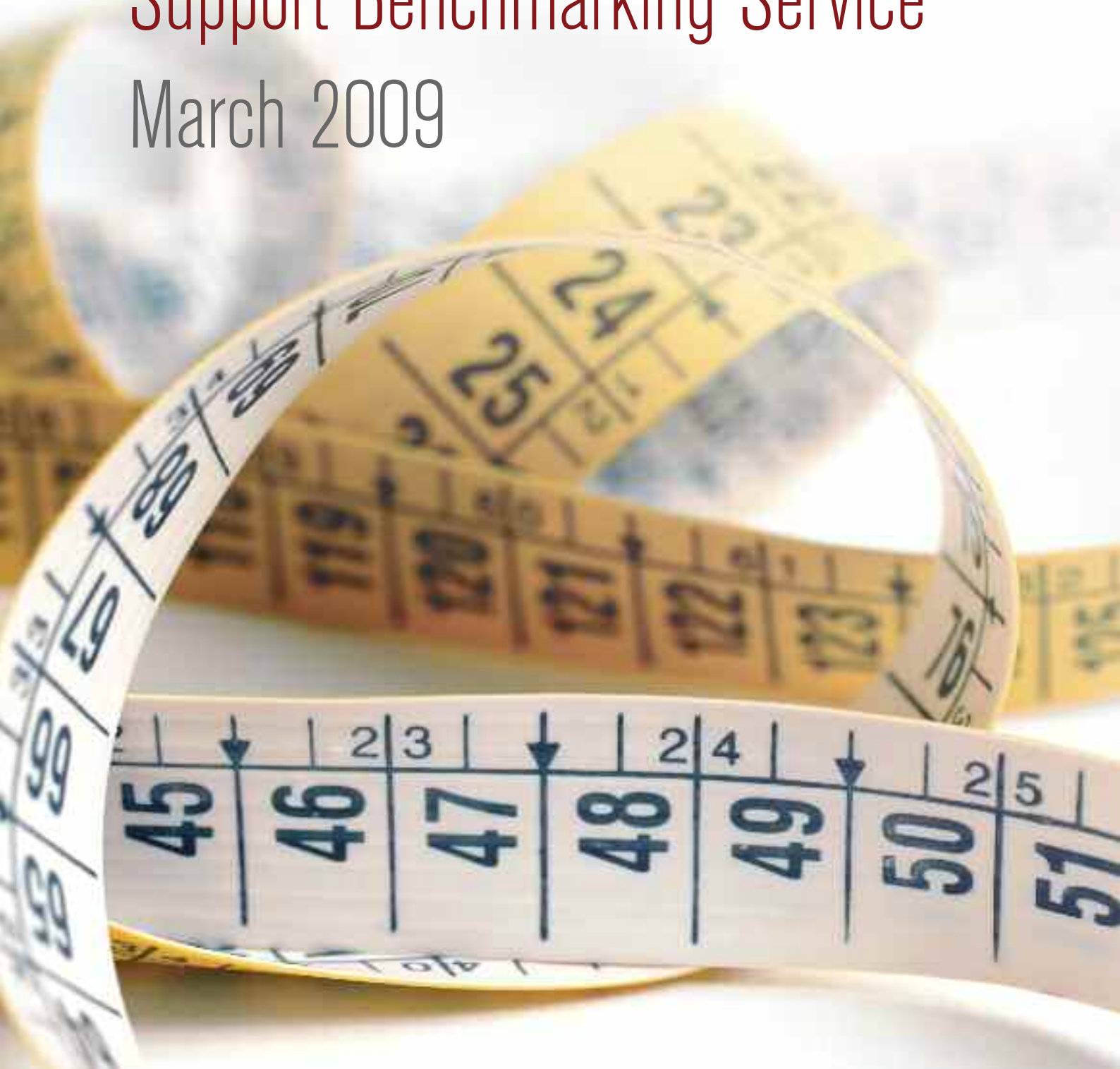


A review of Year 4 of the Support Benchmarking Service March 2009



Report on Year 4 of the Support Benchmarking Service - March 2009

Introduction

1,965 services were submitted to Year 4 of the Support Benchmarking Service: almost 1,800 from England and a further 177 from Northern Ireland. Some £221 million of Supporting People income went into these services, of which as little over £200 million came from English local authorities and some £19 million from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. 120 providers took part in the exercise, including 26 from Northern Ireland. Collectively, some 65,000 vulnerable people benefit from the services included in this benchmarking exercise.

This brings the total number of services submitted to the benchmarking services over its four years of operation to over 9,500.

