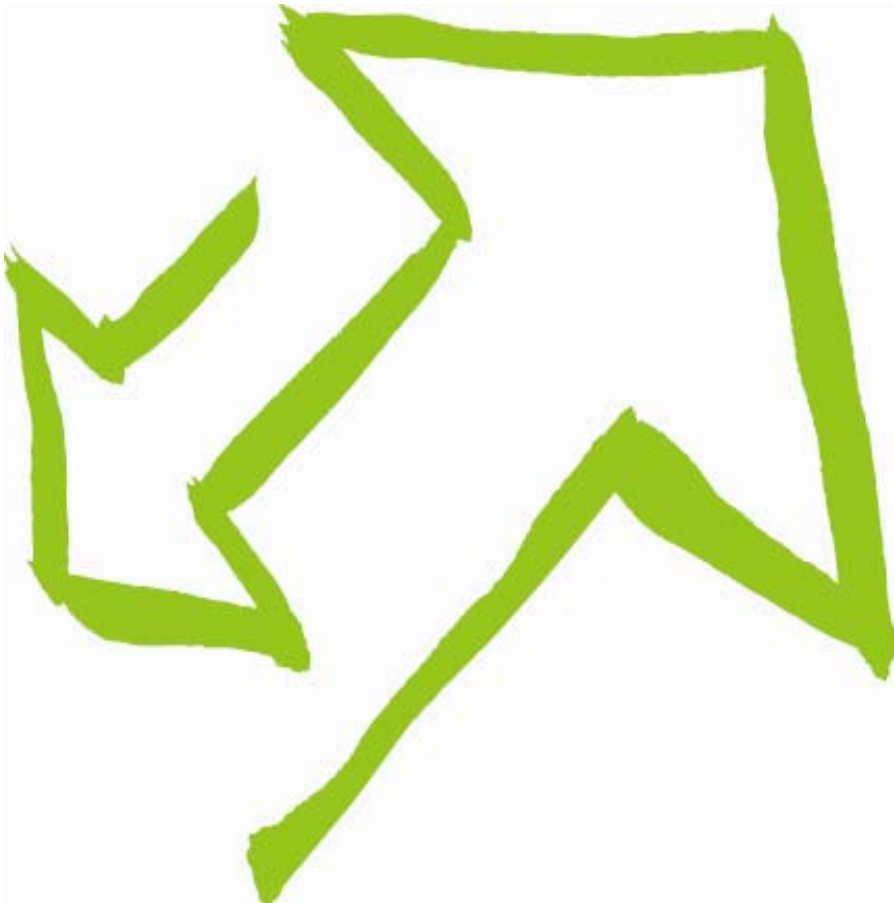


# Supporting People Re-inspection

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

July 2009



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# Supporting People Inspections

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively and delivers high-quality local services for the public.

Within the Audit Commission, the Housing Inspectorate inspects and monitors the performance of a number of bodies and services. These include local authority housing departments, local authorities administering Supporting People programmes, arms length management organisations and housing associations. Our key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) set out the main issues which we consider when forming our judgements on the quality of services. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing).

This inspection has been carried out by the Housing Inspectorate using powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. In broad terms, these principles look to minimise the burden of regulation while maximising its impact. Supporting People inspections are carried out with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).

Supporting People is the Government's long-term policy to enable local authorities to plan, commission and provide housing-related support services which help vulnerable people live independently.

The Supporting People programme brings together significant funding streams including transitional housing benefit (THB), which has paid for the support costs associated with housing during the implementation phase, the Housing Corporation's supported housing management grant (SHMG), and the probation accommodation grant scheme (PAGS) into a single pot to be administered by 150 administering local authorities (ALA). Unitary and metropolitan authorities and counties are designated as an administering authority with the county taking the lead in most cases for the districts in their area.

Administering local authorities work in partnership, with districts where this is relevant, to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for housing-related support services with housing, social services, health and the probation service providers. Negotiation and consultation is also required with service users, all housing and support service providers, other statutory service providers, the private sector and voluntary organisations to plan and commission support services to meet identified needs.

The former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)<sup>1</sup> has published a number of consultation papers on the developing programme and a work plan setting out what local authorities and their partners will need to achieve in order to deliver the programme effectively. All the relevant papers for Supporting People can be found on the Supporting People k-web that can be accessed through the Supporting People website: [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> Now 'Communities and Local Government' (CLG).

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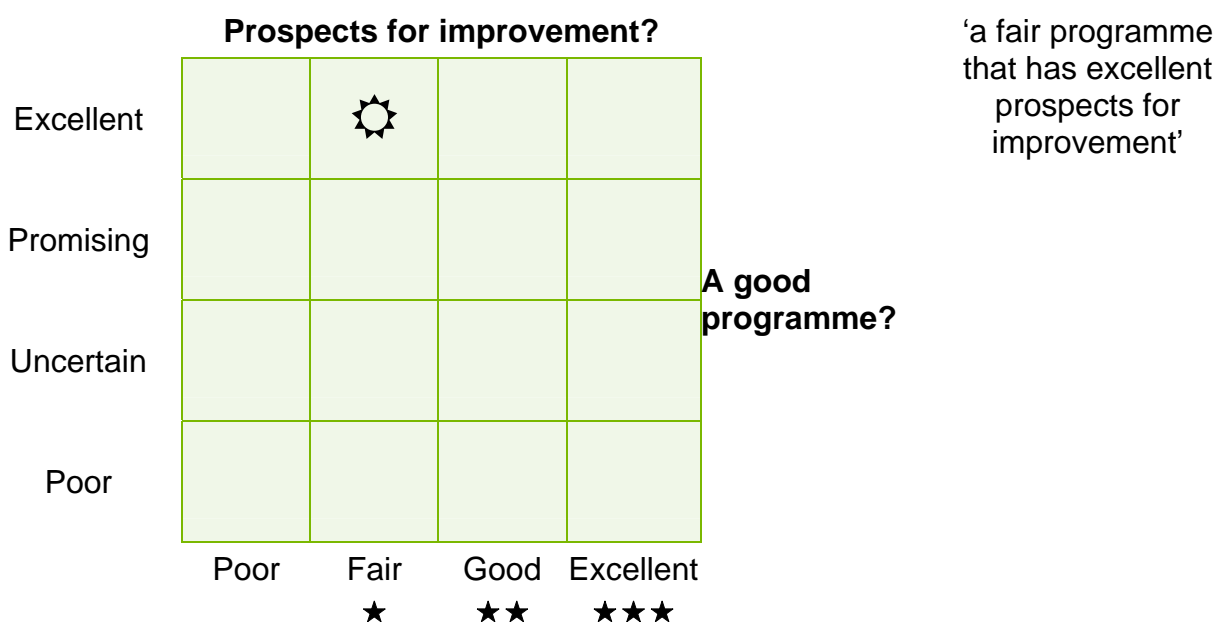
# Summary

- 1 This re-inspection found Rochdale MBC's administration of the Supporting People Programme to be 'fair' with 'excellent' prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Council has made significant progress in the year since the first inspection. Corporate commitment to the Programme has been strong, particularly from elected members. This has helped to deliver good progress against a challenging improvement plan. Revised eligibility criteria have been agreed that make good use of the flexibility now allowed by national changes to grant conditions. Robust value for money and procurement frameworks are in place, there has been an improvement in the quality of existing services and new services have been commissioned for the first time.
- 3 There is effective partnership working, in particular with service providers and with the programme's Health and Probation partners. Service user involvement has also been strengthened and is now having an impact, although this is recent. There is a strong Supporting People team with effective leadership; its work is well planned and there is good financial management. Service providers rate the team highly.
- 4 However, the programme is still some way behind the position expected at the end of the sixth year of the programme. At the time of this inspection, not all providers had received steady state contracts and the retraction of ineligible funding was not yet complete. Although substantial progress has been made over the past year, some needs and commissioning priorities have not yet been met due to earlier delays in the programme. The three-year strategy provides a basis for future commissioning, but more sector reviews and research is required to inform the future commissioning and remodelling of services. Work to address the shortage of move-on accommodation is also at an early stage.
- 5 The corporate commitment to the programme is supported by a financial commitment to allocate the current level of funding and underspend to future housing-related support. Clear improvement plans are in place and progress against plans is regularly and widely reported, although performance reports are not always robust. There is strong staff capacity, and the capacity of providers is enhanced through effective training and support.

# Scoring the programme

6 We have assessed Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council as providing a 'fair', one-star programme that has excellent prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

**Figure 1 Scoring chart<sup>2</sup>**



Source: Audit Commission

- 7 We found the programme to be 'fair' because it has a range of strengths including:
- corporate commitment and governance arrangements are strong, with effective engagement from Health and Probation partners and good links to the Local Strategic Partnership;
  - new services have been commissioned over the past year to meet the needs of some of the most excluded groups. The procurement process for this commissioning is robust;
  - a three-year strategy has been agreed with clear commissioning and enabling priorities;
  - day-to-day delivery of the programme and financial management are strong and the Supporting People team works closely and effectively with service providers;
  - there is an effective approach to contract monitoring and quality assurance;

<sup>2</sup> The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the programme is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a programme that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent programme (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the programme, also on a four-point scale.

