

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 10 MARCH 2003**

**REPORT ON: IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORTING PEOPLE – INTERIM  
PROCESS 2003/04**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK, DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

**REPORT NO: 259 - 2003**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the requirement to progress Supporting People policy and administration locally and more specifically to make recommendations about how certain aspects of the policy and administration should be implemented locally.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-
- 2.2 approves in principle the recommendations within this report, summarised at 6.9.
- 2.3 instructs the Directors of Housing, Social Work and Personnel to prepare further detailed reports setting out the personnel and resourcing implications of these recommendations.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report

## **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The support services funded via Supporting People will ensure that local needs are met locally.

## **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The implementation of the Supporting People policy will allow vulnerable people to access the support services they require to allow them to live as independently as possible within their own home.

## **6 MAIN TEXT**

- 6.1 The Supporting People programme will be introduced throughout Great Britain in April 2003. The implementation of this national programme has been adapted to meet the Scottish legislative framework.
- 6.2 The Scottish Executive issued a revised local authority action plan in June 2002. This action plan sets out the actions necessary to ensure the effective operation of Supporting People from April 2003 and requires Dundee City Council to:-

- prepare a forward plan for Supporting People that meets Scottish Executive requirements. Plans will be audited by Communities Scotland.
- have a system in place for the management and distribution of the Supporting People fund - the resource will be transferred to local authorities in April 2003 with no presumption in terms of discipline or department for the final resource. The fund is based on Transitional Housing Benefit in payment at 31 March 2003, Special Needs Allowance Package, currently paid to Housing Associations, and Resettlement Grant, currently administered by Communities Scotland. A deduction is made for assumed income from charging. The fund will be ringfenced.
- have a commissioning and contracting framework in place for current and future resources. The framework should meet the planning objectives and targets set out in the Supporting People plan.
- review all current support provision by 2006.
- have a system in place for needs and financial assessment of support recipients. A charging policy and framework will also need to be in place along with an infrastructure for direct payments. Income maximisation is identified as a cornerstone of the policy
- inform public and providers.

### 6.3 Planning

Local authorities are required to prepare a forward plan for Supporting People. Support needs overlap with current housing and social work functions and are identified as an area that should be considered as part of the joint future agenda. The Supporting People Plan must link into both the Local Housing Strategy and the Community Care Plan

**It is therefore recommended that housing and social work planning functions in respect of Supporting People are aligned more directly.**

### 6.4 Commissioning

The purpose of the commissioning activity should be to ensure that good quality services are provided that meet individual need. The guidelines suggest that commissioning should be regarded as a "means of translating strategic plans into action".

In the context of the Supporting People programme it should also be the means whereby the Supporting People fund allocated to the Council is monitored and allocated to providers.

The fund is significant in size and the Supporting People policy is cross cutting and of strategic importance.

**It is therefore recommended that a Supporting People Management Team be established which would:-**

- **oversee the Supporting People planning function, approve the Supporting People plan and recommend the strategic priorities within this plan**

- **determine the allocation of the Supporting People fund and hold the Supporting People fund and receive income from charging**
- **make recommendations on the award of contracts**
- **approve contract providers**
- **receive the outcome of service reviews**
- **consist of senior managers in social work, housing, finance and health and be assisted by an accountant to provide detailed financial management information**

**It is further recommended that the Supporting People fund should be established as a separate cost centre within the Council's financial management systems to ensure transparency on the allocation and use of this fund. It is recommended that reporting to the Council should be via the Policy and Resources Committee.**

#### 6.5 Contracting

The workload associated with contract monitoring and review will increase substantially with the full introduction of the Supporting People programme. Interim contracts have been prepared by the current Supporting People team and the social work contracting team. All these new contracts must be reviewed within 3 years with each contractor being given 1 years notice prior to review. A full system of contract compliance will be required. In a number of cases providers delivering support services also provide care services under contract to the Social Work Department. There will also be additional work associated with new support providers coming on stream and the possible withdrawal or termination of contracts with others

**It is therefore recommended that the staffing establishments within the social work contracting team and within housing be reviewed and augmented as necessary to enable this additional workload to be handled effectively, and to ensure the Council can discharge its quality monitoring and audit responsibilities.**

#### 6.6 Assessment

In future, service users will access housing support services via the single shared assessment framework. This includes a needs assessment and a financial assessment, which must then be reviewed at least annually.

It is anticipated that the numbers requiring assessment will increase, as many of these currently receiving housing support services only will now require formal assessment. How this will be taken forward in practice will be determined through the single shared assessment process. It is also expected that local authorities will, as a matter of good practice, offer a financial assessment to people funding support services themselves

**It is therefore recommended that: -**

- **an estimate is made of the additional numbers requiring assessment**

- **staffing levels be reviewed to ensure that both needs and financial assessments can be undertaken timeously**
- **existing policies and practices are examined against the assessment framework**

#### 6.7 Income Maximisation

Income maximisation is a central principle of the Supporting People policy. All users of support services should be offered an income maximisation check, and given assistance if required to submit claims for benefits. At present, this is done for recipients of care services as an integral part of the financial assessment process. The Welfare Rights team within social work has the necessary expertise in dealing with the complexities of the benefits system and in processing significant volumes of initial checks and reviews.

**To ensure the increased number of income maximisation checks can be carried out, a two pronged approach is recommended:-**

- **a short term (6 months) income maximisation campaign, to cover sheltered housing tenants and other significant groups not currently receiving care services. This could also be extended to cover potential Housing Benefit claimants, not in receipt of housing support or care services.**
- **a review of the likely ongoing workload and augmentation of the staffing within Welfare Rights if the numbers merit it.**

#### 6.8 Billing and Payment

The Council must have systems for paying support providers and for collecting charges due.

IT colleagues are currently working on a Supporting People system that will bring together various systems to allow automatic calculation of charges due, and in future, an automatic means of producing bills will be in place.

Payment to providers will be on the basis of contracts, although occupancy and activity levels will need to be monitored and invoices checked. This may need an enhancement of administrative staff levels.

**It is recommended that:-**

- **staffing levels be reviewed to ensure the efficient and effective collection of these charges.**
- **the operation of the new IT system and associated administrative processes be kept under review.**

#### 6.9 Summary of Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

- **housing and social work planning functions in respect of Supporting People are aligned more directly (6.3)**

- a Supporting People Management Team be established as outlined in 6.4
- the Supporting People fund should be established as a separate cost centre within the Council's financial management systems and reporting to the Council should be via the Policy and Resources Committee.
- the staffing establishments within the social work contracting team and within housing be reviewed and augmented as necessary in light of the additional contracting workload (6.5)
- an estimate is made of the additional numbers requiring assessment and staffing levels are reviewed to ensure that both needs and financial assessments can be undertaken timeously (6.6)
- existing policies and practices are examined against the assessment framework (6.6)
- a short term (6 months) income maximisation campaign is run (6.7)
- a review of the likely ongoing workload for Welfare Rights is carried out and staffing within Welfare Rights augmented if the numbers merit it. (6.7)
- staffing levels for billing and collection be reviewed to ensure the efficient and effective collection of charges due. (6.8)
- the operation of the new IT system and associated administrative processes be kept under review. (6.8)

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Support Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None.

Alan G Baird  
Director of Social Work

Elaine Zwirlein  
Director of Housing

David K Dorward  
Director of Finance

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