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# SUPPORTING PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25



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# Welcome by Chief Executive

I am pleased to present this year's Annual Report, which outlines the operational and financial performance of the Supporting People (SP) Programme throughout 2024/25. The report also provides insight into the programme's development, delivery, performance, quality assurance, and overall management.

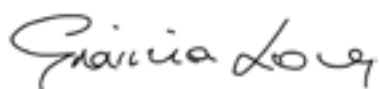
Working in partnership with service providers, the NIHE Supporting People Team has progressed the delivery of the priorities set out in the Supporting People Three-Year Strategic Plan and the COVID-19 Recovery Plan (2022–2025).

As part of our ongoing modernisation of the Supporting People programme, we have invested heavily in the ICT infrastructure which underpins the provision of services. The new SHARP system which went live in September 2024 enables efficient and effective data capture and contract management, reducing the time taken by SP and our partners to oversee the management of contracts, which we hope enables greater targeting of resources towards service delivery.

One of the highlights of the year was the visit to a Supporting People-funded service for young people by the British-Irish Council (BIC). The BIC Ministerial Housing work sector meeting was hosted by the Northern Ireland Executive in Belfast in September 2024. A programme of site visits showcased innovative housing approaches, with a visit to a Supporting People-funded service for young people, where staff spoke passionately about supporting individuals affected by homelessness and other challenges such as mental health.

The stories featured in this year's report from both service users and providers demonstrate the impact of the programme, and the crucial role it plays in helping people live as independently as possible.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all our stakeholders, partners, and the Supporting People staff team for their role in delivering on our objectives for 2024/25. I also commend the entire sector for its continued dedication to the individuals and communities we serve.



Grainia Long  
Chief Executive

# 1.0. Introduction to Supporting People

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), as the strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland, has the responsibility for securing the provision of housing-related support services and takes administrative responsibility for delivering the Supporting People (SP) Programme (introduced in April 2003).

The Programme is delivered on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC), in partnership with the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Justice (DoJ). The Programme awards grant-funding to Supporting People provider organisations to enable them to deliver services that provide housing-related support and assistance to service users, thus enabling them to live more independently. Housing-related support enables vulnerable people to develop and maintain the skills necessary to live as independently as possible in their own home.

Supporting People delivers housing-related support services under the [Housing Support Services \(2002 Order\) \(Commencement\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2003](#), Articles Three and Four of which empower Supporting People to provide grant funding to eligible housing support services; and the [Housing Support Services Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2003](#).

The Department for Communities (DfC) allocates the annual budget for the Programme, has overarching policy and legislative responsibility for Supporting People and provides an oversight role for Supporting People.

The Supporting People programme provides:

- Short-term accommodation-based support for those people in housing need (e.g. homeless hostels, refuges for victims of domestic violence).
- Long-term support to enable someone to sustain a home (e.g. in accommodation-based services where the person has a tenancy and housing-related support is provided to assist the person to maintain their tenancy).
- Short-term support through a floating support service to assist vulnerable adults with housing-related support tasks to help them to maintain independence in their own home, regardless of tenure type (typically for up to 2 years in duration).
- For some service users with more enduring or complex needs, support which is delivered on an ongoing, peripatetic basis in their own home.

## 1.1. Supporting People at a Glance



Almost **20,000** people supported to live independently in 2024/25



Over  
**800**  
Housing Support  
Services

Delivered by  
**80**  
providers

Across  
**15**  
Primary Client  
Groups

## 1.2. Purpose, Aims, and Values

The purpose of the SP Programme is:

**“To provide housing support services to vulnerable people, to enable them to live as independently as possible in the community.”**

This supports the  
Housing Executive’s values of:

**“Making a difference through Fairness, Passion and Expertise.”**

The Housing Executive’s values provide the cultural framework from which Supporting People can direct our own purpose, aims and vision.

The aims are to:

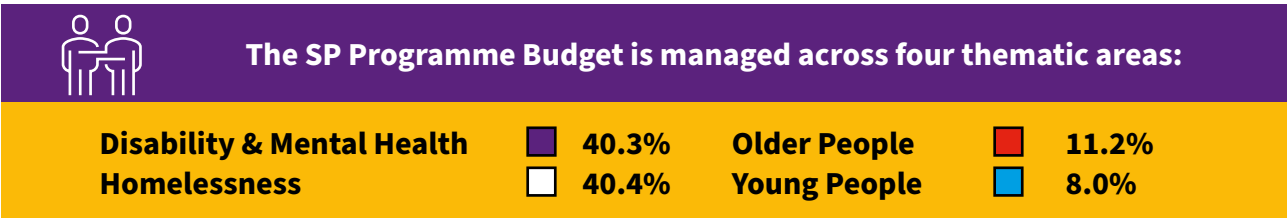
- **Achieve a better quality of life for vulnerable people to live more independently and maintain their tenancies.**
- **Provide housing support services to prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, or homelessness.**
- **Help to smooth the transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment.**

# 2.0. Financial Performance

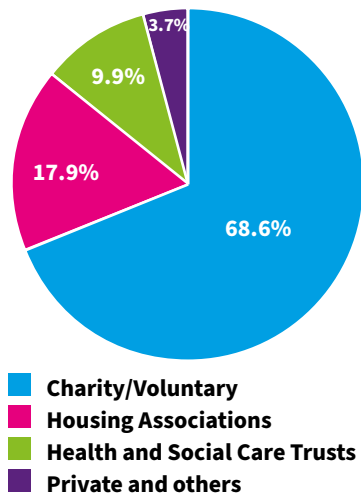
## 2.1. Financial Analysis

In 2024/25 a total of £81.18m was paid to SP Providers. This was primarily funded through the SP budget allocation.

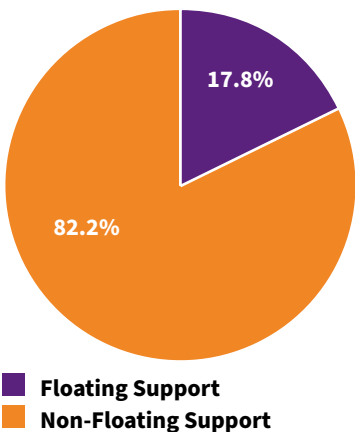
Expenditure on Floating Support from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31 March 2025 was £14.48m, which was 17.8% of the total SP Programme expenditure.



The current funding split by Provider type is classified by the Charity and Voluntary sector, Housing Associations, Health and Care Trusts (HSCTs), and Private and others:



The funding split by service type is categorised into Floating Support and Non-Floating Support services (including Accommodation-Based and Peripatetic Services):



Supporting People carry out validation visits each year on a selected sample of Providers (selection process is via a risk-based methodology), to provide assurance that provider financial returns have been accurately completed by Providers in terms of Supporting People income and expenditure. The Finance Team performed ten remote Financial Validation Visits in the 2024/25 year, in line with the Supporting People Operational Guidelines.

## 2.2. Supporting People Non-recurring funding 2024/25

Non-recurring funding was identified in the 2024/25 Supporting People budget and was made available on two occasions to providers (excluding SNMA provision and Health Trust) before the end of the financial year. One off payment to providers totalled £1,173k. The 2024/25 Funding Agreement terms and conditions applied to this additional funding; therefore, the funding could only be used to meet the cost of Supporting People eligible expenditure incurred in the 2024/25 financial year, any unspent funding will be recouped in the 2025/26 year.