- eligibility criteria have recently been revised to enable more flexible use of funding to better meet needs;
  - a comprehensive value for money framework is used to assess service providers and this has led to improvements in the quality and cost-effectiveness of services;
  - service user involvement has been strengthened to include involvement in commissioning and contract monitoring, as well as representation in the governance arrangements;
  - there is a good range of information available including an updated directory of services and an informative newsletter; and
  - there are several culturally specific services, and targets and plans are in place to increase access to housing-related support for certain under-represented groups.
- 8 However, there are some areas which require improvement. These include:
- commissioning and remodelling of services to meet needs has not yet taken place for all client groups. Sector reviews have not been carried out for all groups to inform service delivery;
  - the Programme has not delivered the outcomes for service users that would be expected by the end of the sixth year of the Programme in terms of reshaping service provision for all client groups;
  - steady state contracts are not in place for all services and accreditation is still to be completed for three providers;
  - work to develop shared outcomes and targets is at an early stage;
  - ineligible costs are still being retracted from one high-cost provider, which delays the investment of new funding;
  - there is a shortage of move-on accommodation and work to address this is at an early stage;
  - the approach to improvement planning with service providers is inconsistent, as is the monitoring of complaints made to providers;
  - the development of service user involvement is recent and some client groups are not yet effectively involved;
  - there is not a co-ordinated approach to the assessment and referral of potential service users; and
  - Equality Impact Assessments have not been carried out in some key areas.

## Scoring the programme

9 The programme has excellent prospects for improvement because:

- financial capacity has been enhanced by the Council's commitment to continue to allocate the current level of funding and underspend to housing-related support services over the next two years;
- there is a strong track record of improvement over the past year, including good progress against a challenging improvement plan;
- improvement plans are clear, address the correct priorities and are linked to individual work plans;
- progress against plans is regularly and widely reported;
- staff are skilled, well motivated and effectively managed. There is a high rate of staff retention and low sickness levels;
- leadership of the Programme and of the Supporting People team is strong;
- the Programme has increasingly used learning from others to help deliver improvements; and
- partnership working is adding to capacity, and the capacity of providers is enhanced through training and support.

10 However:

- performance reporting requires improvement in some areas.

# Recommendations

- 11 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, organisations need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the organisation. In addition, we identify the approximate costs<sup>3</sup> and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council shares the findings of this report with service users, service providers and councillors; and takes action to address all weaknesses identified in the report. The inspection team makes the following recommendations.

## Recommendation

- R1** Ensure that the supply of housing-related support services better meets needs by:
- agreeing and implementing plans to restructure service provision in the light of the recent review of single homelessness services;
  - completing all outstanding sector reviews, including reviews of older people's services (including extra-care provision), learning disability services and a full review of mental health services;
  - agreeing plans to restructure service provision following the above reviews; and
  - agreeing and implementing plans to address the outcomes of the recent research into the housing support needs of vulnerable people with HIV/AIDS.

- 12 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:
- a range of services that better meet housing support needs in the area.
- 13 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by July 2010.

## Recommendation

- R2** Improve the opportunities for service users to access and move on from supported accommodation by:
- implementing the move-on strategy action plan;
  - review access and referral arrangements to ensure that potential service users receive the most appropriate support service for their needs; and
  - ensuring that all frontline staff can effectively signpost people who need housing-related support services.

<sup>3</sup> Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

## Recommendations

14 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- service users are able to move to more independent accommodation or more appropriate supported housing when ready to do so;
- higher turnover leading to more opportunities for people to access supported housing and floating support; and
- potential service users being promptly referred to services that are the most appropriate for their needs.

15 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by January 2010.

### Recommendation

**R3** Improve the outcomes from the Programme by:

- agreeing the remaining steady state contracts with providers and completing the accreditation of providers;
- agreeing shared outcomes, baselines positions and targets for services with all relevant partners;
- ensuring that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken in all relevant areas of Supporting People activity;
- ensuring that performance reports - in particular traffic light reporting - accurately show progress against milestones and targets;
- ensuring that service providers' improvement plans are clear and timetabled, and that progress against them is regularly checked and recorded; and
- ensuring that all client groups who receive housing-related support have opportunities to routinely contribute to the development of the Programme.

16 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- more certainty for service providers, which will enable them to make longer term plans for improving service delivery;
- improved assurance that policies and procedures do not adversely affect particular groups;
- clearer reports of progress, which will enable any slippage to be identified and addressed; and
- a programme that is informed by input from the widest possible range of service users.

17 The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. The first bullet point should be implemented by July 2009 and the remainder by January 2010.

18 We would like to thank the staff of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Dates of inspection: 30 March to 3 April 2009

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# Report

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## Context

### The locality

- 19** Rochdale is situated on the northern edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation and is one of the ten local authorities in that area. Its main population centres are Rochdale, Middleton, Heywood and the Pennine towns and villages, such as Littleborough, Milnrow, Newhey and Wardle. It has a population of 206,100,<sup>4</sup> 19 per cent of whom are aged over 60.
- 20** In 2001 there were 83,452 households in the borough and of these 30 per cent were one-person households and 33 per cent were households with children. At that time, 88 per cent of the population was White, 10 per cent Asian and 2 per cent other non-white British minority groups.<sup>5</sup>
- 21** Rochdale is an area of significant deprivation and is ranked as the 25 most deprived of the 354 English local authority areas, and is the third most deprived of the ten Greater Manchester authority areas, after Manchester and Salford.<sup>6</sup> One area in central Rochdale is the most deprived in England for employment, third most deprived for health, and sixth for income deprivation. Unemployment, as measured by the claimant count, stood at 5.4 per cent in December 2008, compared with a national average for England of 2.3 per cent.

### The Council

- 22** Rochdale MBC has a Leader and Cabinet governance model. The Council is currently controlled by the Liberal Democrats, with 33 councillors, while Labour has 18 councillors, the Conservatives eight and there is one Independent. The Council has just under 5,000 employees and its total budget for 2008/09 was £346.8 million, of which social care accounts for £79.5 million and housing £19.9 million.
- 23** Rochdale has been assessed by the Audit Commission<sup>7</sup> as a three-star council (out of a possible four) that is 'improving well' - an improvement from its two-star rating in 2007. Within this overall score, the adult social care service scored three out of four, and housing scored four out of four. An inspection of Adult Social Care Services by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate in 2008 led to a rating of two stars ('good') with promising prospects for improvement, an improvement from the 2007 score of one-star ('adequate').

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<sup>4</sup> O.N.S. mid-year population estimates 2007.

<sup>5</sup> 2001 census.

<sup>6</sup> Deprivation index 2007; average ward score.

<sup>7</sup> Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2008.

## Report

24 Corporate priorities for Rochdale are set out in 'Aiming High', the Council's corporate strategy for 2007 to 2010. These are:

- to increase jobs and prosperity;
- Every Child Matters;
- improving community safety;
- creating a cleaner greener environment;
- improving health and wellbeing; and
- township dimension.

### The Supporting People programme

25 The Council is the administering local authority (ALA) for the Supporting People programme and runs it in partnership with the Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Primary Care Trust, and the Greater Manchester Probation Trust.<sup>8</sup>

26 Delivery of the Supporting People programme is administered by a team relocated from the housing service in November 2008 to be based within a new Vulnerable Adults Service within Adult Social Care.

27 The Council received £15,077,000 Supporting People grant from central Government in both 2007/08 and 2008/09. This level of funding remains the same in 2009/10 although from 1 April 2009 Supporting People grant has been unringfenced and the grant conditions have been removed. From April 2010 the funding will be paid as part of the Area Based Grant.

28 An administration grant of £221,519 was received from Government in 2008/09 and this was supplemented by £546,900 from the Council. In 2009/10 the administration grant fell to £204,031, with additional Council support of £508,700.

29 At the start of the programme in 2003 there were 56 providers holding 75 contracts, for 299 services. By April 2009 this had decreased to 47 providers, 63 contracts and 156 services as a result of decommissioning and remodelling of services.

30 In 2003 the Programme funded 3,100 units of housing-related support.<sup>9</sup> This comprised 2,866 accommodation-based units and 414 units of floating support. By March 2009 this had increased to 3,533 units, comprising 2,663 accommodation-based units and 870 units of floating support. In addition, there have been 100 units of Home Improvement Agency support throughout the programme.

31 The highest cost service is one for young people at risk costing £679 per unit per week. The lowest cost service is a community alarm service at £0.40 per unit per week.

32 We first assessed the Council's delivery of the Supporting People programme in February 2008 and a report of this inspection was published in June 2008. At that time we rated the Council as delivering a poor, no-star programme, but with promising prospects for improvement. This re-inspection was undertaken at the end of the sixth year of the Supporting People programme.

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<sup>8</sup> Greater Manchester Probation Area gained Trust status on 1 April 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Excluding community alarms and Home Improvement Agency provision.

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# How good is the Supporting People programme?

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## What has the programme aimed to achieve?

**33** In 2008 the Supporting People programme agreed a new three-year strategy 2008 to 2011 which superseded the 2005 to 2010 five-year strategy. The revised strategy set out the following vision for the programme:

**'The Supporting People programme in Rochdale aims to provide high quality, timely and accessible housing related support services that prevent homelessness, promote independence and choice and improve quality of life and well being.'**

**34** To support the achievement of this vision the following aims were agreed.

- To provide high quality, cost-effective, accessible housing related support services that meet identified need.
- To prevent people from losing their homes.
- To promote and enable independent living and social inclusion.
- To provide services that offer individuals choice and control.
- To provide services to improve quality of life and well being.

**35** A set of values to underpin Rochdale's approach to delivering the programme has also been agreed. These values are as follows.

- Equality.
- Partnership Working.
- Enabling and Empowering.
- Listening.
- Transparency.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

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### Is the programme meeting the needs of the local community and users?

**36** The assessment was based on the following key issues.

- Governance and partnerships.
- Grant compliance, strategy and needs.
- Delivery arrangements.
- Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance.
- Value for money.
- Service user involvement.
- Access to services and information.
- Diversity.
- Outcomes for service users.

#### Governance and partnerships

**37** The CLG (previously ODPM) set out the following structural arrangements for the governance, development and delivery of the Supporting People programme.

