

Beacon Council Scheme Round Five

Supporting People Theme

Evidence on Current Practice, Best Practice and User Satisfaction

Background

This paper presents key findings on current practice, best practice and user satisfaction in the selected theme. This information has been taken from the Round Five theme reports completed by the central government policy leads in each theme in late Spring 2003. The full theme reports can be found at: www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon/beacon.htm

The user satisfaction data and analysis was completed by MORI in August 2003 and the full report on all themes is available at www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon5.pdf

The evidence base on theme research and user satisfaction is designed to assist the Independent Advisory Panel in creating the selection criteria for the scheme. It is also designed to assist local authorities in applying for the scheme and in improving services generally. The research evidence base on the Beacon Council Scheme is crucial in identifying current and best practice in service provision whilst taking into account the satisfaction of those that receive the services. This evidence base also enables local authorities to identify areas for improvement as well as potential areas for innovation in attempting to achieve continuous improvement in service provision.

The research evidence base can also demonstrate whether the scheme is achieving its long-term objective of improving services. Warwick University Business School has commenced work on a three to five year ODPM / IDeA funded project entitled *An Impact Evaluation of the Beacon Council Scheme* and this will yield further evidence shortly and greatly contribute to the future evidence base on service improvement.

Section A - Current Practice in Supporting People

- The initial stages of the programme are as follows:
 - Establish local strategy to match demand and supply of services
 - Map the current supply of services
 - Identify current funding streams of those services which will be transferred into the SP pot.
 - Transfer current funding streams in SP budget
 - Establish SP charging policy
 - Develop SP IT, financial, review and contract management systems
 - Initially maintain the status quo, via 'interim contracts'
 - Review current service provision, establish 'steady state' contracts within the first 3 years of Supporting People
 - Decommission unwanted or unsatisfactory services

 - Develop new services according to demand and agreed standards.
 - Ensure services are delivered and paid for by SP and conform to grant conditions

- All services in existence at 31/3/03 will continue to be funded at the commencement of SP. Providers are issued with an ‘interim contract’ by the ALA, with the contract price being based on the amount of legacy funding identified during the supply mapping phase. A model contract is available to be used for all SP services, with amendments to the contract allowed only if both parties agree. Service users should see no immediate change after SP day.

- Two types of contract will exist, they are:

Block Gross’ Contracts; and

‘Block Subsidy’ Contracts

Block gross contracts involve the payment of a monthly lump sum which does not vary with the volume of service use; typically these will cover the smaller non chargeable services provided by charitable organisations, who have a relatively fixed cost base and who would suffer cash flow and planning difficulties were their monthly contract payments to fluctuate, due to circumstances effectively beyond their control.

Block subsidy contracts will cover larger services, with monthly payments dependent on the current volume of service usage and will be chargeable under the Supporting People. However all users in receipt of relief of support on 31st March 2003 have been subsidised by the Supporting People programme. The fact that payment of SP grant will be volume dependent, based on current activity levels, places a large administrative burden on both providers and AAs, because of the need to regularly transmit timely and accurate information to facilitate payment and the monitoring of activity levels.

- Each SP ALA has to adopt a charging policy following a process of discussion within the Core Strategy Group and the Commissioning Body. The ODPM assumes that a local charging policy will exist and will deduct an assumed income from charging when paying SP grant to ALAs. The option not to charge exists, however, it is likely that most SP will charge those users whose income is above a certain level: if the local policy is not to charge, then SP partners will have to fund locally the shortfall in SP grant in order to honour contractual commitments with service providers. Local charging policies are allowed to be more ‘generous’ than proposed by ODPM, but cannot be ‘harsher’, e.g. a decision not to charge for sheltered accommodation, but to levy charges to LD service users, could be taken; however, it would not be possible to charge short term service users such as victims of domestic violence.
- Detailed guidance on charging is contained in the June 2002 Interim Financial Package .The guidance suggests that ‘long term’ service users defined as expected service duration greater than two years, e.g. sheltered housing, supported housing for those with learning disabilities, should be charged. ‘Short-term’ service users, e.g. those fleeing domestic violence and homeless people, will not be charged.
- For chargeable services, new service users will be assumed able to pay full support charges, however, all users are entitled to undergo a two-stage means test: the test will be administered by the ALA. Stage one of the test is to assess the user’s eligibility for Housing Benefit: those qualifying for HB, either partial or in full, are to be ‘passport’ from charging, and will pay nothing. Under stage two of the means test, users ineligible for HB are assessed under ‘Fairer Charging’ guidelines, currently being introduced by DoH but through Social Services departments. The result of the assessment will be that some users will have to pay