Table 1: Year 4 summary results				
Region	Number of Services	Number of units	Total Supporting People income	Total Support income
East Midlands	75	4326	£12,760,652	£12,798,581
East of England	121	5488	£16,847,537	£17,199,921
London	337	7565	£38,667,675	£42,520,978
North East	151	5273	£17,834,107	£18,931,805
North West	343	13573	£31,853,584	£32,751,004
South East	235	5566	£26,696,391	£26,793,548
South West	235	8577	£21,951,557	£22,086,167
West Midlands	129	3541	£13,245,427	£13,327,130
Yorks & Humber	162	6096	£22,473,783	£22,525,297
All England	1788	60005	£202,330,713	£208,934,431
Northern Ireland	177	5515	£19,025,522	£22,732,500
Grand total	1965	65520	£221,356,235	£231,666,931

Support Benchmarking: summary results from year 4

The Sitra/NHF/HouseMark benchmarking system has now been running for four years. Much has changed in that time, not least in the degree to which new commissioning and procurement techniques have affected the sector. These changes are designed to drive up quality and improve Value for Money across the sector.

But, for individual providers, as well as improving the sector as a whole, they want to home in on their particular service. The key perspective that any benchmarking exercise can bring to this task is comparison with similar services. The support benchmarking system we have developed gives participating providers key, anonymised comparisons on financial, performance, quality, and user satisfaction issues. But how feasible are like for like comparisons? Some support or supported housing projects may be quite unique; others may not have particularly uncommon characteristics, but might themselves be the only one of a category of services that has bothered to submit information to this system.

Our system starts from the idea that, in an ideal world, every single submitted service would be supplied with comparative information from between 6 and 25 services run by other providers which:

- **Are in the same region**, using the nine standard CLG English regions.
- **Serve the same primary client group**, as defined under the standard Supporting People list of client groups.
- **Have the same cover arrangements**. We have divided all

services into one of six cover types – 24 hour cover with waking staff; 24 hr cover with sleep-in staff; 7 day a week cover with on call ; 7 day a week cover with no on call; 5 day a week cover with on call and 5 day a week cover without on call. We arrived at these divisions because we believe that staff costs are the major driver of the overall cost of any scheme, and that staff costs are heavily influenced by the amount of cover than it provided as standard.

- **Are classified as the same type of service**, using standard Supporting People service type classifications.

Inevitably, not all submitted services generate a minimum of six 'ideal' comparisons. So we have established a sorting system for arriving at the 'closest possible' comparisons to supply to participants. This default system only comes into operation when insufficient 'ideal' comparisons are generated by the system. So every participant gets a very nuanced set of 'best possible' results against which to benchmark their own particular service. Feedback from participants suggests customer satisfaction is high.

A national perspective

This system is set up to offer tailored, service specific comparisons to participating providers. We recognise that national figures are of interest to both providers and commissioners, who want to set their own local information in a wider context, so we provide here averages and ranges for those categories, for example, per client group, per cover arrangement and per service type, which can be produced on a national basis.

The system cannot be adapted to produce national and regional

averages for each four dimensional category of service. (That is, services which share the same region, client group, cover arrangements and service type). Such 'micro analyses' categories would simply not contain sufficiently robust statistics, there are almost 16,000 potential classifications, so these national figures do not constitute a robust evidence basis for service improvement, which is the ultimate aim of benchmarking. When using these national figures as context or reference points for more focused local analysis, we must very strongly stress two factors to be considered: trend analysis and inflation.

1. Trend analysis

These figures cannot be intelligibly compared with previous years' figures. Only around a third of all services submitted in year 4 of the benchmarking exercise were submitted in the previous year. So trend analysis is not technically possible other than at the crudest global level: no meaningful comparative figures broken down by client group, service type or cover type can be produced. However, it is possible to look at the 550 or so services which have been previously submitted and discern certain patterns which *may* be indicative of wider developments in the sector.

Prime amongst these patterns is an apparent fall in the overall cost per support hour amongst those services which submitted data in both year 3 and year 4 of the exercise. A closer examination of the data showed that this overall decline in costs masked an increase in staff costs broadly in line with inflation and a decrease in other expenditure items such as overheads or direct non staff costs. It may be that this is indicative of a 'scissors effect' on providers: the simultaneous pressures of rising wages and local authority VFM-led procurement leading to decreasing amounts of income being available to cover infrastructure costs. Given the relatively small number of services concerned we cannot say this is a definite trend but we think the circumstantial evidence is sufficiently strong for us to present this year's figures broken down into staff and other costs.