Scheme Type	Budget (Pre-uplift) £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000	Comment
<b>Block Gross</b>	29,634	30,047	413	One-off payments made
<b>Block Subsidy Variable</b>	35,251	35,261	10	One-off payments made
<b>Block Subsidy Fixed (SNMA)</b>	1,391	1,391	-	
<b>Floating Support</b>	14,317	14,479	162	One-off payments made



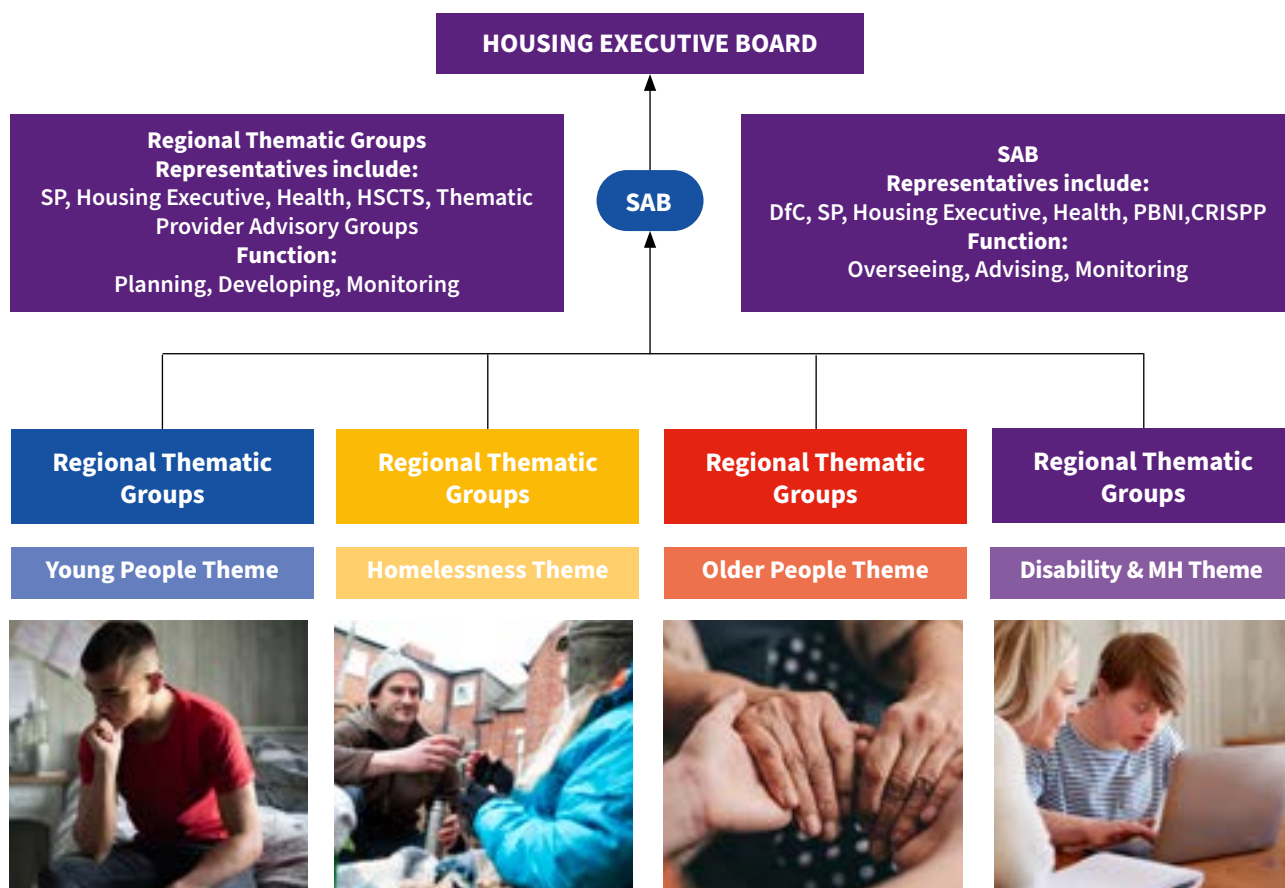
## 3.0. Governance and Reporting Structures

### 3.1. Strategic Advisory Board (SAB)

#### 3.1.1. Functions of the Strategic Advisory Board

The principal functions of the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) are to advise the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Board of the strategic funding priorities of the Supporting People programme in line with the overarching policy, operational strategy, budget allocation and relevant governance arrangements. The Strategic Advisory Board provides assurance that processes and practices are fair, transparent, and equitable; that Supporting People grant-making policies are clearly defined and that there is proper guidance and accountability arrangements in place with all Supporting People strategic partners. The Strategic Advisory Board is supported in its decision-making by the four Regional Thematic Groups. In the year 2024/25 a total of three Strategic Advisory Board meetings took place.

**Fig. 3.1.1. The structure of Strategic Advisory Board and Regional Thematic Groups**



### **3.1.2. The Strategic Advisory Board Achievements 2024/25**

The focus of the Strategic Advisory Board during 2024/2025 included:

- Making recommendations relating to business cases and proposals for expenditure.
- Endorsement of two business cases brought forward by the Regional Thematic Groups (RTGs).
- Oversight of the Regional Thematic Groups.
- Providing opportunities to build partnerships and share information, based on a mutual understanding of respective roles.
- Advising and guiding on existing, planned, or emerging policy and strategy matters.

## **3.2. Regional Thematic Groups (RTGs)**

The Regional Thematic Groups are tasked with identifying, assessing, and prioritising housing support needs through contract management participation. Per the RTG's Terms of Reference, meetings are held at quarterly intervals throughout the year. This year a total of 16 RTG meetings were held across the four thematic groups of Disability and Mental Health, Older People, Young People and Homelessness.

### **3.2.1. Regional Thematic Group - Disability and Mental Health**

**The focus of the Regional Thematic Group Disability and Mental Health in 2024/25 involved:**

- Business-as-usual updates.
- Updates on the re-purposing of a decommissioned service for use as a new 10-unit resettlement scheme.
- Discussions on wider 'Resettlement' issues and in particular the findings and required actions outlined in the Independent Review of Resettlement in Northern Ireland Report.
- Update on closure of service.

### 3.2.2. Regional Thematic Group - Older People

#### **The focus of the Regional Thematic Group Older People in 2024/25 involved:**

- Business-as-usual updates.
- Discussion on the digital switchover and implications on emergency pullcord systems in sheltered/continued independent living services, due to be rolled out in 2027.
- The impact of the Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA) on sheltered/continued independent living services.
- Addressing voids in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) dementia services, by including additional client groups within these services.
- Highlighting the effects of COVID-19 within services.
- The evaluation of the Hub and Spoke pilot in Newcastle.
- The evaluation of the Social Prescribing Model pilot in East Belfast.

### 3.2.3. Regional Thematic Group - Young People

#### **The focus of the Young People Regional Thematic Group in 2024/25 involved:**

- Business as usual updates.
- The outworkings of The Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation (JCSA) for Young People.
- Discussion on the Youth Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.
- The MACs Floating Support Service Pilot, which amalgamated four SP Funding Agreements into one, allowing the provider to work more flexibly.
- The outworkings of the Assessment Bed Workshop to inform utilisation and the geographical spread of the assessment beds.
- Ongoing work with colleagues in the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) with regards to joint funding.
- Issues raised included staffing pressures and financial pressures.
- The significance of Young People leaving care within the Draft Programme for Government.
- A collaborative initiative within the Public Sector, titled New Foundation, which deals with the prevention of Homelessness for people leaving care.

### **3.2.4. Regional Thematic Group - Homelessness**

#### **The focus of the Regional Thematic Group Homelessness in 2024/25 involved:**

- Business as usual updates.
- Reconfigurations of homelessness services to ensure that the accommodation is suitable to address need.
- Highlighting pressures experienced across the homeless sector.
- Service development in the West Area; service established to provide 40 units of dispersed accommodation, with support, for homeless people with high and complex support needs.
- Discussion on the Domestic Abuse Action Plan.

### 3.3. Supporting People Three Year Strategic Plan and COVID-19 Recovery Plan

A reporting framework for the effective monitoring and reporting of the delivery of the strategic actions was developed in November 2022 to monitor and track the achievement of actions under the four strategic priorities of the Strategic Plan:

- COVID-19 recovery.
- Working towards closing the 14% gap between need and supply.
- Innovation.
- Strengthening relationships and collaboration with Supporting People providers.