some or all of the designated charge for their service. It is however up to the discretion of the local authority if fairer charging is implemented in April 1st or delayed for a period up to two years.

- ❑ The introduction of charging may be unpopular, particularly in the sheltered housing sector where traditionally rents have been pooled¹. However, providers can opt not to charge, or to reduce charges, in which case they will have to make up any shortfall between cost of service provision and SP grant from their own resources.

Each SP Partnership needs to have a long term effective IT systems in

- ❑ place in order to manage financial assessments, payments to providers, charging administration and contract monitoring. The initial thrust will be towards establishing systems that will enable effective administration of the programme. After the introduction of SP work as part of a wider e-government agenda will facilitate a national internet-based database called the Hub.

Section B - Indications Of Best Practice in Supporting People

1. Submissions for beacons under this theme will be assessed particularly in respect of evidence and material that can be observed or measured. The satisfaction of users and providers will be highly valued as will the effective working partnership of the Commissioning Body
2. The assessment should consider a number of aspects
 - Strategic Steer and Corporate Commitment
 - Partnership working across the relevant sector
 - Robust review and monitoring scheme in place
 - Delivering Supporting People Services post April 1
 - Risk assessments and Contingency planning
 - Outcomes for services users.
3. **CORPORATE COMMITMENT & STRATEGIC STEER**– There will need to be evidence to show that the community plan/new community strategy links with Supporting People and also that the Supporting People strategy links into wider strategies. There should also be targets set for Supporting People. Evidence on how service users were involved in developing the Shadow Strategy should also be clear and also how service users were involved in setting aims and priorities for the programme.
4. The corporate ownership of the programme is critical and any council being assessed for beacon status should have wide ownership of the programme across the Administering Local Authority. This should include a clear explanation of how any barriers or obstacles have been overcome..
5. **PARTNERSHIPS** -The ALA must have a robust and sustainable Commissioning Body in place that meets the requirements of the SP grant conditions. The CB should have agreed terms of reference and met on a regular basis with clarity around agendas and outcomes. It would be considered very positive practice for the Commissioning Body to have links into

¹ Pooled rents were common practice in a number of local authority Housing Departments where rental and support charges for all tenants were calculated and then an average rent, including charges for any support provided, was levied across the authority dependent usually on property type.

other strategic partnerships, for example, the Local Strategic Partnership (Hartlepool are a sound example of this). There should also be an active Core Strategic Group which has terms of reference with representation from Health, Probation and other strategic partners.