2. Inflation

Our benchmarking service collects figures relating to actual income and expenditure, not budgeted figures. So the information always refers to a past period – the financial year 2007/8 in the case of the year 4 benchmarking exercise. When we have previously published the figures results from prior years' benchmarking exercises we have typically uprated them by the then current rate of inflation in order to make them immediately accessible to potential users.

This inflationary up rating procedure is much more problematic this year. For the first time in many years there is a risk of deflation across the economy as a whole. According to the Office of National Statistics, as of December 2008 there was a significant divergence between two of the main measures of inflation: the Consumer Price Index was running at a rate of 3.1 per cent but the Retail Price Index was only 0.9 per cent. Both measures had fallen very sharply indeed from their levels of a few months previous. It is unclear what the future holds in this respect.

For these reasons we are publishing the cost averages at 2007/8 prices this year, See Table 2:

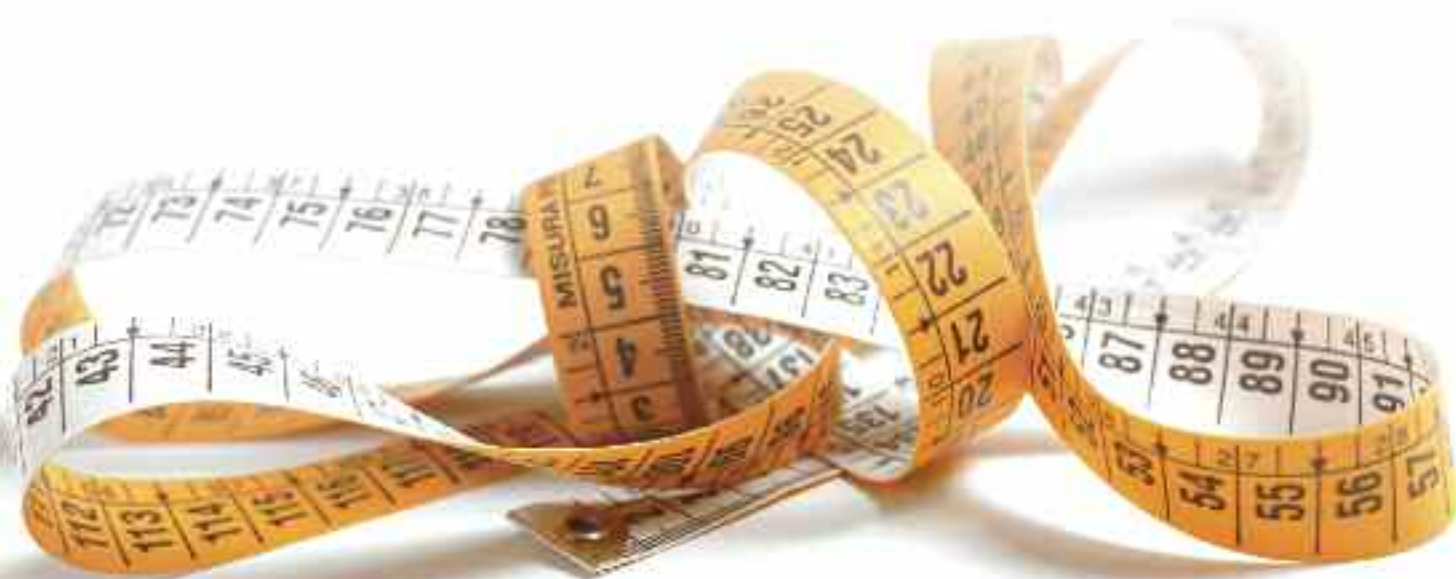


Table 2: Cost averages

	Number of Services	Average of total cost per support hour	Average of staff	Average of all other costs	% staff costs	% age all other costs
2.3 Primary client group						
Alcohol problems	28	£21.10	£14.77	£6.32	70%	30%
Drug problems	30	£21.42	£15.32	£6.11	72%	28%
Frail elderly	32	£19.56	£13.22	£6.34	68%	32%
Generic	131	£22.95	£16.09	£6.86	70%	30%
Homeless families with support needs	43	£19.78	£13.93	£5.85	70%	30%
Learning disabilities	121	£18.80	£13.89	£4.91	74%	26%
Mental health problems	398	£22.20	£16.19	£6.01	73%	27%
Offenders/people at risk of offending	87	£20.93	£15.20	£5.73	73%	27%
Older people with mental health problems	1	£11.47	£9.86	£1.61	86%	14%
Older people with support needs	405	£19.70	£13.53	£6.16	69%	31%
People with HIV/AIDS	8	£22.99	£16.07	£6.92	70%	30%
Physical or sensory disability	28	£21.51	£16.29	£5.22	76%	24%
Refugees	10	£24.52	£17.24	£7.27	70%	30%
Rough sleepers	10	£28.64	£19.36	£9.28	68%	32%
Single homeless with support needs	248	£21.27	£15.60	£5.67	73%	27%
Teenage parents	86	£18.35	£13.00	£5.35	71%	29%
Travellers	2	£22.37	£17.75	£4.62	79%	21%
Women at risk of domestic violence	93	£25.82	£18.03	£7.79	70%	30%
Young people at risk	188	£22.89	£17.09	£5.80	75%	25%
Young people leaving care	16	£25.08	£18.36	£6.72	73%	27%
Grand total	1965	£21.35	£15.32	£6.04	72%	28%
2.4 Service type						
Accommodation for teenage parents	24	£20.01	£13.99	£6.02	70%	30%
Direct access	36	£18.61	£14.12	£4.49	76%	24%
Floating support services	407	£22.36	£15.90	£6.46	71%	29%
Foyer	23	£18.27	£13.82	£4.45	76%	24%
Outreach	14	£23.92	£16.59	£7.33	69%	31%
Peripatetic warden	1	£15.38	£8.52	£6.87	55%	45%
Resettlement service	6	£19.26	£14.48	£4.78	75%	25%
Sheltered housing with a warden	344	£19.89	£13.43	£6.46	68%	32%
