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Contents

Welcome to the first edition of the new Supporting People (SP) Spotlight.

This news update has been produced as part of our commitment in the SP Communication Strategy to provide key stakeholders in the programme with regular updates on its implementation and any new developments.

The Spotlight will be published twice yearly and will be available electronically on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's, (NIHE), website, as well as being distributed in paper format on request.

Housing Executive

SP Business Update

The Housing Exceutive's Board at its meeting in March 2008 approved the SP budget for 2008/09.

The SP budget for the 3 year period 2008/09-2010/11 totals £183m, £61 per annum. This budget amount, made provision for SP funding to a total of 14 supported housing schemes which are to become operational in this financial year.

The challenging CSR settlement for the SP programme meant that there was no funding to assist providers in meeting staff costs of living and other operating costs. The SP team continues to work with providers to help them address these issues.

A number of provider organisations have approached the Housing Executive requesting additional in year monies. The under spend arising from delays in the opening of pipeline supported accommodation schemes is being used to help providers who may need in year support to sustain current levels of service.

The SP programme currently funds 118 organisations providing housing support in over 900 schemes, both accommodation and floating support services. These schemes provide services to more than 23,000 vulnerable people per annum.

Significant progress, within the challenging funding environment, has been made in relation to specific strategic priorities and associated service development in relation to the 11 SP client groups. A total of 8 new supported accommodation projects have been commissioned in the first six months of 2008/9. Non recurrent funding has also been made available to one service provider to allow for the continuation of their service.

All have been endorsed by the SP Commissioning Body and relevant Area SP Partnership.

The Innovation and Capacity Programme is now in its third year of operation. To date a total of 23 organisations have undergone the training and organisational developmental analysis by NICVA. The SP team have met with all of the providers involved in this programme to consider each organisations training and organisational developmental issues. An additional five organisations are included in the 2008/9 programme.

The role and direction of the innovation and capacity programme is under review to take account of the significant changes in the SP landscape. Discussion with the voluntary and community sector has identified a need to refocus the innovation and capacity programme to support the provider sector to manage in the current financial environment.

A number of thematic issues have been identified, including; the scope for shared services across and within the voluntary and community sector themes; the development of benchmarking tools to enable providers to compare quality, performance and value for money and the potential scope for efficiency savings; the development of collaborative models, for example consortia arrangements; and guidance and best practice approaches to appropriate risk management.

The service review programme, although behind target, is being progressed. To date **43 service reviews are underway.** A number of changes to the administrative arrangements are being implemented on a phased basis as part of the modernising services project. It is anticipated that the target of **75 reviews will be achieved this year.**

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SP Accreditation Overview

Accreditation is one of a number of processes which together ensure that the SP programme provides housing support services to vulnerable people at the required standards. The key processes providing control of the programme are:

• Accreditation
• Value For Money assessments
• Service Review
• Innovation and Capacity Building
• Performance Monitoring

The broad purpose of accreditation is to ensure that organisations wishing to contract with the Housing Executive to provide SP services are fit business partners.

Accreditation involves a review of the organisation providing SP services and is not focused on the individual services provided.

Accreditation is based on 4 criteria:

1. Financial viability of the provider.

2. Competent accounting staff and procedures.

3. Effective employment practices.

4. Robust management procedures.

Specific measures have been selected to assess if an organisation has met the accreditation criteria and these are scored from a review of financial information, policies and procedures, foundation documents and information on corporate governance which have been supplied by the provider.

Accreditation Lite was introduced when it became apparent that some smaller organisations had difficulty in providing

evidence required to assess the specific measures supporting the accreditation criteria. While the service providers still have to demonstrate that they meet the 4 criteria, they are not required to provide the detail necessary for a full accreditation.

This framework has been used to accredit small provider organisations or sole traders using a less onerous process (in line with ODPM guidance March 2005). It recognises that the evidence and effort required to meet accreditation should be commensurate with the support provided under the programme. Although the framework adopts a more flexible and pragmatic approach to evidencing of the required standards, individual services will still be subject to the full rigours of the Quality Assessment Framework and service review processes.