- Accountable Officer and the Supporting People team: drive the whole process.
- Inclusive forum: consults with service providers and service users.
- Core strategy group: proposes strategic direction, service review procedures and timetables and work needed to secure the effective and efficient delivery and development of the programme.
- Commissioning body: agrees strategic direction, compliance with grant conditions, outcomes of service reviews and monitors the delivery and development of the programme.
- Councillors: approve key decisions of the Commissioning Body.
- Supporting People team: delivers the local programme.

**38** The previous inspection found a balance of strengths and weaknesses in this area. There was strong corporate commitment to the programme, governance arrangements were in place and beginning to have an impact, and there was evidence of positive working partnerships at a senior level and improving relationships with providers. However, the revised governance arrangements had yet to make a full impact on the programme's delivery. Service user involvement in governance was new and yet to have an impact. Operational linkages were less effective among partners and some providers lacked confidence in the programme.

- 39 This is now an area where strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses. Corporate commitment remains strong and governance arrangements have been strengthened. Councillors are well engaged in the programme. There is effective partnership working, including a positive relationship with service providers. Service user involvement in governance has been strengthened and is now having an impact. However, work to develop shared targets and outcomes with partners is at an early stage.

### **Corporate commitment and links**

- 40 There is strong corporate commitment to the Supporting People programme. The profile of the programme has been raised considerably over the past 18 months and awareness of the programme among councillors is particularly high. Elected members help to ensure that the programme is well integrated into plans for housing, social care, employment and regeneration. For example, a cross-party Supporting People 'Elected Member Panel' acts as a consultative group for the programme. The panel comprises two nominated councillors from each of the four townships, plus three cabinet members with relevant portfolios. They have visited projects and used their positions to champion the programme within the Council and externally. This has helped to raise the profile of housing-related support and ensure that it is central to service development for vulnerable people.
- 41 The lead member for health and adult social care, whose portfolio includes Supporting People, is actively involved in promoting the programme and monitoring progress. He also chairs the Learning Disability Partnership Board, which provides an effective link for Supporting People issues. The lead member keeps other councillors informed through regular updates; councillors are also kept informed through group meetings and the Supporting People newsletter. This is ensuring that elected members are well informed about the programme and are fully involved in its development.
- 42 There is also evidence of strong support for the programme from the most senior Council officers. The Chief Executive has taken an active interest in the programme, both prior to its launch in 2003, and since 2005/06 when it became apparent that delivery of the programme was not on track. He receives regular progress reports from the Executive Director who chairs the Strategic Commissioning Board. He also provides a link to other bodies, for example through his chairing of the Safer Communities Partnership, which is also attended by the Supporting People Accountable Officer. This is providing strong corporate understanding of, and support for, the programme.
- 43 The Council's support for the programme is also evidenced by a medium-term financial commitment. As well as ongoing annual contributions to the programme's administration budget, the Council's Cabinet has agreed to continue to ring-fence the £15 million Supporting People grant allocation and accumulated underspend to the end of 2010/11, despite removal of the national ring-fence from April 2009, on condition that the programme continues to contribute effectively to the Council's priorities. This gives some certainty to the team that commissioning priorities can be delivered to benefit vulnerable people.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 44 Housing support services for vulnerable people are given clear priority by the Local Strategic Partnership (the 'Pride Partnership'). The Supporting People programme contributes to the targets within both the Community Strategy ('Pride of Place') and the Local Area Agreement. The Partnership is one of only eight areas in England to include the two Supporting People national outcomes indicators<sup>10</sup> in its Local Area Agreement suite of indicators chosen to drive improvement in priorities. This demonstrates a commitment to achieving Supporting People objectives from the Council and its partners.
- 45 The Supporting People programme has good links with the Local Strategic Partnership. The Programme is linked through the Vulnerable Adults strand of the health and well being partnership, and the Accountable Officer is the link between Supporting People governance and the health and well being executive. This is ensuring that the Supporting People and vulnerable adults agenda is represented within the partnership.

### **Strategic Commissioning Board (Commissioning Body)**

- 46 In Rochdale the Commissioning Body is called a 'Strategic Commissioning Board'. The Strategic Commissioning Board is working effectively and has strengthened its role since the first inspection. The governance of the programme was reviewed in 2008 and the roles of the Strategic Commissioning Board and the Supporting People Development Group were clarified and strengthened. There is a clear and appropriate separation of roles and a Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the two bodies. The Strategic Commissioning Board has set an appropriate work plan for the Supporting People Development Group based on the 2008 three-year strategy, and monitors progress. This is ensuring that governance arrangements support the effective delivery of the programme.
- 47 Governance of the Programme was identified as a weakness in a baseline assessment that the Council commissioned in July 2006 and an initial review of governance was completed in 2007. As a consequence, the membership of both the Strategic Commissioning Board and the Supporting People Development Group were revised and it was agreed that the governance of the programme should be reviewed annually. This has ensured that the membership and roles of the governing bodies are regularly scrutinised and updated.
- 48 The Strategic Commissioning Board has appropriate levels of membership and attendance. The voting members are Executive Directors from the Council (who has chaired the Board since 2008) and the Primary Care Trust, and the Probation Trust's Divisional Manager. Non-voting members are the Supporting People Accountable Officer, plus senior officers from the Council's adult care service; children's, schools and families service; housing service; and finance department.

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<sup>10</sup> National Indicators 141 'Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living' and 142 'Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living'.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 49 Over the past year meetings have been generally held every four to six weeks, to ensure that delivery of the Service Improvement Plan was maintained following the first inspection. The Strategic Commissioning Board receives quarterly performance reports on delivery of the programme, including information on outcomes (see 'How well does the Council manage performance?' later in this report for further details of performance reporting).
- 50 Evidence from our interviews, observation of a Strategic Commissioning Board meeting and minutes of meetings shows that all partners are actively engaged and meetings are effective and well attended - with 100 per cent attendance by voting partners or their deputies over the past year. Papers, discussions and chairing arrangements contribute to effective decision making. The Strategic Commissioning Board has made some difficult decisions in relation to the delivery of the programme, for example the decommissioning of services which did not meet the necessary quality standards. This has improved the direction and drive of the programme.
- 51 A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the administering authority and the Strategic Commissioning Board, including a disputes procedure and guidelines on conflicts of interests. However, the guidelines for governance attached to the Memorandum which we received required updating to reflect changes in arrangements (such as the merger of two Primary Care Trusts); following our feedback, these were appropriately updated during the inspection.

### **Supporting People Development Group (Core Strategy Group)**

- 52 In Rochdale the Core Strategy Group is called a 'Supporting People Development Group'. The group's role has been strengthened over the past 18 months (by, for example, provider and service user representation) and it played a key role in the review of the Supporting People strategy, using its own expertise and understanding of the client groups, together with other data, to identify gaps in service delivery. It has also focused on ensuring that commissioning decisions have been robust. The Supporting People Development Group has improved its focus on outcomes for the programme; these are now detailed in the Supporting People programme work plan and monitored by the Group.
- 53 The Supporting People Development Group benefits from a broad membership and a generally good level of attendance. There are 15 members of the group, including two recently nominated service user representatives, two provider representatives and a wide range of internal and external partners. The governance review led to an expansion of membership to include a representative from the Economic Partnership, to further develop work that has been completed on improving employment and training outcomes for service users. This range of involvement in the Supporting People Development Group is helping to ensure that the needs of all groups are recognised as the programme develops.
- 54 The role of the Supporting People Development Group is clear and complements that of the Strategic Commissioning Board. Meetings are generally held every six weeks and are timed to ensure a flow of information and recommendations to the Strategic Commissioning Board. The Group is chaired by the Accountable Officer and evidence from interviews and minutes is that the Group carries out its work effectively and is helping to drive delivery of the programme.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 55 There are generally effective arrangements for provider representation on the Supporting People Development Group. Two provider representatives attend and feel able to fully contribute to the Group. Any discussions around specific services take part during a closed part of the meeting which the providers do not attend. However, the role of the provider representatives is not always clear to other providers; the representatives plan to address this through a questionnaire to providers and discussions with the Supporting People Development Group. Also, although the representatives that attend the Supporting People Development Group report back to the provider forum, this feedback is verbal and is not included in the minutes of forum meetings, and so is not available to providers not attending the meetings. This does not ensure that the links between providers and the Supporting People Development Group are fully effective.
- 56 Three service users (extended from two in March 2009) are nominated to attend the Supporting People Development Group from the 'People Supporting People' Steering Group (see 'Service user involvement' for further details of this Group). There are examples of how issues raised by service users at the Supporting People Development Group have been acted upon. For example, an issue raised around the early release of prisoners and their lack of entitlement to benefits has been referred to the Home Office. This is giving service users the ability to influence the programme and raise concerns at a high level.

### **Accountable Officer**

- 57 The Accountable Officer has actively championed Supporting People within the Council and has good links with key partners. Since November 2008 the Accountable Officer has been the Interim Head of Vulnerable Adults - a recently established role within the Adult Care Directorate, designed to strengthen the Council's focus on vulnerable adults. Prior to this restructuring and taking on the role of Accountable Officer, she was the Council's Head of Housing Strategy and Policy. These roles have contributed to the Accountable Officer's strong understanding of the Supporting People programme.
- 58 The Accountable Officer provides an effective link between the various partnerships and structures and has provided the leadership required to deliver improvements in the programme. She attends the Strategic Commissioning Board, is the chair of the Supporting People Development Group and of the Elected Members Panel, and provides a link to the Local Strategic Partnership through membership of the Health and Well Being Partnership Board. The Accountable Officer is also a member of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Board and attends several other corporate and partnership groups. These links are enabling the Accountable Officer to promote the Supporting People programme to a broader audience and support multi-agency working.