Supported housing	993	£21.65	£15.80	£5.85	73%	27%
Very sheltered housing	59	£17.22	£13.03	£4.20	76%	24%
Women's refuges	58	£25.36	£18.32	£7.05	72%	28%
Grand total	1965	£21.35	£15.32	£6.04	72%	28%
2.6 Cover normally provided						
24 hour waking staff - 7 days	144	£20.13	£14.45	£5.68	72%	28%
24 hr presence, inc night time sleep-in cover - 7 days	200	£18.11	£14.03	£4.08	77%	23%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 5 days, on-call or alarm out of hours cover	631	£22.59	£15.81	£6.78	70%	30%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 5 days, no out of hours cover	447	£21.52	£15.62	£5.90	73%	27%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 7 days, no out of hours cover	22	£20.86	£15.25	£5.61	73%	27%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 7 days, on-call or alarm out of hours cover	521	£21.32	£15.20	£6.12	71%	29%
Grand total	1965	£21.35	£15.32	£6.04	72%	28%

Quality

In table 2 we show the average the average quality (QAF) scores emerging in each category of analysis¹.

Table 3: Average QAF scores		
	Number of services	Average QAF score
2.3 Primary client group		
Alcohol problems	28	51%
Drug problems	30	58%
Frail elderly	32	70%
Generic	131	58%
Homeless families with support needs	43	64%
Learning disabilities	121	65%
Mental health problems	398	62%
Offenders/people at risk of offending	87	59%
Older people with mental health problems	1	75%
Older people with support needs	405	60%
People with HIV/AIDS	8	69%
Physical or sensory disability	28	72%
Refugees	10	67%
Rough sleepers	10	75%
Single homeless with support needs	248	66%
Teenage parents	86	72%
Travellers	2	52%
Women at risk of domestic violence	93	77%
Young people at risk	188	66%
Young people leaving care	16	59%
Grand total	1965	64%
2.4 Service type		
Accommodation for teenage parents	24	71%
Direct access	36	71%
Floating support services	407	65%
Foyer	23	68%
Outreach	14	48%
Peripatetic warden	1	50%
Resettlement service	6	54%
Sheltered housing with a warden	344	59%
Supported housing	993	64%
Very sheltered housing	59	64%
Women's refuges	58	79%
Grand total	1965	64%
2.6 Cover normally provided		
24 hour waking staff - 7 days	144	67%
24 hr presence, inc night time sleep-in cover - 7 days	200	65%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 5 days, on-call or alarm out of hours cover	631	61%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 5 days, no out of hours cover	447	64%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 7 days, no out of hours cover	22	65%
Staff cover < 24 hrs 7 days, on-call or alarm out of hours cover	521	65%
Grand total	1965	64%

¹QAF averages are calculated by awarding points for each score against the six QAF core objectives (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1) and then calculating them as a percentage out of a 'perfect' score of 24. So six 'A' scores would be 100 per cent; six 'B's cores 75 per cent; and six 'C' scores 50 per cent.

