

MINUTES OF THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE FORUM MEETING
12 FEBRUARY 2008, CONFERENCE ROOM 11, VICTORIA QUAY

In attendance:

Stephen Sandham:	Scottish Executive: Supporting People Team (Chair)
Norrie Murray;	Scottish Executive: Supporting People Team (Minutes)
Yvette Burgess:	SPEU
Helen Murdoch:	Hanover HA
Tony Fitzgerald:	Angus Council
Austen Smyth:	Richmond Fellowship
Peter Millar:	ASPIRE
Ron Culley:	COSLA

Apologies:

Ben McClory	Scottish Executive: Supporting People Team
Alistair McDonald:	Bield HA
Jane Kennedy:	COSLA
Sharon Wearing:	Glasgow City Council
Patricia Aniello:	SAMH
Malcolm Matheson:	Representing CCPS
Marcia Simpson:	South Lanarkshire Council
Marcia Ramsay:	Care Commission
Caroline Johnstone:	COSLA

1. Welcome and Introductions

Stephen welcomed those attending and gave apologies for those who couldn't make the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minute of the last meeting on 6 February 2007 was discussed.

Helen restated her concern recorded at paragraph 8 on tendering and procurement, where LA's may opt to take over the provision of a service rather than put them out to tender. Helen questioned whether this is lawful. Helen has taken this question to Audit Scotland too. It was agreed that we would keep a watch on this and we may have to come back to this at a later date.

With the above exception the minutes were agreed.

3. Update on Supporting People research and the move to a national performance framework and Single Outcome Agreements

Stephen highlighted the various pieces of research and identified the savings that the Supporting People programme creates in avoided costs elsewhere. For £402 million expenditure there are around £441 million of benefit from avoided costs in admissions to hospital, in delayed or prevention of admission to care homes and prevented homelessness etc. If the Cap Gemini assumptions employed in England had been used the benefits would jump to £900m

The unit cost research explained much of the variation in the higher cost of providing Supporting People services in Scotland compared to England. It couldn't explain the differentials across Scotland quite so easily, and left some question about extent to which care was possibly funded from Supporting People, which raised the issue of case for continuing ring fencing.

Peter suggested that the research which identified that the SP programme was making savings elsewhere justified that that benefit should be built upon rather than changing the whole approach through removing the ring fence.

Stephen identified that COSLA requested the change to non ring fencing the SP programme with less bureaucracy and less reporting to the centre. Advantages include;

- Opportunities to fund educational / employment training, not permitted under SP currently, although it is in England.
- Children under 16 years of age are not currently supported by the ring fenced budget but could be funded in future so the whole needs of vulnerable families, covering adults and children, could more easily be funded
- More flexible and integrated support.
- Savings in bureaucracy would free up savings for front line services.

Ron confirmed that councillors have been asking for these changes for years in negotiating autonomy for local authorities when looking across their responsibilities / priorities. He saw no immediate sea change away from the type of support presently offered under Supporting People, but obviously only time would tell.

Providers generally are concerned that low cost low level prevention services are at risk and that hard pressed LAs will cut these services, the effects of which may not be apparent for some time.

Ron emphasised the importance of the Community Planning Process. Single Outcome Agreements should involve all community planning partners. As policy officers we hope to see these important services supported and are not lost. In theory this process reduces bureaucracy and frees up more costs for local services.

Stephen explained that attempts were made to include a specific outcome around housing support but this was unsuccessful, partly due to competing priorities against a desire to impose only about 45 indicators but also because housing support was an intervention rather than an outcome, and the new focus was on the outcomes themselves. National outcomes have been identified where Housing Support has a role to play. There are a suite of local indicators and attempts are being made to create a local indicator around care and support.

Ron indicated how the JIT (Joint Improvement Team) hoped that Community Care Outcomes framework would fit into the new system, being adopted on a discretionary basis as the gold standard against which to measure success against this new local indicator on care and support.. These outcomes will always be subject to local priorities, however, and there could be no guarantees that the indicator on care and support would be adopted universally across Scotland.

Helen asked if tests will be applied to LA outcomes.

Stephen explained that this is an entirely new landscape based upon a partnership approach. Annual reports from the local authorities will evidence what delivery of outcomes has been achieved. Where that fails the Scottish Government will justly question local authorities where these outcomes have not been achieved.

Ron re-emphasised that providers should engage with Community Planning Partners. Helen said this was not working. She had tried to get involved but was told by LAs that they were too busy. Stephen indicated that there should be a more consultative approach in future. The timing of decisions taken in the Spending review 2007 simple did not allow for as much consultation as local authorities of Scottish Government would have wished, but they were to be actively engaged in implementation and development of subsequent sets of SOAs

Peter welcomed the move from outputs and bureaucracy to single outcome agreements. The annual reports on SOAs should then be reviewed and create consultation on progress made towards the national outcomes.

Both Peter and Helen welcomed the good practice established through the national contracts and Helen hoped that there would be a standard framework to assess the quality of progress toward the new outcomes. Stephen indicated that the Scottish Government would not prescribe the process across the country as it is for local government to deliver the services according to their own priorities.

Ron emphasised that the new landscape is not static, details will change because of Scottish Government and local government changes in focus. Policy will continue to be developed. This is a long term policy approach and no major changes should be expected overnight.

Stephen confirmed that Scottish Government is working hard to get the draft outcome agreements in place by the end of June 2008 but it was a challenging process and timetable.

4. Distribution of SP baseline across local authorities

The distribution in 2008-09 is in proportion to allocations in 2007-08 taking account of the baseline absorbed (£384 million) against the allocations of £401 in 2007-08. There are no indicative allocations for Supporting People (or any of the other non ring fenced funding streams) in 2008-09. This is a level playing field approach but it is for local authorities to assess and determine the services they provide according to local circumstances.

Helen commented that some form of benchmarking was required to establish a unified approach. Peter quoted from the GEN report that said that external providers' services will take 79% of the savings required. Local authorities are therefore not taking their share of the hit. This has to be viewed against the fact that originally external providers received 70% of the available funding.

Stephen commented that in this new landscape the Scottish Government's ability to probe will be less without explicit agreement from COSLA. There will however, be pressure from Scottish Government on local authorities that quality of service is maintained. The performance framework will help monitor the delivery of planned outcomes. But the bottom line is that Scottish Government looks to local authorities to commission services sensibly, ensuring quality is maintained, and not purely on cost.

Ron confirmed the new arrangements create a driver to ensure resources are spent wisely.

5. Need for further transitional guidance from Scottish Government

Stephen referred to the letters he issued on 20 November and 8 January which had not been seen by some.

Stephen agreed to trawl for suggestions of issues that might benefit from further explanation or guidance from Scottish Government. A deadline of 19 February was set for contributions.

Norrie explained that funding for Offender Accommodation Services (previously top sliced from the SP baseline and given to Justice Department) before allocations were issued to local authorities, will no longer be available to Justice Department as the whole baseline has been absorbed in the local government settlement.

6. AOB

The Supporting People Service Review Impact Group ceases to exist.

Future meeting were requested to be quarterly for at least the first year of these new arrangements.

Yvette suggested that a member of the Scottish Council for Single Homeless (SCSH) be invited to attend as a member of this group.

7. Date of next meeting: To be arranged

NM

February 2008