**Fig. 3.3.1. Supporting People Three Year Strategic Plan and COVID-19 Recovery Plan – Update on Year Three Actions**

\*££ indicates that progression of the objective was contingent upon additional funding.

<b>Objective 1</b> <b>Drive recovery from COVID-19, prevent lasting adverse impacts from the pandemic, and positively reform services by targeting services towards those in need.</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target met in full</b>	<b>Target met in part</b>	<b>Target not met</b>
<p>1. In years one, two and three: Support flexibility in contracts, and welcome reconfigurations and service development proposals including those to increase floating support/peripatetic places; in particular those identifying efficiencies and focusing on homelessness, mental health, young people experiencing homelessness and older people.</p> <p><b>Older People Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>A Hub and Spoke model providing an additional 12 units of floating support to Older People was piloted in Newcastle.</p> <p>SP worked in partnership with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) to remodel dementia services. SP agreed to bring in additional older people client groups that complement the tenants already living in the dementia services. This will reduce the level of voids as well as futureproofing the services. This is now complete.</p> <p><b>Disability and Mental Health Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>A reconfiguration of a current Learning Disability service in Belfast Trust area, to address voids from shared to single occupancy, has been completed.</p> <p>A service in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area moved from shared to self-contained accommodation benefiting the current clients and ensuring that the service is futureproofed. This is now complete. Both were revenue neutral.</p> <p><b>Young People Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>A pilot amalgamating four floating support services into one Funding Agreement was carried out to allow for greater flexibility of provision across the Belfast, South-East and South areas and direct staff to areas of greatest demand. This is now complete.</p>	✓		

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<b>Objective 2</b> <b>Work towards closing the 14% gap between need and supply, this will be underpinned by evidence from the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), prioritising services for Older people; People with Mental health issues; Single people with alcohol and/or drug problems experiencing homelessness; and women at risk of domestic abuse.</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target met in full</b>	<b>Target met in part</b>	<b>Target not met</b>
<p>2. In years one, two and three: Maximise administrative efficiencies by implementing a new SP Data Collection Payment and Reporting System and replace outdated SPOCC system.</p> <p>SP have successfully migrated from SPOCC to the newly procured SHARP system, which went live in September 2024. This System enables SP to manage Funding Agreements and facilitate payments to providers, whilst allowing officers to report and analyse service performance and outcomes and carry out contract management duties.</p> <p>The new SHARP IT system will enable provider efficiencies in fulfilling reporting obligations to SP, providing increased capacity, additional functionality, and reduced administration through innovation to respond to evolving business needs.</p> <p>This brings a new collaborative approach to capturing SP information which aims to create a more data rich environment to support decision making and resource allocation.</p> <p>During the second half of 2024/2025, further work was carried out by the SHARP Project Team developing improved reports and system functionality improvements.</p> <p>SP trained around seven hundred external users on the system as well as around seventy internal users.</p>	✓		
<p>3. In years two and three: Use the evidence from SROI and in partnership with health, improve services to meet the needs of homeless people with Drug and Alcohol problems and those with dual diagnosis. ££*</p>			

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<p>A pilot needle exchange service commenced in 2023, in partnership with the Public Health Agency, in four temporary accommodation homeless hostels. The Public Health Agency provided £1,000 per service as a one-off payment for this pilot. Expansion of this project will be subject to further discussion and potentially additional funding from Health.</p>	✓		
<p>4. In years two and three In years two and three: Remodel services where appropriate to meet the needs of single homeless service users.</p> <p>Strategic Outline Case (SOC) presented at commissioning structures to reconfigure a homeless service in Belfast to create better move on opportunities and reduce “bed blocking” within the main hostel. This is subject to additional funding.</p> <p>SP undertook a competitive selection exercise for an accredited SP provider to deliver a short term accommodation-based service for forty units of support for individuals with high support needs in the Derry/Londonderry area. The service opened on a phased basis.</p>		✓	
<p>5. In years two and three: Develop new services and enhanced delivery for people at risk of domestic abuse. ££*</p> <p>SP has been included as a member of the Cross-departmental Working Group for the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategy.</p>		✓	
<p>6. In years two and three: In collaboration with Health, identify gaps in mental health provision and increase services, in accordance with need. ££*</p> <p>The review of a Mental Health Floating Support scoping exercise for the Western area recommended that floating support services be included in pipeline development via SP Commissioning processes, subject to additional budget allocation.</p> <p>The 2024/25 Budget Bid included provision for additional floating support within emerging strategic issues. Inadequate budget was made available to increase services.</p>			✓

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<p>7. In years two and three: Work with statutory partners to support resettlement of people with a learning disability or poor mental health currently residing in hospitals. ££*</p> <p>A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) was presented and approved at SAB aligned to resettlement. There is ongoing engagement between Department of Health (DoH) and the Department for Communities (DfC) in relation to development of this service. SP participated in specific engagement with the HSCTs, SPPG and the DoH regarding resettlement of individuals.</p>		✓	
<p>8. In years two and three: Work with partnership in Health to scope future housing support needs for individuals with a learning disability, currently living with family for whom a Supported People-funded service may be appropriate in the future.</p> <p>There will be a further SNA completed in 25/26 in conjunction with HSC/SPPG to undertake a broad strategic and holistic joint assessment of need.</p>			✓
<p>9. In years two and three: Support the implementation of the strategic actions from the Strategic Review of Temporary Accommodation including the need for specialist accommodation-based services. ££*</p> <p>Engagement with service partners and analysis of service data determined that there was an increased range of housing related support needs with service users experiencing homelessness. SP undertook a competitive selection exercise for an accredited SP provider to deliver a short-term accommodation-based service for forty units of support for individuals with high support needs in the Derry/Londonderry area. The service opened on a phased basis.</p> <p>SP worked with a provider in the North-East to relocate to provide new accommodation for a homeless service. This self-contained accommodation is in line with an action from the Strategic Review of Temporary Accommodation and provides a move away from a large-scale hostel on a shared living basis.</p>	✓		

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<p>10. In years two and three: Consult and engage with partners on viable solutions to address voids due to sharing issues in disability and mental health services and implement solutions identified.</p> <p>A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) to reconfigure a current Learning Disability service in Belfast from shared to single occupancy has been progressed and is anticipated to resolve utilisation issues.</p> <p>A similar proposal has been approved for services in the NHSCT area. Both proposals were revenue neutral.</p>		✓	
<p>11. In years two and three: Increase the number of floating support units for older people.</p> <p>A Hub and Spoke model, providing an additional 12 units of floating support to Older People was piloted in Newcastle.</p>	✓		
<p>12. In years one, two and three: Use the SNA to prioritise funding for additional floating support, peripatetic and accommodation-based services.</p> <p>Additional floating support was dependent upon additional budget availability.</p>			✓
<p>13. In years one, two and three: Increase efficiency by reducing the number of Providers by 10% by facilitating the current trend of Provider mergers.</p> <p>There was a small reduction in provider and scheme numbers, driven by the sector.</p>		✓	

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<p>14. In years one, two and three: Work with Providers to develop efficiencies from composite contracts. Target a 15% reduction in schemes by focusing on bundling numerous low-cost support schemes.</p> <p><b>Young People Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>A pilot amalgamating four floating support services into one Funding Agreement was carried out to allow for greater flexibility of provision across the Belfast, South-East and South areas and direct staff to areas of greatest demand. This is now complete.</p>		✓	
<p>15. In years one, two and three: Work with providers to achieve better value for money.</p> <p>Better value for money was largely progressed via service improvement, amalgamations and reconfiguration of funding agreements. Some examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SP working in partnership with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSC) to remodel dementia services. SP have agreed to bring in additional older people client groups that complement the tenants already living in the dementia services.</li> <li>- A number of frail elderly and learning disability services were reconfigured from shared to self-contained accommodation.</li> </ul>	✓		

