

**1 What's it about?**

Refer to equality groups

**What is it there for? What is it meant to deliver?**

The Supporting People programme delivers housing related support to over 6000 households in Swindon. People supported through the programme include:

- Domestic violence victims
- High-risk offenders
- Frail elderly people
- Homeless families
- Older people
- People with learning disabilities
- People with physical disabilities
- People with sensory impairments and head injuries
- People with severe and enduring mental health problems
- Rough sleepers
- People with substance misuse problems
- Teenage parents
- Young people at risk & care-leavers

The Supporting People programme is delivered in partnership with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector agencies and aims to maintain or enable independent living. In so doing the Supporting People Programme reduces costs on other higher cost services particularly by providing low threshold early intervention support, and as an alternative to residential care.

Housing related support activities aim to assist vulnerable people to:

- Successfully manage finances
- Undertake paid or voluntary work
- Manage physical and / or mental health
- Achieve qualifications / developing workplace skills
- Participate in recreational / group activities
- Develop family / social contacts
- Stop anti-social behaviour
- Achieve support planning objectives
- Take up / sustain a tenancy

The programme aims to provide independence and positive outcomes for service recipients, and promoting equality is a fundamental objective of the programme. The programme cuts across many of the equality groups, so a decision to remove any service is likely to negatively impact groups of people encompassed by the equality legislation.

There is a need to make £250,000 savings over and above business as usual savings to meet predicted funding levels and commitments for the financial year 2012/13.

The following service changes are proposed:

Withdraw funding from teenage parent accommodation schemes. This would save £90,000 annually, effecting 19 families. There is an alternative source of support for this group in Sure Start centres, which have similar objectives and are available in localities across the borough. The likely response from Bromford Housing Association would be to change the schemes to general needs housing. If this occurs the current residents would lose their homes, and the local authority would be obliged to assist to secure alternative accommodation for residents, which may be privately rented housing, temporary accommodation or alternative supported housing. Therefore there may be an adverse impact on a group covered by legislation by virtue of their age, sex, and possibly pregnancy. This adverse impact needs to be weighed against the existence of Sure Start centres in neighbourhoods across Swindon, the council's statutory duty to provide accommodation to vulnerable people, as well as the opportunity cost of not making this decision impacting on other vulnerable groups. Discussions have taken place with the commissioner for Sure Start Centres, and it has been agreed to ensure that all qualifying households assisted by the Housing Needs Department will be identified to the appropriate Sure Start service. This means that although the service for 19 households is reduced, the service for the 4-50 qualifying households assisted by Housing Needs annually will be improved.

Cease funding overnight support at Bridge Services accommodation for high-risk offenders. Saving £70,000 annually, affecting 8 residents. The scheme at Bridge Services provides resettlement to high-risk offenders based in the Swindon area. It is the only scheme of its kind in the borough, partly because Swindon is unique in not having premises for offenders approved by the Ministry of Justice. The accommodation is particularly expensive, costing £26k per resident per annum on top of rental costs, mainly because the accommodation requires overnight staffing by 2 members of staff. There is no reason that housing related support should be offered overnight. The reason overnight staff are required is for security purposes, and should not be funded as a Supporting People function. The impact of their withdrawal will be to make it impossible for high-risk offenders to be accommodated at Bridge Services. The risk in this decision would mainly be to the community, since it would make it even harder for authorities in Swindon to safely accommodate offenders identified as posing a significant risk to the community. On the other hand, the role of safely accommodating offenders sits mainly with the Ministry of Justice who are seeking to establish a national network of accommodation schemes for offenders. Offenders are not a proscribed group for equalities purposes, but 16.2% of the residents over the last year were from Black Minority and Ethnic backgrounds, which is higher than our population estimate.

Cease funding overnight support at Hazelmead House, mental health supported housing scheme. Saving £40,000 annually affecting 14 residents. The Supporting People Programme provides funding for housing related support, and there is no reason for this support to be made available overnight. We will seek to renegotiate with the providers for the service to focus on support during the day. Meetings with the provider are due to take place this month, with the provider's response being considered at the Supporting People Partnership Board in December.