8 service provider organisations have been accredited under the "Accreditation Lite" framework.

Accreditation Lite is awarded on the basis that it is to be reviewed where the provider organisation's circumstances change. A 'Full Accreditation' assessment would then be initiated.

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Passporting

Some organisations, including Registered Care homes, Housing Associations and Health & Social Care Trusts are already subject to appropriate regulations and have been passported as SP service providers.

At September 2008 there were 118 service provider organisations required to meet SP accreditation standards. 102 of these met accreditation criteria (including 39 passported) and the remaining 16 were engaged in the accreditation process. 89.7% of the SP programme was delivered by accredited provider organisations.

A number of the 16 providers who have not evidenced that they meet the required standards are being assisted through the Innovation and Capacity Building Programme.

The position at 30 September 2008 is as per Table 1 below:

Table 1

	Orgs	% SP funding
Current provider organisations	118	100%
Organisations meeting accreditation standards	102	89.7%
In process	16	10.3%

What is the SP Modernising Services Project?

The Modernising Services project underway within SP is part of the Housing Executive's overall Modernising Services programme.

Modernising Services is about applying the most up-to-date technology and business practices to deliver efficient and effective services.

The overall aim of the project is to determine how processes can be improved and to consider the best way to deliver services in light of the current and future priorities and operating environment for the programme. This business improvement strategy for the administration arrangements for the programme will be facilitated and complemented by more sophisticated and integrated IT systems.

The project is due to be completed by October 2010, although changes to the administration arrangements for SP will be implemented on a phased basis throughout the life of the project.

Dedicated structures for the project have been established within the Housing Executive, which includes a Project Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services and a project team which sits within the SP team.

SP are committed to ensuring key stakeholders, including providers of SP services are kept informed about the project and have an opportunity to meaningful contribute to the identification of areas for improvement.

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The consultation process for the project includes:

-   Regular updates through CRISPP and SP focus groups.

-   Production of a regular newsletter and/or articles within the CHNI SP Bulletin.

-   News updates on the Housing Executive website.

We are also undertaking a process of involving and seeking feedback from stakeholders, which includes:

-   Survey of all housing support providers.

-   Interviews with individual organisations.

-   The establishment of a Quality Assurance Group of providers to run through the life of the project.

The work which has been undertaken to date includes:

•   Production of SP Communication Strategy - This strategy will be published in the New Year and is intended to give clarity and focus to the way that SP communicates with its partners and provide standards against which communications will be measured.

•   Commencement of New Ways of Working Pilots with SP providers - These pilots have been established to evaluate new contracting and monitoring arrangements, including capacity contracts for longer term services and outcomes monitoring.

•   Establishment of Area Focused Teams - These teams are organised on the basis of current Housing Executive Area office boundaries to facilitate the local delivery of the SP programme. Their role includes relationship management with key SP stakeholders, especially providers.

•   Procurement of SP ICT Systems - The Housing Executive are currently undertaking a detailed exercise to identify and procure a suitable ICT solution for SP. It is anticipated that the implementation of new ICT systems will commence in the new financial year.

Other priorities which have been identified include:

•   Evaluation of the current monitoring and review framework, which includes consideration of new contract management arrangements to replace the existing service review process.

•   Development of a service user involvement framework to reflect good practice in other administering authorities including those identified as regional champions.

The SP section of the Housing Executive's website will include regular updates on the progress of the Modernising Services project. A summary of the responses received from providers to the survey is currently available on the website.

Outcome Monitoring & Contracting

Within the national strategy for SP produced by CLG, there is an increasing focus on outcomes and a lesser one on processes, as a mechanism for targeting services more strategically to produce better outcomes and greater value for money. It is recognised that a focus on outcomes:

• Helps ensure that the needs of service users are best met from finite resources.