### Partnership arrangements

- 59 There are good links and effective joint working between the Council and its health and probation partners, both in the governance of the programme (as outlined above) and in identifying needs and drawing up plans to meet those needs. For example, the Strategic Commissioning Board was chaired by a Probation representative until his retirement in 2008, and senior representatives of Probation and the Primary Care Trust attend both the Strategic Commissioning Board and Supporting People Development Group routinely.
- 60 The partners value the contribution that the programme makes, particularly in prevention services, as seen for example in the 'pathways to care focus' of the recent review of single homelessness provision. More widely, the Supporting People programme is seen by partners as offering liaison opportunities, particularly between health and probation, which do not exist in other forums.
- 61 The Youth Offending Team and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team are both effectively involved in the Supporting People programme and are active members of the Supporting People Development Group. They understand the relevance of Supporting People to the achievement of their core objectives, and have been actively engaged in the development of projects for their client groups.
- 62 Another example of effective joint working is in the area of employment, education and training. The Supporting People team has built links with the Economic Partnership and has enabled service providers to work with training providers to give service users access to training and employment. This partnership work is providing new opportunities for service users.
- 63 Within the North West Region there are clearly established structures to discuss and develop the programme at regional and sub-regional levels. For example, the Supporting People team is linked into the Greater Manchester Supporting People Forum and the North West Supporting People Strategic Group, which in turn are linked to the Regional Housing Group and the North West Regional Assembly. Rochdale's work through these groups and with neighbouring authorities has developed well over the past year. For example, Rochdale is leading the development of a jointly funded service for offenders across all ten Greater Manchester authorities.
- 64 There has been work over the past year to develop shared targets and outcomes with partners, although there is more to do in this area. The Strategic Commissioning Board considered the contribution that the programme makes to National Indicators in August 2008 and this has formed the basis of work to develop shared outcomes. For example, a shared outcome to 'increase the number of problem drinkers achieving independent living' has been agreed for inclusion in the new alcohol strategy. This contributes to the National Indicator 'Reduce alcohol-related hospital admission rates'. Supporting People has then included lower level outcome targets in the steady state contracts for relevant. Also, joint outcomes and targets have been agreed for the newly-commissioned supported lodgings services and resettlement Service, and the specification for a new offenders' service includes joint targets between Probation and Supporting People. However, work on developing shared outcomes remains to be completed for other relevant indicators and partners.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Service providers

- 65 Relationships with service providers are now strong. Service providers are well integrated into the programme; they are regularly consulted and kept informed of new developments.
- 66 The Providers Forum is well established and well regarded by providers. The Forum meets quarterly, or sometimes more often, and all 47 providers are invited. Attendance is high, with an average of 39 attendees over the past two years, but sometimes more than 50 (some providers send more than one representative). Providers are well consulted through the forum; there are relevant presentations and useful information is disseminated. The Forum is chaired by a provider, although the agenda is largely determined by the Supporting People team; however, a recent change now allows for a provider-only section of the meeting to redress this balance.
- 67 Providers have a range of other opportunities to participate and contribute their expertise. For example, through away-days, most recently to help shape commissioning proposals; through participation at the learning disability provider forum; through the Provider Forum performance sub-group; and through a sub-group to review eligibility criteria. Providers were also invited to an event as part of the recent strategic review of single homelessness services. Providers are formally linked to the governance arrangements through their two representatives on the Supporting People Development Group (as discussed earlier).
- 68 Providers have confidence in the administration of the programme. Prior to and during the inspection we spoke to or received survey results from around 25 of the 47 providers. These providers were unanimous in their praise for the Supporting People team and viewed the Provider Forum as an effective vehicle for receiving and exchanging information and good practice. This level of partnership working is ensuring that the programme is delivered more effectively.
- 69 The Supporting People team has, where necessary, encouraged providers to share approaches and resources which has been particularly helpful for smaller providers. This helps to keep providers on board with the programme's aim of continually improving service provision and the quality of services for the benefit of vulnerable people.

### Grant compliance, strategy and needs

- 70 The previous inspection found this to be an area with more weaknesses than strengths. Rochdale was late in establishing grant eligibility within the programme and no service providers had been fully accredited. Some needs were not yet understood well enough to inform the three-year strategy and access to move-on accommodation was underdeveloped. However, there was a robustly developed and deliverable three-year strategy, and retraction of funding from ineligible services was in progress.

71 This is now an area with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Eligibility criteria have been revised following national changes to grant conditions and there has been steady progress in accrediting providers and retracting funding - although late in the programme. However, accreditation and the retraction of ineligible funding are not yet complete. The three-year strategy provides a basis for future commissioning, but more needs mapping and research needs to be carried out to inform the remodelling of services. Work to address the shortage of move-on accommodation is also at an early stage.

### Grant conditions and eligibility criteria

- 72 The original eligibility criteria were reviewed and revised in consultation with providers in 2007. The criteria have recently been further revised,<sup>11</sup> again following discussions with providers, to allow for more flexibility following the removal of national grant conditions in April 2009. The revised criteria provide for a more integrated approach to meeting the support needs of vulnerable people by opening up opportunities for funding previously ineligible services such as befriending, counselling and mentoring. The criteria have retained the focus on needs groups and reinforced the focus on outcomes that meet identified national and Council objectives. The service providers that we spoke to expressed confidence that they had been well informed and consulted on the new criteria and their implications. This provides a clear basis for funding housing-related support and reflects positive consultation and communication with providers.
- 73 There is evidence of the eligibility criteria being applied consistently across services, irrespective of whether they are delivered by internal Council providers, or external organisations. For example, some internally provided homelessness funding within services was found to be ineligible and has been removed. This is ensuring that providers have confidence and trust in the assessments and decisions made about the eligibility of their services.
- 74 Not all ineligible funding has been retracted. A total of £1,967,381 has been identified as ineligible funding and £1,175,933 of this had been retracted by the end of March 2009. There are also measures in place to continue to identify ineligible funding. However, the programme is still in the process of removing ineligible costs from a provider of learning disability services. These costs, totalling £958,000, are being retracted over three years to enable replacement funding to be put in place. Retraction began in 2008/09. In 2009/10, £363,448 has been retracted and in 2010/11 the remaining £428,000 will be retracted. Although it is welcome that this has been planned to ensure no detrimental effect for individual service users, the retraction of ineligible funding six years into the programme means that resources available for other services have not been maximised.
- 75 The programme was slow to carry out robust accreditation of service providers. At the time of the first inspection no providers had been accredited, although financial checks were made on all providers in 2007 prior to the issue of new revised interim contracts. There has since been significant progress, with all but three providers now accredited, and the outstanding three at various stages of completion and due to be completed by June 2009.

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<sup>11</sup> The revised eligibility criteria were agreed by the SCB on 2 April 2009.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Supporting People strategy

- 76** A five-year strategy was developed and publicised in line with government guidelines in 2005, but this was not robust and was not used to drive the programme forward; for example, it did not rank priorities to drive forward commissioning within the programme. It is however positive that the programme recognised these shortcomings and began work in 2007 with partners and providers to develop a more robust 2008 to 2011 three-year strategy. This strategy was agreed by the Strategic Commissioning Board in February 2008 prior to further consultation and final approval by the Strategic Commissioning Board in June 2008. The strategy identified nine commissioning priorities, based on needs and supply data and mapping carried out with partners, although more work needs to be done in several areas (see 'Needs mapping, analysis and review', below).
- 77** The three-year strategy makes appropriate links to national strategies and priorities, and takes account of the regional and sub-regional context. The strategy contributes to the aims and objectives of the Council's Housing Strategy as well as other strategic documents, such as the Mental Health Strategy, the Older Persons' Housing Strategy and the Crime and Disorder Strategy.
- 78** Progress against the strategy is regularly reported and the strategy itself is periodically reviewed, most recently through a strategy away-day in March 2009. Overall, the three-year strategy provides a sound basis for the development of the provision of housing-related support.

### Needs mapping, analysis and review

- 79** Needs mapping has taken place to inform priorities, but more work is required to complete strategic reviews and decide how best to meet the housing support needs of some client groups.
- 80** The Supporting People team and partners carried out needs mapping in 2007/08 as part of the development of the three-year strategy, and this informed the priorities within the strategy. This work included surveys (completed by providers, stakeholders and elected members); workshops at the Provider Forum; and service user focus groups. The information gathered was used as a basis for discussion at a strategy away-day in September 2007 and led to the identification of a set of commissioning priorities for the programme and also a set of research and enabling priorities (such as the need to improve move-on from supported housing). The needs analysis and strategic priorities are periodically reviewed and refreshed with stakeholders; most recently at the March 2009 strategy review away-day.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 81** Sector reviews are not fully complete and have been commenced late in the programme. There have been some strategic (or sector) reviews to look at all services delivered to a client group and how they can best be remodelled to meet needs, but this has not taken place systematically for all client groups. For example, a review of single homelessness (the highest area of Supporting People funding) has only recently concluded and decisions about the future shape of services have yet to be taken. Sector reviews of older people's services and learning disability services have yet to start and are in the strategy action plan for 2009/10. Although some information on the needs of older people has been gleaned from a high level Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, this is not specific to housing-related support and there are no clear plans to meet needs, such as the shortage of provision for frail older people.
- 82** A full review of mental health services has not taken place. A 'mini review'<sup>12</sup> to identify gaps in services took place recently so that the issuing of steady state contracts in April 2009 was not held up. However, the mini review states that a full review is likely to take around 12 months to complete and this has yet to begin. Also, the mental health strategy needs to be refreshed and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of mental health provision has yet to take place. This means that in several key areas of provision, services have not been remodelled to best meet the needs of service users and plans to do so are not yet in place.
- 83** There is a generally joined-up approach to identifying the housing-related support needs of young people across services for children and young people, adult services, the youth offending service and services for teenage parents. For example, Rochdale, in partnership with a small number of other authorities, has commissioned an agency to look at how to develop systems for the transition of people with learning disabilities from children's to adults' services. The agency is expected to report in May 2009. This approach helps to ensure that service users receive more seamless support, irrespective of the differing organisational structures delivering services.
- 84** There was also thorough research in 2008/09 into why young people's accommodation breaks down and the gaps in provision that need to be filled to address this. However, this is another area where the recent timing of the research and the need for it to be informed by the equally recent review of single homelessness, mean that firm decisions to address the research findings have yet to be taken.
- 85** The review of single homelessness services, although carried out late in the Supporting People programme, has provided a comprehensive picture of needs. A high proportion of the Supporting People budget is spent on single homelessness, although in most cases clients also have other needs. Consultation on the conclusions of the review has begun and is likely to lead to significant remodelling of provision over the next year.