6. **INCLUSIVE FORUMS** should be held with wide representation and meaningful participation. The Commissioning Body and Core Strategic Group must liaise with this group.
7. **ROBUST REVIEW AND MONITORING** – ALA should have sufficient staff within the SP team with the necessary skills to carry out the review and monitoring process across the different types of service. If skills are not in place what is being done to achieve this? Should be evidence as to how those providers, who are to be reviewed first, were selected. Other areas of best practice would be the development of additional service standards, additional performance indicators, local benchmarking and targets. Best practice would also involve users and carers in the process of review and monitoring.
8. **DELIVERING SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICES POST APRIL 2003** – Evidence that a SP project plan is in place and being monitored and used as a working document. Robust performance management and monitoring systems should be in place. Payments to providers should be accurate and made on time. Is there an effective charging policy in place? Users should have been informed in the process of change from one funding regime to SP with as little disruption as possible and explanations should have been simple and written in layman terms. Councillors should have been kept informed of all aspects of changeover to the new SP regime. All these consultation processes should be clearly evidenced. Positive practice would see the existence of a SP Communication Strategy in the corporate arena with widespread ownership for its effective delivery.
9. **RISK ASSESSMENTS - Have the local authority assessed the risks** associated with the Supporting People programme. Best practice would involve establishing a separate risk register. The risk register would include what plans are in place to deal with IT project failure together with what plans have been agreed to deal with closure of a provider or sudden failure of a scheme (eg fire, health and safety failures).
10. **OUTCOMES FOR SERVICE USERS** – Beacon Councils should have a clearly defined vision of improved outcomes for service users together with clear mechanisms for progress to be reported to service users and measurable targets for how improvements will be achieved. A mechanism should be in place for service providers to report regularly on service improvements and best practice should also incorporate reality checking with service users on a regularly defined basis to confirm improvements and to monitor their sustainability over time.

Section C - User Satisfaction in Supporting People

This broad theme covers four areas of policy, namely the funding of housing related support services including:

- Domestic violence refuges;
- Sheltered accommodation for older people;
- Independent living complexes for people with learning difficulties; and
- Units for people with alcohol misuse problems.

There is sporadic national survey data relating to two of these areas. Some key measures are included below:

Accommodation for those affected by domestic violence

There is some data looking at the extent to which local authorities have access and make use of temporary accommodation for homeless people experiencing domestic violence.

Local authority use of temporary accommodation for homeless households experiencing domestic violence

<i>Base: 354 local authorities in England.</i>	Never uses	Uses occasionally	Uses regularly
	%	%	%
Refuges	4	33	63
Hostels	28	28	44
Private rented sector	66	22	13
Bed & Breakfast	35	47	18
Local authority/Housing Association on a temporary basis	30	32	38
Friends/family	17	59	24
Other	88	6	6
Any temporary accommodation	0	100	0

Source: National Survey of Local Authorities (1999).²

Local authorities with access to local refuges – by region

<i>Base: 213 local authorities in England.</i>	Authorities with refuge places	
	Number	%
England	213	60
Eastern	24	50
East Midlands	20	50
London	31	94
Merseyside	4	80
North East	14	61
North West	26	68
South East	37	55
South West	23	51
West Midlands	21	58
Yorkshire & Humberside	13	62

Source: National Survey of Local Authorities (1999).³

² Quoted from “The Provision of Accommodation and Support for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence In England (Housing Report 2002).

³ Quoted from “The Provision of Accommodation and Support for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence In England” (Housing Report 2002).

Whether local authorities have access to specialist temporary accommodation for homeless households experiencing domestic violence

Base: 354 local authorities in England.

	% of local authorities
People from ethnic minorities	6
People with a physical disability	12
People with mental health problems	21
People with learning disabilities	13
Single women	23
Specific age groups	15

Source: National Survey of Local Authorities (1999).⁴

Sheltered accommodation for older people

There is some national data on sheltered accommodation for older people. Below are results from a paper published by the ODPM called 'Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – A Strategic Framework'. This outlines the types of accommodation elderly people live in and who provides this sheltered accommodation.

Type of accommodation older people live in

	%
Ordinary housing	90
Sheltered and very sheltered housing	5
Registered care homes	5

Source: Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – A Strategic Framework, ODPM.

Providers of Sheltered Housing

	%
Local authority sheltered accommodation	54
RSL sheltered accommodation	37
Private sector	4
RSL very sheltered	3
Local authority very sheltered	1

Source: Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – A Strategic Framework, ODPM.

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⁴ Ibid.