• Allows appropriate understanding of the value of individual services.

• Permits a reduction in bureaucracy and administration by concentrating more on results than processes.

• Allows links to be developed between SP and wider strategic priorities

It has become clear that there is a gap in terms of the information currently gathered on SP services in terms of what the SP programme is delivering for service users and the real tangible benefits and outcomes being achieved as a result of the support service they are receiving.

By developing good practice in agreeing and monitoring suitable outcomes with providers, SP are seeking to demonstrate how SP services are contributing towards delivering the aims of the SP programme at a local and national level.

In England, a national outcomes framework has already been developed and a number of SP Administering Authorities have also sought to develop frameworks which combine national, regional and local elements. SP in Northern Ireland has researched this approach and, as a next step, is intending to test it at an operational level. This is being done through a series of pilot projects.

The framework developed for operation in Northern Ireland, initially within the identified pilot projects, is based on the assumption that there are 3 levels of outcomes at Strategic, Service and Service User levels. Although for each service the framework will be adapted to reflect the needs of the specific client group and the service model, the strategic outcomes will remain the same. **These high level strategic outcomes reflect those introduced by CLG nationally and are:**

• **Achieving economic well being**
• **Enjoy & Achieve**
• **Be Healthy**
• **Stay safe**
• **Make a positive contribution**

Service Level - These outcomes are usually numeric and easily measurable and will have clear ties to the strategic level outcomes. For example, by measuring the number of service users supported to access training or employment, activity is being measured that makes a clear and direct contribution to the high level strategic target of improving economic well being.

The Northern Ireland Framework will include a 'basket' of indicators that SP will discuss with each provider and agree which are the most appropriate for the service to collect. This tailored approach ensures all monitoring is relevant to the scheme and that providers don't have to collect irrelevant or excessive data.

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Service User Level - Service User outcomes are generally measured by a variety of 'distance travelled' models, such as the 'Outcome Star'. If not already doing so, providers are required to adopt or develop some form of these models. Each provider can select a model that they are already using or that they feel is most appropriate for their own service, client group and IT capacity.

The distance travelled model should include:

• A set of target indicators.

• A scoring system to allow for the assessment of distance travelled.

• Baseline and regular reviews to assess progress. The intensity and frequency of this will depend on the client group and the nature of the support being provided.

• A system for reporting results, for example tables or computer generated tables and graphs.

It is also important to emphasise that the approach used to develop all the proposed SP outcome indicators is underpinned by the requirement for a needs-based support plan to be in place for each service user, which is reviewed on a regular basis.

This means that each service user will need to have had a needs assessment which then links to a clear support plan, which is reviewed regularly. This is important because the approach only intends to measure outcomes which have been identified as needing support for achieving. For example, there would be no point in recording a positive outcome re Be Healthy if there were no support needs identified for the service user in relation to this area.

The Northern Ireland pilot studies commenced in October 2008 and will run for 18 months. We will keep you informed of their progress in the following editions.

Floating Support Research

In April 2008 the Department of Communities & Local Government (CLG) published a document entitled 'Research into the effectiveness of floating support services for the SP programme' (available to download at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/floatingsupportservices

The research was based on a short-term secondary review of available literature and current practice undertaken in September 2006. The research aimed to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of floating support services, and the balance needed between floating support and accommodation based services in order to improve service delivery and choice and control for service users. The document gives good signposts to good practice with examples from relevant authorities.

'Floating support' is defined as 'support services which are not tied to the accommodation' i.e. support that either:

• floats off to another service user when the support is no longer required (usually crisis intervention or short term work); or

• follows the individual as the service user moves through different types of accommodation (usually long term support).

The research acknowledges the benefits of floating support in terms of its ability to deliver flexible, person centred services to enable people to establish and maintain independence in "ordinary" housing.