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<sup>12</sup> 'Mini review of unmet need for people with mental health issues requiring Housing Related Support- December 2008' sent to inspection team with Rochdale's self assessment, January 2009.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Strategy for access to move-on accommodation

- 86 There are still considerable barriers to people moving on from accommodation-based support when ready to do so and difficulty in accessing appropriate accommodation. Nomination rights are not being maximised and move-on is hindered by the exclusion practices of some landlords. The move-on strategy was recently finalised (March 2009), although initial work has taken place during the drafting of the strategy. For example, floating support has been arranged for some housing applicants, and it is planned that move-on from supported accommodation will be recognised as a priority in a revised allocations policy. While awaiting approval of this new policy, a pilot of the revised bandings has housed 19 people from supported housing schemes over the last six months. Work is also in progress with the Council's arm's length management organisation and Registered Social Landlord partners to remove barriers to move-on and an initial meeting to discuss allocations and nominations was held in January 2009. However, overall, this work is at an early stage in the context of year six of the Supporting People programme and providers are aware of many service users who would be ready to move on if the right support or accommodation was in place.

### Delivery arrangements

- 87 The previous inspection found this to be an area with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. There was a skilled Supporting People team with proactive leadership, and the capacity of the team was enhanced by corporate and external support. The inspection found strong links with the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement, and effective approaches to Fairer Charging and risk management. However, performance monitoring and management were yet to be fully developed and embedded and there was a lack of shared understanding between the running of the programme and the front line delivery of services.
- 88 This re-inspection found that this was an area where strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses. There is a strong Supporting People team with effective leadership. Work is well planned, there is good financial management and providers rate the team highly. There are effective links to the Local Area Agreement and to MAPPAs<sup>13</sup>. Fairer Charging is proactively promoted. However, training for providers in child protection is not yet comprehensive and validation of providers' approach to adult and child protection is limited. Also, performance reporting is not robust in some areas.

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<sup>13</sup> Multi Areas Public Protection Arrangements, known as MAAPA, are the statutory arrangements for managing sexual and violent offenders. MAPPAs are not a statutory body in itself but is a mechanism through which agencies can better discharge their statutory responsibilities and protect the public in a co-ordinated manner. The Responsible Authority (RA) consists of the Police, Prison and Probation Services. They are charged with the duty and responsibility to ensure that MAPPAs are established in their area and for the assessment and management of risk of all identified MAPPAs offenders.

### Supporting People team

- 89 Since the last inspection the Supporting People team has moved from Strategic Housing Services into a new Vulnerable Adults Service within the Adult Care Service. This has brought the benefit of improved links with other adult services and partnership boards. The team is skilled and highly regarded by service providers and other stakeholders. It is well resourced and has benefited from additional capacity provided by specialists seconded from other Council services, for example in commissioning and procurement, in order to deliver the Service Improvement Plan.
- 90 The lead officer provides strong and supportive leadership and has good links with adult care partnerships and with external groups. The profile of the team has been raised since the previous inspection, largely through the proactive approaches of the lead officer and Accountable Officer, and partners are now well aware of the Supporting People programme.
- 91 The Supporting People team has established effective working arrangements with service providers and other partners. Providers view the team as capable and knowledgeable and consider that communication from the team has improved in quality over the last year. A 2008 provider survey showed high levels of satisfaction with the team across all areas, and rated it as 'excellent' in most areas. When compared with other authorities in which they work, providers state that Rochdale's approach is highly inclusive, open and encouraging.
- 92 The team provides information, support and training for providers and in particular for small providers. For example, there is one-to-one support for small providers to help them compile information for value for money assessments. In another example, the team recognised the impact that contributing information to inform a move-on accommodation study would impose on one organisation and provided the resources to help achieve this. This encourages goodwill and joint working.
- 93 The team's capacity has been supplemented by substantial, but temporary, external resources. Arrangements are in place to ensure that the team's performance should not decline when these resources are removed during the coming months. For example, specialist procurement expertise will continue to be available from the Council's corporate procurement service, and two Supporting People staff have procurement qualifications, while two others are undertaking training in this area. This ensures that the team can continue to deliver a good quality service.

### Work planning

- 94 Effective work planning is in place within the Supporting People programme. A Service Improvement Plan was developed based on the recommendations of our 2008 inspection and other internal and external audits, and on the priorities within the three-year strategy. The Service Improvement Plan feeds into a detailed spreadsheet containing timetabled milestones and this in turn feeds down to individual work plans with targets. This ensures that work is closely aligned to key priorities and progress is regularly tracked.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

95 Progress against the Service Improvement Plan is regularly reported to the governance bodies and through Council structures. However, reporting is generally on an exception basis, but exceptions are not always clearly identified by the current approach to traffic light reporting (see 'How does the service manage performance?' later in this report for further details of performance monitoring and reporting). This may inhibit the ability of senior managers and governance bodies to accurately monitor performance.

### **Adult and child protection and MAPPA<sup>14</sup>**

- 96 Child and adult protection is given a high priority, although some work in this area is recent and training for providers is not yet comprehensive. Staff in the Supporting People team have received training on child protection and the safeguarding of adults and show an awareness and understanding of the issues involved. Strong links are in place with partners working within child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults.
- 97 All service providers have been offered free training in the safeguarding of adults through the Council's corporate training programme. A review took place in 2008 to confirm whether all providers' staff have undertaken safeguarding adults and children training. Results show that every provider has accessed basic Protection of Vulnerable Adults training, either through the Council or through their own arrangements.
- 98 Training in the safeguarding of children is not yet comprehensive. The 2008 review showed that 16 of 48 providers did not include the safeguarding of children within their inductions. Since then, further training has taken place for providers' staff, but around a third of providers have yet to complete this training. Arrangements have been made to deliver a rolling programme of basic training for the remaining and new provider staff. From April 2009, providers will also have access to the Council's e-learning training on safeguarding children. Information and presentations on these issues has also been provided through the Provider Forum. A Supporting People officer is on the Safeguarding Children Training Sub-Group and this ensures that there is a co-ordinated approach to training. Overall, however, the training of providers' staff in the safeguarding of children is recent and is not yet complete.
- 99 In addition to the training organised on child protection, the Supporting People team has developed a close working relationship with children's centres, and initiatives are being developed to deliver parenting skills to service users and provide child care for service users wishing to be involved in the programme.

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<sup>14</sup> MAPPA: Multi Area Public Protection Arrangements.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 100** Providers are assessed against the 'Security, Health and Safety' objective<sup>15</sup> within the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) and there is evidence of improved levels of quality in this area. Validation of providers' self assessments against this objective takes place on a risk basis. However, this approach to validation is recent (from April 2008) and only validates around 50 per cent of providers. From spreadsheets provided,<sup>16</sup> only nine of the then 49 providers had been validated against this objective in January 2009, with a further 17 'scheduled to be completed shortly'. By the end of March 2009, 27 of the 50 providers had been validated, with no scheduled validations outstanding. A higher level of validation would give stronger assurance that the welfare of adults and children is being safeguarded.
- 101** It is positive that Rochdale is taking part in a North West Partnership initiative to agree a cross authority approach to achieving high standards (levels A and B) as part of the implementation of the new QAF from April 2009. Rochdale and another authority have addressed the objective 'Safeguarding and protection from abuse' and have involved service users and providers in this work. This will be used by north-west authorities to ensure a consistent regional approach.
- 102** Any issues picked up during validation visits are followed up through the appropriate procedures. For example, Protection of Vulnerable Adults procedures were followed in a recent case, including a case conference. Adult protection procedures are also highlighted in other relevant Supporting People procedures, such as complaints and risk management.
- 103** The Supporting People contract places an obligation on providers in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. A recent review found that all providers have a policy in place which has been reviewed within the last three years. A 'Notifiable Incidents' procedure is also in place across all providers and this has resulted in stronger risk management within services.
- 104** Evidence from our provider visits showed that appropriate attention is given to safeguarding within schemes. For example, a scheme which primarily accommodates vulnerable older teenagers had a robust and appropriate approach to safeguarding, both within the project and in the assessment of supported lodging placements.
- 105** Supporting People has effective links to MAPPAs and the Supporting People lead officer and team work closely with Probation. Supporting People senior officers and providers attend MAPPA meetings and there is evidence of good information sharing and positive outcomes for offenders. The team and providers are well engaged at all appropriate levels of MAPPA and have taken appropriate actions to support the placement and management of higher risk offenders in particular projects.
- 106** The Supporting People team led the recent development of a joint protocol for the risk management of residents in projects that may receive sex offenders. The protocol was developed in partnership with the Police, Probation and the specific projects. This is evidence of the positive approach taken by Rochdale Supporting People towards public protection.