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<b>Objective 3</b> <b>Work with Supporting People providers, to invest in service innovation to achieve greater value for money and better outcomes for service users.</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target met in full</b>	<b>Target met in part</b>	<b>Target not met</b>
<p>16. In years one, two and three: Work with providers to establish a forum for SP engagement, service development, staff training and cross-provider benchmarking and information sharing.</p> <p>SP worked to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, to ensure that the highest quality service is delivered. SP engage regularly with statutory partners and stakeholders through the DfC Joint Policy Forum, DfC Delivery Group, Social Care Collaborative Forum, the Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Review and DoH Local Planning Partnership Groups.</p> <p>Bi-annual meetings have been established with both Housing Association (HA) Chief Executives (CX) and Association for Real Change (ARC) who represent the Learning Disability sector. Additionally quarterly meetings with CRISPP (Committee Representing Independent Supporting People Providers) have been established. These meetings are attended by the Strategic Housing Authority Director and Assistant Director of SP with the purpose of fostering two-way information sharing and sharing of best practice and collaboration between providers.</p> <p>Furthermore, SP have connected with the Rural Community Network (RCN), delivering a presentation. This presentation raised awareness of SP services in rural areas, with a view to increasing signposting to services. The Rural Action Plan was discussed, which creates a scheme for effective workstream collaboration between SP and the RCN. Following positive feedback from the RCN, there is a commitment to ongoing communication and cooperation.</p> <p><b>Young People Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>An Implementation Plan for the Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People has been developed and shared, a steering group has been established with a focused membership and a Provider Forum has been established as an outworking of the recommendations from the Strategic Review. Local Planning Partnership Groups (LPPGs) have been established to encourage a holistic approach to the review of services and funding and all are active across the five HSC Trusts. Groups, led by a steering group, have worked on scoping exercises to determine and establish provision across the region. Work is also underway</p>	✓		

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<p>to develop a cumulative Training needs Analysis based on submissions from Providers. Actions from the establishment of LPPGs will further enhance and develop policy with a focus on outcomes and achievements for the young people.</p> <p>SP has been included as a member of the Cross-departmental Working Group for the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategy.</p>			
<p>17. In years one, two and three: Work with providers to establish a framework for service users to be engaged in shaping services to reflect their needs. This may include annual surveys, representative forums, or further development of service user outcomes.</p> <p>The Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People included engagement with service users (including current, former and potential future users).</p> <p>SP Policy Strategy and communications are continuing to look at ways to establish service user engagement.</p>		✓	
<p>18. In years one, two and three: Drive collaboration between providers.</p> <p>SP has worked to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, to ensure that the highest quality service is delivered. SP engage regularly with our statutory partners and stakeholders through the DfC Joint Policy Forum, DfC Delivery Group, Social Care Collaborative Forum, the Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Review and DoH Local Planning Partnership Groups.</p> <p>Bi-annual meetings have been established with both Housing Association (HA) Chief Executives (CX) and Association for Real Change (ARC) who represent the Learning Disability sector. Additionally quarterly meetings with CRISPP (Committee Representing Independent Supporting People Providers) have been established. These meetings are attended by the Strategic Housing Authority Director and Assistant Director of SP with the purpose of fostering two-way information sharing and sharing of best practice and collaboration between providers.</p> <p>Furthermore, SP have connected with the Rural Community Network (RCN), delivering a presentation to the group in September 2024. This presentation raised awareness of SP services in rural areas, with a view to increasing signposting to services. The Rural Action Plan was discussed, which creates a scheme for effective workstream collaboration between SP and the RCN. Following positive feedback from the RCN, there is a commitment to ongoing communication and cooperation.</p>	✓		

Table continues overleaf

<p><b>Young People Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>An Implementation Plan for the Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People has been developed and shared, a steering group has been established, and a Provider Forum has been established as an outworking of the recommendations from the Strategic Review. Local Planning Partnership Groups (LPPGs) have been established to encourage a holistic approach to the review of services and funding. All LPPGs are active across the five HSC Trusts and are led by a steering group. The LPPGs have worked on scoping exercises to determine and establish provision across the region. Actions from the establishment of LPPGs will further enhance and develop policy with a focus on outcomes and achievements for the young people.</p>			
<p>19. In year two and three: Develop and remodel dementia, frail elderly, and disability services to address voids. ££*</p> <p>In partnership with BHSCT, SP have agreed additional older people client groups that complement the tenants already living in the dementia schemes. This will be considered for application to two other services.</p> <p>There have been a number of frail elderly and Learning Disability services moving from shared to self-contained accommodation. This will reduce the level of voids as well as futureproofing the services.</p>	✓		
<p>20. In years one, two and three: Implement the findings of the Review of Jointly funded Young People Services.</p> <p>An Implementation Plan for the Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People has been developed and shared, a steering group has been established, and a Provider Forum has been established as an outworking of the recommendations from the Strategic Review. Local Planning Partnership Groups (LPPGs) have been established to encourage a holistic approach to the review of services and funding. All LPPGs are active across the five HSC Trusts and are led by a steering group. The LPPGs have worked on scoping exercises to determine and establish provision across the region. Actions from the establishment of LPPGs will further enhance and develop policy with a focus on outcomes and achievements for the young people.</p>	✓		

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<p>21. In years one, two and three: Throughout the life of the strategy, we will ring-fence £1million non-recurrent monies annually for innovation. ££*</p> <p>Funding was unavailable for the Provider Innovation Fund (PIF) in 22/23 and 23/24. SP included the PIF in the bid for funding in 24/25.</p> <p>This action cannot proceed at the current time due to inadequate budget.</p>			✓
<p>22. In years one, two and three: Develop models of support for young people experiencing homelessness including improved emergency accommodation options, Housing First, Night stop and shared tenancies. ££*</p> <p><b>Young People Thematic Area:</b></p> <p>SP worked in partnership with colleagues in Housing Services to develop a Shared Tenancy model in the area.</p>		✓	

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<b>Objective 4</b> <b>Strengthen relationships across health, criminal justice, and housing to achieve greater collaboration and sharing of risk with the aim of achieving better outcomes for service users and generating greater value from public funds to enhance available resources for housing support.</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target met in full</b>	<b>Target met in part</b>	<b>Target not met</b>
<p>23. In years one, two and three: Use existing collaboration in place through Community Planning Partnerships to develop pilots between health, housing, social care, and justice organisations to share resources and greater target support, such as the Strategic Leadership Group in Belfast, which is developing a programme to target intensive support towards those experiencing homelessness, and with complex needs, including drug and alcohol dependency.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Public Health Agency, a pilot needle exchange service commenced in 2023 in four temporary accommodation hostels within the Homelessness Thematic. The Public Health Agency provided £1,000 per service as a one-off payment for this pilot. Expansion of this project will be subject to further discussion with PHA and potentially additional funding from PHA.</p>	✓		
<p>24. In years one, two and three: Throughout the life of the strategy, make bids for additional funding including through monitoring rounds when appropriate.</p> <p>The monitoring round was available in 2022/23, however no monitoring round was available in 2023/24. The budget bid for 2024/25 included a request for additional funding.</p>			✓
<p>25. In years one, two and three: Throughout the life of the strategy. We will use the SNA and findings in Social Return on Investment to inform bids for additional funding.</p> <p>The monitoring round was available in 2022/23, however no monitoring round was available in 2023/24. The budget bid for 2024/25 included a request for additional funding evidenced by the Strategic Needs Assessment and the Social Return On Investment findings which was not met.</p>			✓