The research reported a considerable body of evidence to support the cost effectiveness of floating support in a number of areas, for example in reducing rent arrears; preventing tenancy breakdown (and the resulting costs); reducing the number of hospital admissions (for people with mental health problems); allowing the timely discharge of older people from hospital; reducing re-offending rates; addressing anti-social behaviour and preventing truancy costs. All of these outcomes reduce costs for public agencies, but also have wider social benefits of helping to create sustainable communities and greater social cohesion.

One of the key messages from the research is the balance needed between floating support and accommodation based services.

The debate about the balance between floating support and accommodation based services has tended to be framed in terms of the more floating support commissioned, the less accommodation based services will be available. This review showed that by re-commissioning existing floating support services it is possible to not only increase the capacity of these services, but also provide much more focused and coherent services, without impacting on the level of accommodation based services.

The researchers found a general consensus that an effective balance between floating support and accommodation based services should be based on local circumstances, and result from the strategic approach adopted by the authority to achieving the outcomes they require. In particular authorities need to consider the point at which people require access to services and how people can move through services.

The research also points to good practice in the way that services are accessed, suggesting that some services may be best accessed through a single point of assessment where individuals with complex needs undergo a multi-disciplinary assessment before being referred to the required services.

The research also touched on different types of floating support services and found that in general they could be grouped under the broad headings of generic, specialist or crisis intervention services.

As part of its ongoing commitment to providing an evidence base to inform policy and operational decisions, SP are now considering procuring similar research into the effectiveness of floating support services for the SP programme in Northern Ireland.

Further details will be provided in forthcoming editions of this Newsletter.

SP Website

We hope you find the website useful and informative:

**http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/wwu_home/
supporting_people-3.htm**

We are currently in the process of updating our website and wish to use the site as one of our primary communication channels with stakeholders. As part of our commitment to communicate with providers, we will be developing the site so that regular updates will be posted in a 'What's New' section.

We hope that you will find our website a helpful resource. If you would like to make suggestions or comments about the website, please contact the SP Team on (028) 9031 8820 or supporting.people@nihe.gov.uk

During the next quarter check out the website for details of:

- The Publication of SP Communication Strategy.

- West Area Stakeholder event to be held in the new year.

Who is who in the SP Team?

The SP programme in Northern Ireland is administered by the Housing Executive. A dedicated staff team has been established and is based within the headquarters of the Housing Executive in Belfast.

The Team falls under the responsibility of Colm McQuillan, Assistant Director of Corporate Services and is headed by Brian O'Kane, Senior Principal Officer. Either can be contacted by email: colm.mcquillan@nihe.gov.uk / brian.okane@nihe.gov.uk

Or by contacting Alisha Dempster at alisha.dempster@nihe.gov.uk or (028) 9031 8427.

The remaining staff in the team are organised into the following main areas of business:

Administration Team which is responsible for the administration activity associated with the programme, including receipt of contract monitoring information from providers, gathering of service review information, administrative support for meetings and recording of all correspondence. The team members are:

Enid McMurray (Principal Officer)
enid.mcmurray@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8779

Rosemary Owens
rosemary.owens@nihe.gov.uk (028) 9031 8406

Fionnuala McArdle
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Vincent Leonard
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David Mayne
david.mayne@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8800

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Audrey Ritchie
audrey.ritchie@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8425

Julie-Ann Mohan
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Strategy & Services Development Team
which is responsible for the delivery of the SP
strategy and policy framework, including the
administration of the SP Commissioning Body,
representing SP within a number of multi-
agency groups and liaison with SP umbrella
groups/representative bodies. The team
members are:

Claire Crainey
claire.crainey@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8906

Julie Alexander
julie.alexander@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8819

Contracting & Payments Team with
responsibility for the processing of SP period
payments and issuing of funding agreements.
The team members are:

Stephen Osborne (Principal Officer)
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(028) 9031 8776

Evelyn Jamison
evelyn.jamison@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8415