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<sup>15</sup> 'Security, Health and Safety' is the CLG's QAF objective C1.3, to be replaced by 'Safeguarding and protection from abuse' from April 2009.

<sup>16</sup> 'QAF validations from April 2008' provided in January 2009 and updated in March 2009.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Local Area Agreement (LAA)

**107** The Supporting People programme and its objectives are clearly linked to the Local Strategic Partnership ('Pride Partnership') and the Local Area Agreement. The role of Supporting People is championed within the Local Strategic Partnership by the Accountable Officer, who is a member of the Health and Well Being Partnership Board. Housing support services for vulnerable people are a priority of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Partnership has included both Supporting People-related national indicators in its suite of indicators chosen to drive improvement in priorities. This demonstrates a commitment to achieving Supporting People objectives from the Council and its partners.

### Fairer Charging

**108** An appropriate Fairer Charging policy and procedures are in place, and this is aligned to charging for non-residential domestic care. There has been a proactive approach to ensuring that service users receive Fairer Charging assessments. All new clients are assessed and there has been promotion of Fairer Charging through leaflets and posters. There have been briefings to the Provider Forum, and Fairer Charging will be promoted again at a service user event in May 2009. In 2007/08 the Council made 97 Fairer Charging assessments and in the first ten months of 2008/09 made 125 assessments.

**109** Full welfare rights checks are carried out for people who apply for a Fairer Charging assessment, resulting in new benefit claims totalling £58,300 a year during 2008/09. This is helping to maximise service users' incomes.

**110** There has also been work to promote Fairer Charging to leasehold schemes. The Supporting People team has assessed one leaseholder service for 30 older people for eligibility and is currently supporting leaseholders in the Fairer Charging process to ensure benefit maximisation.

**111** An anomaly in charging for the Community Alarm service has been identified and is being addressed as part of the commissioning of a new responder service, which is scheduled to start in May 2009. Any service user who qualifies for Housing Benefit will receive the new service free of charge.

### Individual Budgets/Direct payments

**112** Supporting People is engaged with the development of Individual Budgets. The Accountable Officer sits on the 'Personalisation Project Board', which is implementing the personalisation agenda in Rochdale. The Council is aware of the outcomes for Supporting People of the individual budget pilots, although only a small amount of Supporting People funding has been included in individual budgets to date. The team are monitoring best practice and national developments in relation to individual budgets and Supporting People. It is recognised that there will be a need to transform the way support and care structures are organised and Rochdale's 'Transformation Board' is considering how Adult Care and Supporting People can be restructured to meet these changes in service provision. Overall, although work is at an early stage, there is a reasonable level of awareness of the implications of Individual Budgets for the Supporting People programme.

### CLG monitoring

- 113** Data is submitted to the CLG on time and with a reduced level of missing data (5.9 per cent) that is well below regional and national averages. A considerable amount of work was undertaken in 2008 to improve data submissions, including training and support for providers. Improvements include a new condensed reporting format and a specific focus on CLG outcomes.

### Risk management

- 114** There is a generally robust approach to risk management. The Strategic Commissioning Board has approved a risk management policy; a risk register and a business continuity plan are also in place. Any risks associated with the programme are highlighted in performance reports to the Supporting People Development Group and Strategic Commissioning Board.
- 115** The risk register is linked to the Corporate Risk Register, and action to reduce risk is assessed at Supporting People team meetings. A risk-based contract management procedure is in place (see 'Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance', below) with the timetable for contract management based on a risk assessment of providers which is revised annually. This approach has seen high risk providers reduce from 21 in 2007 to seven in 2008 and two in 2009. In 2009/10, low risk providers will receive a lighter touch in contract reviews, with higher risk providers having a more in depth review. However, the risk-based approach to validation visits is recent and the number of visits is limited.
- 116** The business continuity plan is a detailed and practical plan which addresses the risk of closure of a service provider or other emergency. The plan includes out of hours contact details for each provider and information on accommodation or floating support that can be offered to service users at short notice. This helps to minimise the risk to service users in the event of their service provider being unable to support them.

### Performance monitoring and management

- 117** Appropriate performance management and monitoring systems are in place. The Supporting People team works to clear work plans that are linked to the Service Improvement Plan, and the Supporting People Development Group has an appropriate work plan set by the Strategic Commissioning Board. Performance reporting and monitoring is generally strong (see 'How does the service manage performance?' later in this report).
- 118** Financial and budget monitoring is robust, with spending monitored through a spreadsheet which details all contracts and has three-year projections. This is reported to every Supporting People Development Group and Strategic Commissioning Board. Reports are prepared by finance specialists from outside the Supporting People team; this provides an audit and verification process for payments made by the team. Payments to providers are timely and generally accurate; the 2008 provider survey found that 100 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the promptness of their payments and 93 per cent were satisfied with the accuracy of payments.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

**119** The Supporting People team has worked with providers to improve the quality of data submitted, and this has delivered improvement and is now satisfactory. Data checks have been made on all the performance indicators within the workbook. Outcomes for service users are monitored and reported by providers, and work to agree shared targets is taking place - although baseline data needs to be agreed in a number of areas.

### Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance

**120** The 2008 inspection found this to be an area of weakness. No steady state contracts were in place and the level of surpluses represented a missed opportunity to commission and improve services for vulnerable people. Limited additional units of support had been provided, and the original service reviews and feedback given were inconsistent. However, the inspection found the new methodology for contract monitoring to be sound.

**121** This inspection found this to be an area with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. There has been reasonable progress in issuing steady state contracts over the past year, but 44 per cent remained unsigned at the time of this re-inspection. There has also been significant progress in commissioning to meet priorities, although from a low base and prior to full needs assessments and strategic reviews for some client groups. The procurement framework is robust and procurement has been carried out effectively with the involvement of partners and service users. There is now an effective approach to contract monitoring and quality assurance, although improvement planning and the monitoring of complaints made to providers are inconsistent.

### Commissioning

**122** There was a lack of new commissioning to address unmet needs prior to 2008/09, despite the substantial level of underspend - although many existing services were remodelled or extended. However, there has been significant commissioning activity in 2008/09, which is redressing the previous lack of activity, although late in the programme.

**123** Commissioning priorities are identified in the 2008 to 2011 three-year Supporting People strategy, based on needs assessments made with partners and providers. However, as discussed earlier, needs mapping is not informed by comprehensive strategic reviews for all client groups (see 'Grant compliance, strategy and needs', above). This means that the information on which commissioning priorities are based is not as comprehensive as it might have been and that priorities may not be fully appropriate.

- 124 The three-year strategy commissioning priorities and progress against them is set out below. Progress is regularly reported to the Supporting People Development Group and Strategic Commissioning Board. In some cases the Strategic Commissioning Board has amended the original strategic priorities as new needs information has become available, and in the light of a recent strategy refresh exercise.
- Priority 1: Develop specific service provision for ex-offenders or link to the commissioning of other services. **(Commissioned to start from 1 April 2009)**
  - Priority 2: Reconfigure single homelessness services. **(Awaiting outcomes of strategic review of single homelessness)**
  - Priority 3: Develop specific service provision for people with substance misuse problems. **(In the light of information from the single homelessness review, this need will now be met by remodelling existing services)**
  - Priority 4: Increase the number of supported lodgings across the borough specifically for young people with substance misuse problems, young people at risk and teenage parents. **(Commissioned supported lodgings scheme from October 2008)**
  - Priority 5: Expansion of support services for people with mental health problems. **(Commissioned from April 2009)**
  - Priority 6: Consider the need for additional Supporting People funding in the provision of extra-care. **(No firm plans - awaiting review of older persons services)**
  - Priority 7: Review services for women as victims of Domestic Violence and commission new services if required. **(Further needs analysis showed no clear need for new services, other than a Befriending service which may be commissioned in 2009/10)**
  - Priority 8: Support to rough sleepers. **(Commissioned outreach service from September 2008)**
  - Priority 9: Low level generic floating support. **(Floating support services have been commissioned from April 2009 for Gypsies and Travellers; housing options; an expanded Bond Board service; and an expanded family inclusion service. Also, a resettlement service has been commissioned to start in June 2009, and a vulnerable adults service has been commissioned to start in July 2009)**
- 125 Other commissioning has also taken place or is underway to meet newly identified priorities agreed by the Strategic Commissioning Board. A 'Credit crunch' financial advice project to prevent homelessness has been commissioned with the CAB (from April/May 2009); a Greater Manchester Offender Project (see 'Joint commissioning' below) due to start in July 2009; and a Telecare responder service (to replace and extend an existing service, from May 2009). Overall, since the previous inspection seven new services have been commissioned providing 137 additional units of support.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Joint commissioning

- 126** There has been a good level of engagement with internal and external partners in the recent commissioning and shared targets and outcomes have been developed for the new services. It is positive, for example, that the new Commissioning Strategy of Greater Manchester Probation Trust recognises Supporting People as a strategic partner.
- 127** The services listed above were commissioned with the involvement of the relevant partners, including adult social care, health, housing and probation. Relevant partners are members of the project groups for each procurement exercise (see 'Procurement' below). Two examples are as follows.
- The Youth Offending Team, Drug and Alcohol Action Team, and commissioners for teenage parent services were involved in commissioning the supported lodgings service for young people.
  - The Prison service, Probation, Drug and Alcohol Action Team, health and mental health commissioners were involved in commissioning the ex-offenders service.
- 128** There has been limited joint commissioning of jointly-funded services, although Rochdale is taking the lead in developing the Greater Manchester Offender service with funding secured from all ten Greater Manchester authorities and from Probation.
- 129** This inclusive approach taken to the recent commissioning, and commissioning that is underway, is helping to ensure that services meet the full range of service users' needs.

