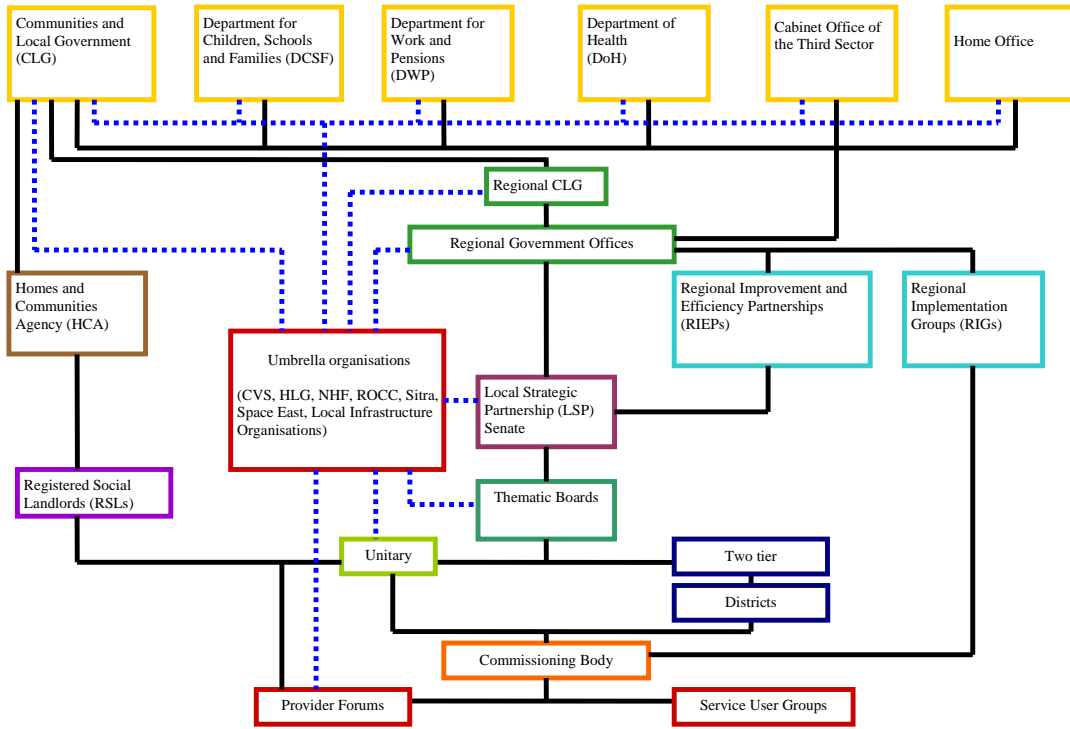
LSP – Local Strategic Partnership

PCT – Primary Care Trust

RIG – Regional Implementation Group

SCS – Sustainable Communities Strategy

# Appendix 3



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## References

<sup>1</sup> Due to the fact that funding for the Supporting People programme is not delivered in a named grant we refer to these service as housing related support throughout this guide. We do recognise however the importance of the Supporting People brand and encourage its continuing use to support the national and local profile of these preventative services.

<sup>2</sup> It is recognised that some localities do not have a dedicated Supporting People Team in that they have been disbanded merged or renamed. We use the term Supporting People Commissioners to describe those local authority personnel who are responsible for the administration of what was the Supporting People programme.

<sup>3</sup> Although it would be reasonable to conclude that if the Supporting People team has been disbanded there would be no personnel responsible for attending any regional fora.

<sup>4</sup> Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments Department of Health 2007  
[www.dh.gov.uk/publications](http://www.dh.gov.uk/publications)

<sup>5</sup> See signpost on second tier organisations in the introduction section.

<sup>6</sup> Supporting People Administration Grant has been included in Area Based Grant since April 2008.

<sup>7</sup> This term means retaining or removing a proportion of a grant or budget for a specific purpose, for example, funding a centralised service.

<sup>8</sup> Audit Commission 2009, Report on Supporting People Programme 2005-2009, p. 43  
[www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Audit Commission 2009, p. 44 [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> CLG select com p. 36 add weblink

<sup>11</sup> Audit Commission 2009, p. 12 [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Audit Commission 2009, p. 61 [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Downloads/spprogramme200509acfinalreportclg.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Visit [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/Pages/auditcommissionrespondstoabolitionofcra.aspx](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/Pages/auditcommissionrespondstoabolitionofcra.aspx)

<sup>14</sup> Sitra and hact, 'The Significance and Impact of Small Providers in the South West and To Hact sponsored work'.

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<sup>15</sup> These groups can also be referred to as Voluntary Action or Community Action or another name.

<sup>16</sup> CLG Select Committee Report, p 39.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p 14.

<sup>18</sup> CLG Select Committee Report, p 36.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p 42.

<sup>20</sup> CLG Select Committee Report, p 42.

<sup>21</sup> Direct quotes from LSEP provider questionnaire.

<sup>22</sup> Service users are often placed into groupings that reflect their primary need see the Communities and Local Government (CLG) cost benefit research p10 [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1274439](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1274439)

<sup>23</sup> This term refers to housing associations, that is, third sector bodies registered with the Tenant Services Authority and eligible for membership of the Federation. We have not included arms-length management organisations (ALMOs) in our research.

<sup>24</sup> The articles in magazines also prompted providers, local authority personnel, elected councillors and those sitting on LSPs to contact Sitra to highlight challenges to their service or in their locality and examples of positive ways of resolving these.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 1 for list of fora attended.

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**Sitra champions excellence in housing, support and care.**

**Sitra is a membership organisation providing leadership, influencing policy through expertise, promoting best practice and providing consultancy, training, information and advice services to:**

- **Promote positive outcomes for clients, providers and funders**
- **Drive the policy agenda**
- **Encourage a healthy, diverse and sustainable sector**
- **Support quality and professionalisation.**



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