Cap the hourly support charge paid for recipients of support in Sheltered Housing at the Swindon average. Saving £50,000 annually, potentially affecting 370 households. It is hard to predict the response from Sheltered Housing providers, although it is most likely to involve changes to service charges rather than withdrawal of services.

**What potential is there to help meet the equality duties?**

None for the decisions above.

**What equality benefits does it create?**

None.

**What are the barriers to meeting this potential?**

- This decision puts the homes of some service-users at risk, as well as potentially requiring contractual changes to their accommodation licences. Landlords may decide that services are no longer financially viable, service-users might not be able to maintain their tenancies without the current support model, and might take the view that contractually they have a legitimate expectation to continue to receive the same support as they did when they signed their tenancy. The case of *Boyejo v London Borough of Barnet* in the High Court concerned the withdrawal of wardens from sheltered housing. The case law highlights that this decision needs to be considered in the light of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, in particular section 49A(1). A decision has to be taken that will adversely impact on at least one of the groups covered by the equality strands, the council still has a duty to take account of its statutory duty to promote equality. The decision will need to be considered in the light of whether this is the least bad option.

**2 Who's it for?**

Refer to equality groups

**Who is expected to benefit? What do we know about them?**

The beneficiaries of this decision will be those people whose services are safeguarded by focussing cuts on a small number of services.

**Who is missing or may find it difficult to benefit?**

- Some groups will not benefit, these are the people who currently receive the services. The current residents are at risk of losing their home, however, the Strategic Housing team would work in partnership with them and their landlords to secure alternative accommodation if the need arises.
- People who are too vulnerable to live independently, and not vulnerable enough for care may suffer when compared to their outcomes under the current provision level.

**Do we know why?**

The reduction in varied rates of charges will increase the homogenisation of Supporting People services.

**3 Impact**

Refer to dimensions of equality

**How will these services be delivered to a diverse group of people? (positive impact)**

Discussions with providers are ongoing so the full impact is not yet known. Remaining services will be unchanged.

**Is there any innovative thinking, working, technology or equipment that could improve delivery?**

- Existing providers have the option to restructure their services to reduce costs, or increase revenue from other sources such as service charges or housing benefit. A cessation of funding will not necessarily cause a cessation of support. For example, a registered social landlord that is both a landlord and care provider is entitled to claim housing benefit to cover reasonable costs under the Exempt Accommodation regulations contained in Statutory Instrument 2006/217. NB the DWP is currently consulting on restricting the amount of rent and eligible service charges being claimed via the Exempt Accommodation regulations.
- There is potential for improved links between housing services and alternative support providers such as Sure Start. There is an agreement that all households in temporary and supported accommodation will be identified to the Sure Start centre in the neighbourhood they are placed in. At the moment housing related support is offered to 19 young families, although there are over 200 households in temporary accommodation.

**Is there anything about the way we deliver which may stop people getting involved? (Negative impact)**

There is a negative impact from the withdrawal of funding for Teenage Parents accommodation.

**Is that reasonable? Can it be justified? Is it something that can be resolved?**

The justification is that there is alternative support available from Sure Start centres. Whilst we recognise that there is an adverse impact this has to be set against alternative options, for example withdrawing funding from one of the learning disability accommodation based services.

**What consultation has taken place?**

Discussions have taken place with the Supporting People Partnership Board and the Supporting People Service User and Provider Forums. A fuller consultation will take place with the individual providers affected.

**4 So what?**

[Link to business planning process](#)

**How can we bring about any necessary change?**

Board should make decisions on 7<sup>th</sup> December, and negotiations with providers for implementation in the financial year 2012/13.

**What can be done now and what will be included in future planning?**

The final decision about the budget allocation rests with the council, and will be made shortly.

**When will this be reviewed?**

These decisions will be reviewed at future board meetings, when the impact of these decisions will be reported on.

**How will we measure success?**

- If the budget is met next year. If the negative impact on service users is kept to a minimum, and if there is no movement of vulnerable service-users from supported housing to homelessness.

<b>For the record</b>
<b>Name of person leading this DIA</b> James Graham
<b>Names of people involved in consideration of impact</b> Pete Holohan. Nick Stephenson.
<b>Date Completed</b>
<b>Name of director signing DIA</b>
<b>Date DIA signed</b>
<b>Date approved by corporate group.</b>