### Procurement

- 130** There is a comprehensive and effective approach to procurement. A robust Commissioning and Procurement Framework for Supporting People has been introduced and implemented with the input of a specialist seconded from the corporate procurement department. This has brought a professional approach to the commissioning of new services. An annual review of the framework took place in January 2009 and amended it to include the lessons learnt from the first year of commissioning and to emphasise the move toward outcome-based commissioning and the involvement of service users. Since the approval of the framework, tender exercises have been undertaken or are underway for the services listed above (see 'Commissioning').
- 131** The procurement process itself is also robust. A project plan is used for each procurement exercise, which clearly timetables the steps to be taken. A project group is set up for each commission, including relevant partners and service users. Specifications are now more outcome-based rather than prescriptive, and tenders are assessed on a weighting of around 60 per cent quality and 40 per cent cost (but with a budget maximum). Any delays in new services have tended to occur at the provider's start-up stage, rather than during the procurement process. This is ensuring that procurement is carried out fairly and on schedule - and new services meet quality thresholds.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 132** The process is transparent; for example, tenderers are told who will be on the interview panel, which has sometimes changed their approach to ensure that they communicate clearly with the service users on the panel. Unsuccessful tenderers are given the opportunity of feedback meetings. Providers have attended training on how to complete and return tender documents and these have been simplified to encourage all to tender. This helps to ensure that competitive tendering includes smaller and specialist providers.
- 133** However, the corporate procurement strategy is not robust - it is not dated and is not detailed. It refers to a balance of 'quantity and cost', which we presume should be quality and cost. The action plan projects are not dated although items are stated as completed. Although this is separate from the Supporting People team's procurement framework, we would expect this overarching corporate strategy to also be robust.
- 134** There has been effective service user involvement in procurement. Service users are now briefed and trained; they help to evaluate tenders and set interview questions, and can influence a maximum of 25 per cent of the score when contracts are awarded. Service users have influenced the commissioning of an alcohol floating support service, a supported lodgings service and an offenders' service and this involvement will continue in future commissioning. In one case a prospective provider was called back for a second interview to address some concerns of the service users on the panel. This helps to ensure that new services are procured with active service user participation and meet the needs of service users.

### Contracts

- 135** The programme has been late in issuing steady state contracts. At the time of the last inspection three-year steady state contracts had been developed but had not been agreed with, or signed by, individual providers; all providers had interim contracts or service level agreements. By the time of this inspection (30 March 2009) 56 per cent of steady state contracts had been signed, with the remaining 44 per cent (26 contracts) timetabled to be agreed and signed by the end of June 2009. The outstanding contracts are for single homelessness and older people's services - both areas where decisions on the future shape of services had yet to be taken at the time of this inspection. The single homelessness review was recently completed, but strategic decisions have yet to be taken, while the review of older people's services has yet to take place.
- 136** Progress in agreeing contracts over the last year has been steady and has ensured that partners and providers have been involved and kept on board. Existing contracts have been rationalised and consolidated appropriately. Overall, however, although significant and effective progress has been made in the past year, the programme is well behind the position it should be in at the end of year six in terms of agreeing contracts and giving providers and service users more certainty about the future delivery of services. The absence of steady state contracts means providers operate with a lack of certainty about future funding which limits their ability to plan effectively for the future.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

**137** The programme was slow to carry out accreditation of service providers. At the time of the first inspection no providers had been accredited, although financial checks were made on all providers in 2007. There has since been significant progress, with all but three providers now accredited, and the outstanding three at various stages of completion. These are due to be completed by June 2009.

### Quality assurance

**138** The first inspection found that service reviews were completed by an extended deadline of May 2006 (agreed with the CLG: the original deadline was March 2006) and robust contract monitoring did not commence until a year later. However, there is now a robust approach to contract monitoring and quality assurance, and this was confirmed by feedback from providers and file checks carried out on site. This ensures that service users are benefiting from services that meet or exceed quality standards.

**139** Contract management uses a risk-based approach, with risk reviewed at least annually with provider involvement. Internal and external services are subject to the same procedure. All providers, except those newly commissioned, received visits during 2008/09 at which elements of the QAF which had been self-assessed by providers were validated - with the number of validations dependent on the risk assessment. This approach is understood and accepted as fair by the providers we spoke to.

**140** Joint care and support contracts are in place with adult care for learning disability services and an effective joint contract monitoring procedure has been developed with the learning disability team, with over 25 services jointly reviewed using this methodology.

**141** Providers that we spoke to consider that the approach to contract monitoring has improved significantly. In 2008, 29 per cent of providers rated this as average and 2 per cent as poor. The Council responded by working more closely with providers to better understand their needs and support them to meet performance and information requirements. Several smaller providers that we met received very helpful support, guidance and training that have enabled them to meet the programme's requirements. All providers are now issued with contract monitoring performance reports at least annually, and there is a clear appeals process within the contract monitoring framework.

**142** However, the approach to the monitoring of complaints made to providers is inconsistent and not fully effective. Interrogation of complaints is a particularly useful method of ensuring not just the quality of complaints-handling by the provider, but also identifying specific concerns of service users with the quality of services provided. Although complaints data is required from providers, and complaints are discussed during monitoring visits, there is not evidence from file reviews or discussions with providers of effective assessment of the content of complaints taking place. This is a missed opportunity to strengthen the quality assurance process.

- 143** There is a thorough approach to involving service users in contract monitoring and earlier concerns<sup>17</sup> about their training for this role and the need for CRB checks have been addressed. There is evidence of this involvement leading to positive outcomes; for example, following contract monitoring visits, service users' feedback has led to action to promote and review complaints procedures, and improve information materials. This ensures that contract monitoring takes account of issues from a service user perspective.
- 144** There is evidence of provider performance improving over time against the QAF standards (see table in 'What is the track record in delivering improvement?' section later in this report). The programme is working to continue this improvement. For example, providers have targets for the improvement of QAF scores through to 2010/11. QAF scores are benchmarked against other authorities and the results are shared with providers so that they can measure their own performance against similar providers. Positive practice is shared with providers in several ways. For example, good practice is identified through visits and is summarised on a database. Good practice is also shared through the provider forum and through the national website (spkweb). This approach helps to create a culture of continuous improvement.

### Improvement planning

- 145** There is an improved but inconsistent approach to improvement planning with providers. At the time of the last inspection formal improvement plans were not developed, although minuted meetings with providers which addressed improvement requirements did take place. Some of the files seen during this inspection contained an improvement list, others had notes of annual contract discussions with some or no agreed actions and limited dates. There was not evidence of actions with timescales that were agreed and later checked for completion. However, the action plan for a learning disability provider visited makes clear the actions that need to be taken and the timetable for those actions. This inconsistent approach does not ensure that improvement is closely monitored or delivered.
- 146** Providers, however, are satisfied with the support and training available to help them to deliver improvements; this has been particularly beneficial to small providers. Information is given to providers on how they might move, for example, from level C to B of the QAF. Improvement is also driven by the sharing of good practice (see 'Quality assurance', above). The impact of this is that effective support is now helping to drive improvements in the quality of services delivered to service users.

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<sup>17</sup> These issues were raised in feedback following a CLG visit to the Rochdale Supporting People team in November 2008.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Value for money

- 147** The previous inspection found this to be an area with more weaknesses than strengths. The late identification of ineligible services and the accumulated surplus meant that the Council was not providing value for money through investment of the £15 million Supporting People grant. The recently agreed procurement strategy had not yet delivered new services, there was no cross-authority joint commissioning, and national and regional benchmarking was not being used to manage and drive the programme. Costs were higher than regional and national averages. Although there was a clear approach to the use of value for money in the contract monitoring approach, it had yet to be fully effective in achieving savings and efficiencies. More positively, regional benchmarking data was being used to benchmark individual service costs and some efficiency savings had been achieved.
- 148** This is now an area with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. There is a comprehensive value for money framework in place and this has been used to reduce costs and improve the quality of services, although average quality scores are below national and regional averages. It is a strength that there has been substantial benchmarking and the results have been reported, shared and used to drive improvement. Unit costs are now below average. However, the earlier delays in identifying ineligible funding and allocating funding means that service provision is not yet giving maximum value to service users. Also, plans to address the high level of administrative funding are not yet clear.

### How is value for money managed?

- 149** A comprehensive value for money framework is in place and is delivering improvements in the efficiency of service delivery, through both costs and quality. The framework was agreed in 2007 with provider and service user involvement, and reviewed in November 2008. Capacity within the Supporting People team to implement this framework has been enhanced, initially through the secondment of a value for money specialist from the central finance team, and from January 2009 through the permanent location of this specialist within the Supporting People team.
- 150** Annual value for money assessments of providers began in 2007, based on a balanced scorecard which provides financial and quality ratings; this is weighted and fed into a risk matrix. The cost assessment is comprehensive; it includes support charges, hourly rates, the level of staff and management costs as a percentage of spending and the number of support hours per service user. The quality assessment takes account of QAF scores, performance indicators and feedback from service users and stakeholders. This data is then used to inform contract negotiations with existing and newly commissioned services and there is evidence of it leading to savings, efficiencies and improvements in the quality and scope of services.
- 151** Support is given to providers in compiling information for the annual value for money assessments; this is particularly helpful for smaller providers. Training was held for all providers, followed by one-to-one help with the completion of initial value for money assessments where necessary. The providers that we spoke to rated this support highly.

- 152** The outcome of the annual value for money assessments is reported to the Strategic Commissioning Board and Supporting People Development Group. It is positive that this information is also shared through the national Supporting People website with providers' names removed. This enables local and other providers to compare performance in terms of value for money without compromising the competitiveness of providers.
- 153** Providers indicate that the team's approach to value for money is thoughtful and has improved over time. This is not because the team has not challenged appropriately, as evidenced by overall reductions in average costs. Providers who work with several authorities stated that Rochdale's approach compares favourably with others; value for money negotiations that could be adversarial in other authorities are sensitively handled and solutions negotiated.