Table continues overleaf



<p>26. In years one, two and three: Throughout the life of the strategy, work with DfC to enable greater collaboration across Government departments and achieve greater strategic alignment and greater value for the public purse.</p> <p>SP engage regularly with statutory partners and stakeholders through the DfC Joint Policy Forum, DfC Delivery Group, Social Care Collaborative Forum, the Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Review and DoH Local Planning Partnership Groups.</p>	✓		
<p>27. In years one, two and three: Throughout the life of the strategy use tools such as SNA and SROI to seek more investment as there is evidence that prevention produces significant future savings to the public purse. Investment which may cost more initially will have significant long-term gains.</p> <p>The monitoring round was available in 2022/23, however no monitoring round was available in 2023/24. The budget bid for 2024/25 included a request for additional funding evidenced by the Strategic Needs Assessment and the Social Return On Investment findings.</p>			✓
<p>28. In year two and three: Identify potential for new co-funded services.</p> <p>SP are awaiting the outworkings of the Review of Jointly Funded Services.</p>		✓	
<p>29. In year two and three: Re-define the Strategic Advisory Board to enhance strategic partnership working and outcomes for service users.</p> <p>The review of the Strategic Advisory Board is being brought forward under the SP Modernisation Programme to take place in 2025/26.</p>			✓

Table continues overleaf

Value for Money and Value of Outcomes			
Action	Target met in full	Target met in part	Target not met
<p>30. In years one, two and three: Drive continuous improvement by utilising contract management tools such as the Quality Monitoring Tool, Operational Guidelines and Termination of Grant Funding framework to help ensure providers are delivering eligible housing support services which are strategically relevant to the objectives of this strategy and value for money.</p> <p>A review of the Quality Monitoring Tool has been completed, and the new format will be tested during the lifetime of the SP Modernisation Programme.</p> <p>The review of the SP Operational Guidelines is to be brought forward under the SP Modernisation Programme to take place in 2025/26.</p> <p>The review of the Termination of Grant Funding Framework is complete.</p>		✓	
<p>31. In year two and three: Reviewing the funding agreement framework, to enable providers greater agility in the delivery of services, while ensuring appropriate levels of accountability.</p> <p>To be brought forward under the SP Modernisation Programme to take place in 2025/26.</p>			✓
<p>32. In year two and three: To increase the Outcomes levels reported by providers and develop an outcomes baseline and improvement measure with the provider sector.</p> <p>To be brought forward under the SP Modernisation Programme to take place in 2025/26.</p>			✓
<p>33. In Year two and three: To enhance the Financial Review process that validates eligible costs and consider central cost apportionment.</p> <p>To be brought forward under the SP Modernisation Programme to take place in 2025/26.</p>			✓
<b>Total number of Actions met in full, in part, or not met:</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>

## 4.0. Supporting People Activities

### 4.1. Contract Management

The Contract Management Teams are the main operational contact for Supporting People providers, giving guidance and support on an ongoing basis and via mandatory Contract Management Meetings. They monitor the performance and quality of Supporting People providers at service level to enable the best outcomes for service users. They also assess proposals and business cases brought forward from statutory stakeholders and providers.

Fig. 4.1.1. shows total figures of contract management activity for each of the Contract Management Themes in the 2024/25-year vs the 2023/24 year.

**Fig. 4.1.1. Total figures of Contract Management Activity by Theme 2023/24 and 2024/25**

23/24			24/25 <sup>1</sup>		
Thematic Area	QMTs	CMMs	Thematic Area	QMTs	CMMs
Disability & Mental Health	27	36	Disability & Mental Health	23	34
Older People	22	26	Older People	13	27
Young People	10	17	Young People	11	19
Homelessness	30	42	Homelessness	30	43
<b>Total:</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>123</b>

<sup>1</sup> Reduction in QMT activity within the Older People thematic during 24/25 correlated with a reduction in staffing capacity.

## 4.2. Contract Changes

There were various contract changes during the 2024/25 year as summarised in Figs. 4.2.1. to 4.2.3. below. These contract changes were affordable from normal Supporting People baseline funding.

**Fig. 4.2.1. Service Restructuring**

Thematic Area	Location & Provider	Action
Older People	Belfast, Clanmil Housing	Cullingtree Meadows: Change of primary and secondary client group and age supported.
Older People	Belfast, Clanmil Housing	Sydenham Court: Change of primary and secondary client group and age supported.
Homeless	Belfast, Simon Community	Malone Foyer, 3-5 Malone Road: Units reduced from 42 to 32. No change to total funding.
Older People	Belfast, Belfast H&SCT	Hemsworth Court: Change of primary and secondary client group and age supported.
Older People	Belfast, Belfast H&SCT	Cullingtree Meadows: Change of primary and secondary client group and age supported.
Older People	Belfast, Belfast H&SCT	Sydenham Court Enhanced: Change of primary and secondary client group and age supported.
Disability	Ballymoney, Triangle HA	2A Garryduff Road & Garryduff House Deregistered: Two services combined into a new service 'Garryduff Bungalows 2A, C and D.
Disability	Belfast, Belfast H&SCT	Belfast Dispersed Housing Service: Capacity reduced by 3 units and SP funding reduced.
Disability	Belfast, The Cedar Foundation	Lanthorn Mews: Reconfiguration of scheme from shared to single accommodation.
Disability	Crumlin & Ballymena, Praxis	The Courtyard move to Mount Street: Capacity reduced from 12 to 11 units to accommodate reconfiguration from shared to single accommodation.

**Fig. 4.2.2. Service Extensions**

Thematic Area	Location & Provider	Action
Homeless	Coleraine, Simon Community	Lodge Road: Capacity increased from 15 to 16 units. No change to total funding.
Homeless	Larne, Simon Community	Curran Road: Capacity increased from 18 to 20 units. No change to total funding.
Homeless	Belfast, Simon Community	11-13 Saintfield Road: Capacity increased from 21 to 22 units. No change to total funding.

<b>Homeless</b>	Lisburn, Simon Community	Flush Park: Capacity increased from 30 to 32 units. No change to total funding.
<b>Disability</b>	Belfast, Belfast H&SCT	8 Hanna Street: Capacity increased from 10 to 11 units. No change to total funding.
<b>Disability</b>	Belfast, Belfast H&SCT	Shaw's Park: Capacity increased from 1 to 2 units. No change to total funding.

### 4.3. Major Adverse Incidents (MAIs)

Supporting People providers inform Supporting People of incidents in line with the Supporting People Major Adverse Incident (MAI) Framework, which are reported to the Department for Communities and to the NIHE Safeguarding Team as appropriate. Trends or increases in MAIs are noted and any anomalies are discussed at regular meetings between DfC and the Supporting People Team.

Fig. 4.3.1. shows the total Major Adverse Incidents figures for each Theme in the 2024/25 year in comparison to the 2023/24 year.

**Fig. 4.3.1. Total figures of Contract Management Activity by Theme 2023/24 and 2024/25**

Major Adverse Incidents				
Thematic Area	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage Increase/Decrease	Trend Arrows
<b>Disability &amp; Mental Health</b>	108	69	36.1%	↓
<b>Older People</b>	21	23	9.5%	↑
<b>Young People</b>	30	62	106.7%	↑
<b>Homelessness</b>	76	130	71.1%	↑

## 4.4. Other Supporting People Activities

### 4.4.1. Supporting People Policy, Strategy and Communications

Fig. 4.4.1. Highlights the work streams of Supporting People Policy, Strategy and Communications Team over the 24/25 year.