Eamonn Marley
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Administrator for providers A-K
Jonathan Rankin
jonathan.rankin@nihe.gov.uk (028) 9031 8487

Administrator for providers L-Z:
Aidan McGrath
aidan.mcgrath@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8013

5 Area Teams which are responsible for liaising
with providers in their area, the application
of the monitoring and review framework,
overseeing contract performance and sitting on
a range of locally based steering and decision
making groups, including Area SP Partnerships.
The team members in each area are:

Belfast Area Team
Lead Officer Liam O'Hanlon
liam.ohanlon@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8381

Rory McDonnell
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Marion Fisher
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South East Area Team
Lead Officer Donal Brereton
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Sharon Stuart
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South Area Team
Lead Officer Eamonn Mullan
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Joe Quinn
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North East Area Team
Lead Officer Sinead Twomey
sinead.twomey@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8568

Angela McLaughlin
angela.mclaughlin@nihe.gov.uk (028) 9031 8876

West Area Team
Lead Officer Louise Clarke
louise.clarke@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8790

Colin McCloy
colin.mccloy@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8405

Finance Team - with responsibility for ensuring the best use is made of SP resources for new and legacy SP services, through accreditation, value for money analysis and budget monitoring. The team members are:

Financial Accountant
John Graham
john.graham@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8877

Budget Monitoring & Value for Money
John Bond
john.bond2@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8878

Accreditation & Value for Money
Nick McGrath
nicholas.mcgrath@nihe.gov.uk (028) 9031 8879

Modernising Services Project Team
- with responsibility for identifying and implementing new ICT systems and improved business processes. The team members are:

Project Manager Caroline Connor
caroline.connor@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8402

Helen Irvine
helen.irvine@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8408

Pamela Stevenson
pamela.stevenson@nihe.gov.uk (028) 9031 8881

James Taylor
james.taylor@nihe.gov.uk   (028) 9031 8820

How to contact the SP Team
If you know the team member you wish to contact, the direct contact details for the individual members of the team are provided above. Alternatively you can write to the SP team at:

The Housing Centre
2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB

Or email us at supportingpeople@nihe.gov.uk

Glossary of Terms

ASPP - Area SP Partnership -There are 4 ASPPs, which correspond to the Health Board Areas. Membership consists of representatives from the Housing Executive, NI Probation Service and Health Trusts. ASPPs are responsible for agreeing priorities, in their respective localities, for the commissioning of new supported housing and support services in the light of emerging strategic objectives and for identifying unmet housing support needs in their area.

CHNI - Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland. An 'umbrella' group that represents the interests of organisations involved in the provision of support to homeless persons in Northern Ireland.

CLG - Department for Communities and Local Government. (May also be referred to as DCLG). The UK Department that replaced the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (ODPM). It has responsibility for promoting the building of more and better homes, reducing homelessness, improving public services, regeneration and tackling anti-social behaviour.

CRISPP - Committee Representing SP Providers. A Group that represents the specific interests of SP service providers.

CSR - Comprehensive Spending Review.

DSD - Department for Social Development. The Northern Ireland Government Department with overall responsibility for the SP Programme.

ICT - Information and Communications Technology.

KWEB - SP Knowledge Website.

NICVA - The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. The 'umbrella' body representing the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

Pipeline Supported Accommodation - A proposed housing support scheme that has been approved by the Commissioning Body, but is not yet operational.

Service Providers - Organisations or sole operators who are contracted by the SP team to provide a housing related support service.

Service Review - A process through which the SP team look at the quality, performance and value of all services commissioned through the programme.

SP - Supporting People.

SP Commissioning Body - the inter-agency partnership set up by the Housing Executive in conjunction with the four Health and Social Services Boards and Probation Board NI with responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the SP programme and for the commissioning of new housing support services, on a regional basis, subject to approval by the Housing Executive Board.

Stakeholders - People or organisations that form part of the SP programme. Stakeholders share or contribute to the aims of the SP programme.

Housing Executive

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