**Fig. 4.4.1. Supporting People Policy and Strategy Activities and Performance 2024/25**

Activity/Project	Description
<b>Production and development of the Supporting People Business/ Annual Plans 2024/25</b>	Produced SP Annual Report 24/25 Contribution to NIHE Annual Report 24/25 Contribution to the NIHE Housing Investment Plan Update 24/25
<b>Secretariat for the Strategic Plan Delivery Project Group</b>	To support the delivery of the Supporting People Three Year Strategic Plan and COVID-19 Recovery Plan 2022-2025.
<b>Secretariat for the HA SP Providers Engagement Meetings</b>	One of the Strategic Actions for the Policy, Strategy and Comms (PSC) Team is to work with Providers to establish a forum for SP engagement in terms of service development, staff training and cross-provider benchmarking. One stakeholder engagement meeting was held with the NI Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) and Housing Association CEOs to discuss the challenges affecting the SP programme in the context of the cost-of-living crisis during 2024/25.
<b>CRISPP Engagement Meetings</b>	Two stakeholder engagement meetings were organised and held with the Committee Representing Independent Supporting People Providers (CRISPP) during 2024/25.
<b>Supporting People (SP) and Association of Real Change (ARC) Executive Exchange Meetings</b>	SP attended and contributed to the two bi-annual meetings, held by ARC in 2024/25. This organisation promotes inclusion, respect and support for people with learning disabilities and other needs.
<b>Strategic Plan Actions Year Three</b>	Development of a document to update on the progress made on the Strategic Plan actions for Year Three.
<b>SPOCC Replacement Project</b>	Assisted in the development of briefing papers, training schedules and training invites for the Provider sector.
<b>Information requests</b>	The Supporting People Communications team responded to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Freedom of Information requests (FOIs)</li> <li>• 30 Assembly Questions (AQs)</li> <li>• 6 Subject Access Requests (SARs)</li> <li>• 81 Formal Requests for Information</li> </ul>
<b>Good News Stories</b>	Developed Good News Stores Template and shared this with provider organisations to build up a library of Good News Stories, promoting the work of Supporting People funded services.
<b>Social Media</b>	Involved in planning future social media content with colleagues in corporate communications.

4.4.2. Supporting People Business Improvement

Fig. 4.4.2. highlights the Work Stream of Supporting People’s Business Improvement Team over the 2024/25 year.

Fig. 4.4.2. Supporting People Business Improvement Activities and Performance 2024/25

Business Area	Improvement
IT Replacement Project	Supporting People successfully implemented the new SHARP system in September 2024. Prior to this we continued our partnership working with 13 SP providers who made up our Provider Working Group and assisted us with making system enhancements and improvements in advance of Go-Live. Training was delivered remotely to over 700 providers users before all users were given system access by the end of September 2024.
	Following Go-Live, the Project Team were on hand to provide guidance and assistance to provider users to ensure a smooth transition to SHARP. Current system functionality mainly centres around making payments and monitoring service performance more accurately. System enhancements have been documented and planned for 25/26.
	Discussions continued with the system developers CDPSoft, to add new functionality and identify potential system development to improve user experience.
	The support aspect of the system began transitioning from the System Team to IT Application Support who will take over the role of troubleshooting and dealing with new user requests.
	Ad-hoc training sessions also continued for new and existing system users.

#### **4.4.3 Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People**

SP have been working in partnership with SPPG, all 5 Health and Social Care Trusts, NIHE Housing Services and Providers to implement the Year 1 actions from the report, which has now been accepted by the JCSA Steering Group. Planning and works continue to achieve the delivery of the recommendations in Year 2 which have worked extremely well thus far. The partnership approach adopted has been hugely successful and has fostered enhanced working relationships.

Local Planning Partnership Groups have been established across all Trust areas and are currently playing an active role in development of policies and procedures, enhanced working relationships and inter-agency working required to achieve the objectives required for joint monitoring visits and assessment. They have actively been involved in creating a scope of properties and active engagements within the sector, specific to their Trust area. Whilst still in a relatively young stage of establishment the groupings are making significant headway in detailed work to assist in the reconfiguration and development of YP services regionally.

The Provider Forum, co-ordinated by Simon Community, has proved to be a huge support and sounding board for all LPPGs and indeed recommendations and actions suggested by the group have been acted upon. The group has met quarterly, engaged with management teams within SP and SPPG, attended Joint Policy Forum meetings in a representative role and maintained and enhanced all current working arrangements regarding delivery of the JCSA recommendations. Additional training for front line Housing Advisors has been rolled out regionally and is complete with Trusts working diligently regarding towards delivery of YP specific Social Workers within their own Trust areas which remains challenging in the current financial circumstances.

The [Strategic Review of Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People](#) can be found on the Housing Executive website.



## 5.0. Outcomes

### 5.1. Supporting People Outcomes

In order to deliver the Programme for Government Outcomes, Supporting People developed an approach in which the Programme for Government Outcomes informed five high level Supporting People Programme Outcomes, which in turn link into the 11 Supporting People Outcome Indicators (SPOIs) at service level: [The Supporting People Outcomes Framework](#).<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 5.1.1. Supporting People Outcomes Framework shows how the draft Programme for Government Targets feed into the High-Level Outcomes of the Supporting People Programme. The framework also shows the Service Level Outcome Measure, and the relevant themes that each outcome falls under.

<sup>2</sup> The introduction of Outcomes measurement for Supporting People (SP) services was borne out of the 2015 DSD review. Recommendation 3 of the Supporting People review required Supporting People to **“develop a revised approach to outcomes measurement in consultation with service Providers, which will allow for more consistent and meaningful performance monitoring”**.

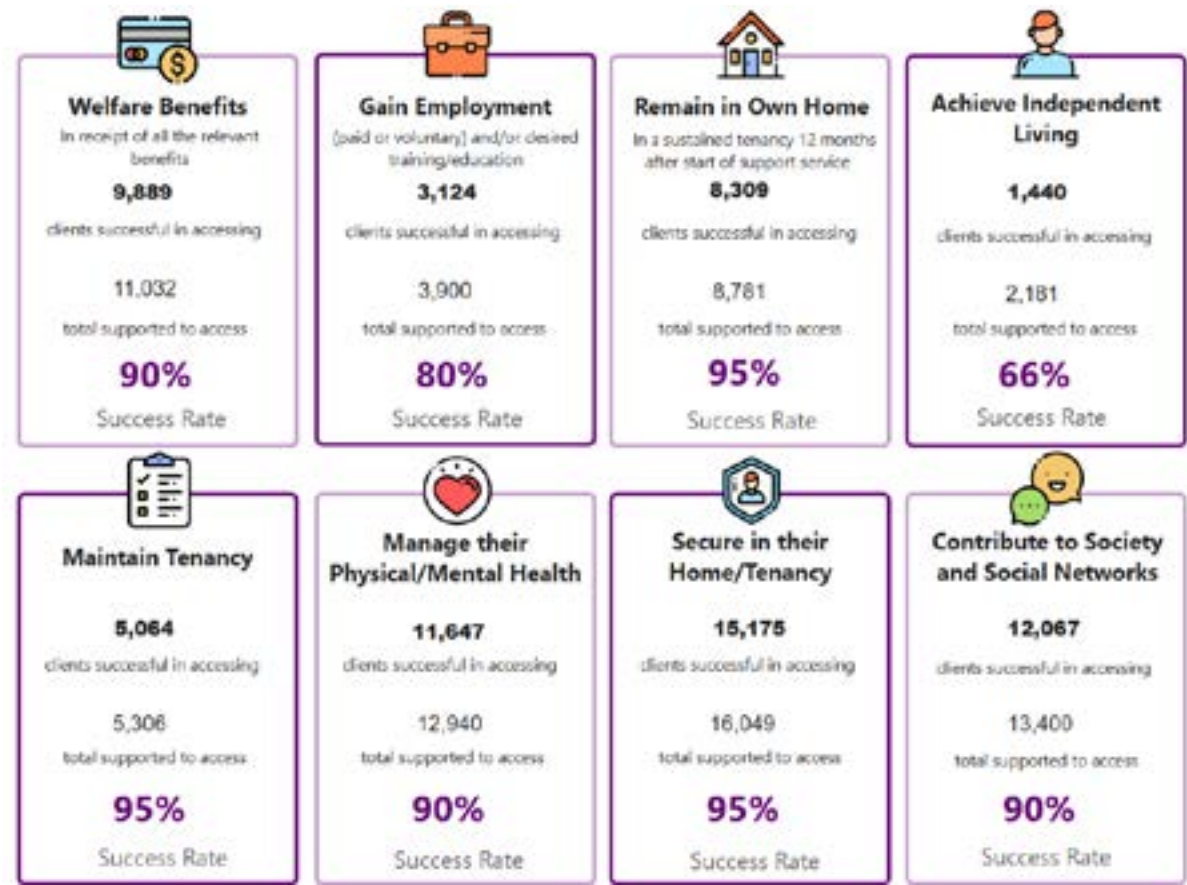
Fig. 5.1.1. Supporting People Outcomes Framework

Draft PFG Target(s)	SP Programme - High Level Outcome	SP Services - Outcome Indicators	Service Level Outcome Measure	MH & Disability	Older People	Homeless	Young People	Crisis Accommodation Services
We care for others and help those in need	1. Improved Economic Well-being for service users	1a. Service users supported to access welfare benefits	Number of service users in receipt of any relevant benefits as a result of the support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
More people working in better jobs		1b. Service users supported to gain employment (paid or voluntary) and/or enhance skills / education	Number of service users who engaged in employment (paid or voluntary) and/or desired training/education as a result of support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We care for others and help those in need	2. Increased number of people living Independently	2a. Service users supported to remain in own home <b>(LONG TERM SERVICES ONLY)</b>	Number of Service users in a sustained tenancy 12 months after start of support service	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
		2b. Service users supported to achieve independent living <b>(SHORT TERM SERVICES ONLY)</b>	Number of service users living in permanent/ stable accommodation in the community as a result of support provided	✓	X	✓	✓	X
		2c. Number of service users supported to move into alternative temporary living arrangements <b>(CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICES ONLY)</b>	Number of service users successfully moved into alternative temporary living arrangements as a result of support provided	X	X	X	X	✓
		2d. Service users supported to maintain their tenancy as a result of floating support <b>(FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES ONLY)</b>	Number of service users who maintained their tenancy as a result of floating support being provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We care for others and help those in need	3. Being Healthy	3a. Service users supported to manage their physical /mental health	Number of service users who accessed primary health care/mental health services/social services as a result of support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We enjoy long, healthy, active lives		3b. Number of service users supported to access healthcare <b>(CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICES ONLY)</b>	Number of service users who accessed healthcare as a result of support provided	X	X	X	X	✓
We care for others and help those in need	4. Living in Safety & Security	4a. Number of service users who have been supported to feel secure in own home/tenancy	Number of service users feeling more secure as a result of support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other		4b. Number of service users who have been supported to feel secure and protected <b>(CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICES ONLY)</b>	Number of service users feeling secure and protected as a result of support provided by service	X	X	X	X	✓
We enjoy long, healthy, active lives	5. Achieving & making a Positive Contribution	5a. Service users supported to contribute to wider society and enhance social networks	Number of service users who have improved /enhanced their social network as a result of support provided (e.g. improve family relationships; participating in community projects/residents groups/ volunteering etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

## 5.2. Outcomes Front-End

The Supporting People Outcomes Front-End collates Supporting People Outcome Indicators from Providers. In the 2024/25 year, the Supporting People Programme showed an overall average success rate of 91% against the Outcomes Indicators.

**Fig. 5.2.1. Outcomes Indicators reported through the Outcomes System by Supporting People providers for the 2024/25 year.**



There are a small number of services known as, crisis accommodation services or “crash services” who provide short-term shelter to vulnerable homeless people. Due to the extremely short turnaround time of when the service user enters and leaves the service, these services do not work on achieving outcomes with the service users, unlike other homeless services. There are outcomes indicators exclusive to these services to ensure that the work being carried out is recognised and not lost. These three outcomes are particular to this service user group and these services are not expected to report on the regular homeless outcomes, nor are the other homeless services expected to report on the three crisis accommodation outcomes.

In the 2024/25 year, the crisis accommodation services showed an overall average success rate of 93% against the Outcomes Indicators.

**Fig. 5.2.2. Outcomes Indicators reported through the Outcomes System for the crisis accommodation services for the 2024/25 year.**



# 6.0. Supporting People Performance

## 6.1. Performance Indicators

Through our three Performance Indicators (PIs), Supporting People contributes to two of the Housing Executive’s [Draft Corporate Plan 2022-2025’s](#) High Level Priorities;

- 1. Over the next three years we will invest around £1,973m into our local economy, through our housing services, construction activity, employment opportunities and through our support for the health, voluntary and community sectors. In the same period, we will process circa £1,148m in Housing Benefit payments across public and private housing tenures.
- 2. We will work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers and to help reduce poverty and improve Health & Wellbeing.

**Fig. 6.1.1. Status of Regional Services Performance Indicators (RSPIs) for Supporting People in the year 2024/25**

Regional Services Key Performance Indicator (RSKPI)	Status
RSPI 3.2.1 Maintain a minimum spend of 17.5% for Floating Support as part of the Supporting People Programme ( <i>given the pressure on available accommodation</i> ).	Exceeded
RSPI 4.6.1 1% increase (from the baseline) in numbers of new clients supported ( <b><i>subject to funding</i></b> ).	Not Met
RSO 3.2.2 Commence a Supporting People Programme service improvement project.	Achieved

## 7.0. Service User Stories

Supporting People aims to improve the lives of vulnerable people, enabling them to live as independently as possible, have a better quality of life and achieve positive outcomes. Some examples of how Supporting People have achieved this through the services they fund are detailed below.

### Young People

#### **“Building Independence - James’ Story”**

James, a 19-year-old, faced significant housing instability after leaving the care system. Without family support and struggling to maintain stable accommodation, he experienced periods of sofa surfing and temporary housing. His lack of independent living skills and mental health challenges exacerbated his difficulties.

Many young people experiencing housing instability face frequent moves and a lack of secure accommodation, making it challenging to build stability. Alongside this, it’s important to understand that mental health struggles such as anxiety and depression are not uncommon, often with limited access to appropriate support. These are the challenges that James experienced. Further to this, his financial hardship complicated the situation, as budgeting and accessing benefits proved challenging. Social isolation exacerbates these challenges, and James had limited supportive relationships and community connections.

James was supported for two years and through this time a personalised support plan was developed with his input, fostering a strong sense of togetherness, respect, and collaboration with his floating support worker. Together, they identified his goals and needs, securing safe, supported accommodation and a clear pathway to independent living. James also agreed to support for his mental health and was referred to community counselling and peer groups that provided him with emotional and mental health support. James received financial support through the “Every Youth” housing fund, which supported him in finding a private rented property and access to finances for a deposit. While this was ongoing James’ floating support worker offered life skills guidance, such as budgeting and home maintenance. Socially, James was encouraged to engage in community activities, helping him to build positive relationships and a stronger sense of connection.

With the support of MACS Floating Support, James achieved stable housing and began living independently. His mental health improved through regular therapy and peer support, while he gained financial literacy and successfully managed his budget. A significant part of his journey was gaining a stable place to call home, with this stability allowing him to develop meaningful social connections, largely facilitated by his engagement in community activities. These connections greatly enhanced his overall well-being and sense of belonging.

James' Floating Support Worker shares, *"Seeing James progress from instability to independence has been incredibly rewarding. Through our Floating Support, we were able to work together, respect his goals, and provide the tools and guidance he needed. Watching him grow into a more confident, self-sufficient individual is a testament to the power of our work and the positive impact we can have on someone's life."*

## Homelessness

### "Shauna's Story of Resilience"

Shauna, a 38-year-old, was referred to Queens Quarter Housing (QQH) following a period of street homelessness and crash bed placements. She had experienced a number of challenges during her initial presentation, including: substance addiction, poor mental health, physical health concerns, domestic and sexual violence, family bereavement caused by addiction, and losing custody of her children. Her relationship with her partner exacerbated difficulties engaging with agencies as she would often resort to sleeping rough instead of accessing support.

Shauna was assigned a case manager when she arrived at QQH to address both her immediate and long-term needs. She also received additional support from her Complex Lives Intensive Support Worker (ISW), working collaboratively.

To support Shauna in overcoming her alcohol addiction, her case manager worked with her to identify triggers and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Shauna agreed to seek external support and was assisted in requesting a referral to Community Addictions through her GP. During challenging periods of relapse, QQH staff provided compassionate support, prioritising her physical safety while she was under the influence. They also encouraged her to maintain personal and living space hygiene, helping to reinforce independent living skills.

Shauna was incredibly anxious when she received her tenancy offer, as she had found safety in QQH. Her case manager and ISW reassured her and secured an offer of floating support in the area of her tenancy. Support allowed Shauna to work on decreasing her alcohol use significantly, resulting in her becoming proactive when working to prepare for her upcoming tenancy and physical health appointments. Support also enabled Shauna to finally have a sense of safety in QQH. She felt reassured that staff were prioritising her well-being, as well as supported when making difficult disclosures. The floating support team were provided with a handover outlining Shauna's background, needs and upcoming appointments to ensure a smooth transition. This aided in allowing Shauna to feel prepared with her move.

Since moving into her new tenancy, Shauna has had the opportunity to build a stable life. She is actively engaging with her floating support worker to maintain her sobriety and is re-establishing contact with her children, with the hope of

eventually regaining custody. Moving away from Belfast enabled her to build positive social connections. Shauna now feels able to plan for a more positive future, rather than living in survival mode and fearing what each day may bring.

Shauna explains, *“Well, you saved my life...I don’t know what I would’ve, and still would do, without you all. I just needed someone to give me a chance and you did. Only for all my support in Belfast, I have no doubt that I would’ve been found dead, like my brother”.*

The level of support delivered to Shauna was made possible by her Complex Lives ISW. Collaboration amongst services is a vital component of success and should be encouraged to ensure wrap-around support.

## **Older People**

### **“Little Friends and Grandfriends”**

Older people can often experience feelings of isolation and depression. Spelga Mews, in collaboration with Little Friends are leading the project for a new Linking Generations NI (LGNI) pilot entitled “Creating Intergenerational Communities”. Together, they seek to combat these issues while providing an opportunity for residents to regain a feeling of purpose.

Twelve residents aged 65 and over, with a diagnosis of dementia, living within a supported living setting, alongside a local nursery group of forty children aged four and under, took part in a sponsored walk - “A walk with Grandfriends”, held on Sunday 22nd September 2024 in Banbridge - a first of its kind in Northern Ireland. Spelga Mews Dementia Scheme participants and Little Friends Nursery have brought communities together and promoted intergenerational friendship.

The long-established relationship between the two settings has flourished, allowing this project to help provide more fulfilling activities and use a more mindful approach whilst also combatting the feelings of isolation and depression, allowing for mutual teaching and learning while providing participants with a feeling of purpose.

The “Walk with a Grandfriend” was a great way to introduce the families of residents and children into this very person-centred, intergenerational practice. It also helped to focus on relationship building. Residents with advanced dementia may not be able to share their experiences with their family, however, involving their family directly in the IG practice enables them to witness first-hand the profound positive impact it has on their loved one’s overall sense of well-being and creating memories for families and the children to last a lifetime. While the memory of the event itself may diminish for residents, the overall elated feeling remains for hours and sometimes days to follow.



The positive impact this walk had on all involved was phenomenal. Not only did the children and residents benefit, but so too did the families and staff. The atmosphere was one of happiness, love and acceptance throughout the day from all, with some of our residents who have on occasion struggled with their feelings of self-worth actively socialising with the children and parents. The event allowed local families, who had never been to Spelga Mews or knew of their vital work, to attend alongside their children to see the positive impact having links with our local community has on our residents.



## **Disability & Mental Health**

### **“Accepting Disability and Overcoming Social Isolation”**

Ian was referred to Action Ability’s Floating Support Service by his social worker as he was struggling to adapt to the changes in his life due to becoming severely sight impaired. He was no longer able to leave his home independently and was battling with his mental health due to being socially isolated and being unable to accept his disability.

Ian’s eyesight had been deteriorating significantly in the year leading up to his initial involvement with floating support. Having struggled to understand and accept his disability, he was very reluctant to receive any support or services being offered to him as he feared this would take away his independence. He had become extremely socially isolated and was experiencing long periods of time without leaving his home. The longer Ian spent at the home, the more anxious he became about leaving again and engaging with his peers. Ian noticed his social skills had been negatively affected and his enthusiasm for things he once enjoyed was gone.

He frequently had negative experiences trying to navigate the outside world alone, with his guide cane, and was struggling with a lack of confidence, which further increased his isolation and left him struggling at home alone regularly.

Ian was allocated a floating support worker who worked with him a one-to-one basis initially, building a rapport which developed into a strong and trusting relationship. Ian was supported initially to leave his home and attend a church group which he was familiar with and important to him in the past. This support developed to supporting him to leave his home to go shopping, attend hospital appointments and attend local events of interest. Ian and his floating support worker continue to discuss further support which could be put in place to help him manage independently, including a cleaner and personal carer, which he is now more open to discussing.

When Ian was first diagnosed with significant sight impairment, he was referred to the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), but did not engage well with their services. He has since been working with his floating support worker to understand and accept his disability and has recently attended a RNIB technology fair and a one-to-one appointment with RNIB, supported by his floating support worker, to discuss their services and aids. Ian is feeling hopeful following his visit to RNIB and has arranged to engage further with them.

Ian's floating support worker continues to engage with his social worker, who subsequently arranged for direct payments for Ian to access a befriending service and a RNIB technology grant which will help cover the costs involved in purchasing more accessible technology. Ian was supported to review his welfare entitlements due to his disability, and was supported to apply for a blue badge, register with Disability Action Transport Service and review his benefits and apply for pension credit. Ian has also been referred to a mental health support service specifically for men.

Since engaging with Action Ability's Floating Support service, there has been a significant increase in Ian's mood, confidence and motivation to live his life to the fullest again. He attends his local church group weekly, sometimes more, and is keenly in contact with his floating support worker throughout the week seeking opportunities to leave his home. He is due to start working with a befriender and is starting to engage with RNIB services with the support. Ian is making significant progress in reducing his isolation and learning to live with his disability. Floating support has had a significant impact on his life and the Floating Support worker will continue work to implement further supports when Ian is ready.



Ian expressed, *"The quality and improvement and the ease that it gives me in life, they are there for me at a moment's notice, sometimes I use them up to 3 times a week, nothing is ever too much for them and it makes life so much more bearable for me. I can't recommend these people more highly. They are a service which people with my condition, virtually blind, really, they are a god send and I'm so grateful and appreciative for all that they do for me, and they even do more than I ask them, so I couldn't recommend them more highly."*

## 8.0. Outlook 2025/26

Throughout 2025/26, Supporting People focus will be on developing a new Five-Year Strategy to commence April 2026, and delivering the Supporting People Modernisation (SPM) workstreams:

The purpose of Supporting People Modernisation is to implement measures that support evidence-based commissioning of housing related support services ensuring programme effectiveness and maximising service user outcomes.

The Supporting People Modernisation project will be delivered over a two-year timeframe between April 2025 and March 2027 and will focus on 4 interrelated workstreams:

1. Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA): To provide a robust evidence base of current and projected housing-related support needs at local and thematic levels.
2. Updated Outcomes Reporting Model: To develop a revised outcomes framework that enables improved monitoring, benchmarking, and evaluation of programme impact.
3. Direct more funding to frontline service delivery: To explore and propose funding approaches that better reflect client complexity and maximise value for money.
4. Updated Governance Structures and Administrative Processes: To review and enhance governance, decision-making, and operational processes to support efficient and accountable programme delivery.

### **During the 2025/26 year we will:**

- Ensure the services we fund are appropriate to changing need.
- Produce a new five-year Strategy to commence in 2026.
- Progress the SP Modernisation project.
- Deliver the SHARP system enhancements planned for 25/26.
- Work with Supporting People providers, to invest in service innovation to achieve greater value for money and better outcomes for service users.
- Explore reconfiguration opportunities to ensure best use of services.
- Ensure we collaborate effectively with our providers and continue to strengthen relationships across health, criminal justice and housing, with the aim of achieving better outcomes for service users and generating greater value from public funds, to enhance available resources for housing support.