### Benchmarking

- 154** A more effective approach to benchmarking has been introduced. Value for money data is now benchmarked locally and regionally. The regional benchmarking is carried out annually with a number of North West authorities comprising over 3,000 services, which gives the exercise substantial validity. Outliers are then identified and looked at in more detail. There are examples of reductions in costs or increased provision following this benchmarking. There are also two cases where high hourly costs have been accepted due to the specialist nature of services and their high outcomes for service users. Benchmarking outcomes are shared with providers so that they can compare their own performance. This is helping to ensure that maximum value for service users is obtained from the annual funding.
- 155** National benchmarking information has been used via the national Supporting People website.<sup>18</sup> For example, this was used to look at data for services to Gypsies and Travellers as part of research into commissioning a new service for this group.

### Improving value for money

- 156** The Council has secured an improvement in value for money during negotiations for three-year steady state contract, both financially and in terms of added units and outcomes. The overall cost of contracts has reduced whilst maintaining quality and in some cases extending the number of units of support provided. Average unit costs for accommodation based services fell from £242.56 in 2003 to £77.74 in 2008, and for floating support from £127.00 to £66.47. These are significant improvements on the 2007 figures cited in the previous inspection report and are lower than the 2007 national and regional averages,<sup>19</sup> due largely to the removal of some high ineligible costs and the remodelling of services following value for money assessments.

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<sup>18</sup> [www.spkweb.org.uk](http://www.spkweb.org.uk)

<sup>19</sup> 2008 figures not yet seen.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 157** However, in the context of a six-year programme, Rochdale has been slow to retract ineligible funding, commission new services and commit the high level of annual underspend. New commissioning to meet strategic priorities began in 2008, but is not yet complete, and the level of underspend increased year-on-year until it was committed to new commissioning during 2008/09. The cumulative effect of these factors is that the programme has not been maximising the extent and structure of service provision it obtains from the £15 million annual funding, and will only be capable of doing so in future years.
- 158** Improvement in the quality of services is evidenced by the year-on-year rise in QAF ratings (see table in 'What is the track record in delivering improvement?' section later in this report). This improvement was confirmed by residents we spoke to during visits to providers.
- 159** It is a strength that Rochdale has sought to benchmark its QAF scores regionally and nationally. However, although QAF scores have improved within Rochdale, the benchmarking of 2007/08 QAF scores showed that Rochdale's overall scores were generally lower than the regional and national averages.<sup>20</sup> For many individual client groups scores were around or above average. However, scores for single homelessness services (Rochdale's largest sector) were below the regional average. Rochdale's scores improved in 2008/09, but no data is yet available to compare this with regional and national averages. This indicates that although there has been improvement in service quality, this does not yet meet average regional and national standards for all client groups.

### Administration grant

- 160** In 2008/09 an administration grant from central government of £221,519 contributed to the cost of running the programme, with an additional contribution of £546,900 from the Council. In 2009/10 the administration grant fell to £204,031, with additional Council support of £508,700. There has been some work to assess the value for money received from the administration grant, but this has yet to produce firm outcomes.
- 161** The high level of supplementary administrative funding from the Council reflects a corporate acknowledgement that investment was required in this area to meet the shortcomings identified before and during the first Audit Commission inspection. The use of this funding, mainly through specialist secondments and temporary staff, has brought significant benefits to the programme as outlined throughout this report. We would now expect to see firm plans for a reduction in administrative support alongside the planned integration of the service into the Council's adult care service; these plans are not yet clear.

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<sup>20</sup> 2007/08 QAF benchmarking supplied with Council's self assessment January 2009.

### Service user involvement

- 162** The previous inspection found that weaknesses outweighed strengths in this area. Individual service user involvement in the reviews of their particular service had been robust, but this had mostly been driven by providers. Limited use was made of existing service user networks and there were limited outcomes from service user involvement in influencing and directing the programme. There were some encouraging developments in this area but progress had been slow.
- 163** This is now an area where strengths outweigh weaknesses. There has been increasing service user involvement in the programme, although much of this is recent. The main service user group has been strengthened and three client-specific sub-groups have been set up. Users have been effectively involved in contract monitoring and commissioning, and involvement in the governance of the programme has been strengthened. However, more work is needed to involve some client groups.

### Opportunities

- 164** There has been a recent and encouraging improvement in service user involvement, although some of this is not yet embedded in all areas. The Council has, in the last six months, focused on widening the range of service users engaged, providing training and support as well as a range of opportunities for involvement. A designated Supporting People officer supports service user involvement and a specialist consultant has been contracted to examine the best ways of engaging service users and work with them; this has been effective and valued by service users. This work will be taken forward through a service user involvement framework and action plan, agreed in January 2009. The providers we visited recognised that there is increasing service user involvement in the programme.
- 165** The programme recognised the need to improve its involvement practices and this led to the engagement of an external consultant who, with service users, worked effectively to develop the mechanisms for service user involvement.
- 166** Although the service user involvement framework and action plan is recent, a number of actions have already taken place to improve involvement. For example:
- a 'People Supporting People' service user group has been in place since 2007, but in 2008 service users started focusing on how to achieve more meaningful change and worked on this with the consultant and the Supporting People team;
  - there has been recent piloting of three 'Service Improvement Groups' for specific client groups, led by service users. Together with the 'People Supporting People Steering Group' - this creates a new democratic structure directly involving 5 per cent of service users;
  - there has been consultation through a survey of service users in November 2008 and a 'Winter Speak' event in December 2008;
  - some service users have recently produced a service user newsletter; and
  - training and support for service users, to assist their involvement, includes confidence building and training in carrying out peer reviews, procurement and mystery shopping.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 167** The People Supporting People service user group is a diverse and vocal group, steadily growing in numbers with the support of the Supporting People team. Until October 2008, although service users were consulted through the group, their meaningful influence and effect was questionable. In the main service users were advised about progress of the programme and did not influence priorities. This has since changed and service users have been supported and trained to take a more proactive role.
- 168** Service user involvement has also been strengthened over the past year by identifying and making more use of existing groups and partner mechanisms. For example, the Supporting People involvement officer has attended and established links with existing forums for mental health, and for alcohol and drug abuse. The Supporting People team also use voluntary organisations as advocates for service users when necessary.
- 169** The 2008 provider survey found that some providers viewed service user involvement as not always inclusive or relevant to their client groups. This, and the analysis of returns from an involvement survey of service users, led to an action plan for 'seldom heard' groups being put in place in January 2009. The action plan focuses particularly on people with learning disabilities and those in sheltered housing. However, more work is needed to ensure that some groups, such as Gypsies and Travellers, refugees and those with HIV/AIDS who need housing-related support can routinely contribute to the development of the programme.
- 170** Service user involvement in the governance arrangements has been strengthened and is starting to show encouraging results. A recent strategy review day was attended by 13 service users who contributed their views on a range of issues including mental health and homelessness services. Two service users have recently been nominated to attend the Supporting People Development Group from the People Supporting People Steering Group. It is clear that the Supporting People Development Group's recommendations to the Strategic Commissioning Board take into account service users' views and there are examples of issues raised by them being acted upon. This is giving service users the ability to influence the development of housing-related support services.
- 171** There is now effective training and support for service users to assist their involvement. For example, the Council has accessed funding to train ten service users in basic skills through a 12-week course at a local college. Another example is the engagement of a specialist agency with experience of working with people with learning disabilities and helping them to express their needs and aspirations.

### **Involvement in contracting and monitoring**

- 172** There is effective service user involvement in contracting, monitoring and procurement (see 'Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance', above).
- 173** Service users are involved in the contract monitoring processes. They are given the opportunity to put their views forward through a focus group, in writing or in an individual discussion, and are consulted about support planning, opportunities to participate and other issues. Issues raised are followed up. This gives service users the ability to influence the services they receive.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 174** Service users have been involved in commissioning services, evaluating tenders, and interviewing potential providers. For example, they were involved in the specification and procurement of a new floating support service for people with alcohol problems, and some are now on an implementation steering group. Also, teenage parents were involved in the commissioning of a supported lodgings service.
- 175** There has been a strong commitment to engage with offenders in the development of Supporting People provision. Offenders were involved in the development of the new offender floating support service and considered that their input was valued. Plans are being actively developed to further improve offender engagement.
- 176** Service users are briefed and trained for their roles in contract monitoring and procurement. There were initially weaknesses in training and risk management identified by CLG, but the Council moved promptly to respond to these by introducing more tailored support and CRB checks where appropriate. Service users are now well prepared for their involvement.

### Outcomes from service user involvement

- 177** In the context of a six-year programme, outcomes are limited by the recent timing of many initiatives and of the service user framework and action plan. However, initial signs of the outcomes from these initiatives are encouraging and there are some specific examples of improvements as a direct result of user involvement, which include:
- the new offender service has been improved as a consequence of user involvement and its focus more clearly meets the identified needs;
  - a prospective provider was called back for a second tender interview to address some service user concerns; these were addressed and the contract was awarded;
  - representatives of service users have carried out mystery shopping to check access to outside agencies. As a result of one check, a meeting has taken place with a call centre manager to discuss the problems found, with a view to raising standards; and
  - teenage parents have influenced a change in policy which has resulted in Supporting People paying for child care to allow teenage parents to be more involved in the programme.

### Access to services and information

- 178** The previous inspection found that this was an area with more strengths than weaknesses. A range of referral routes enabled users to access services and good quality information was produced. The directory of services was well presented, accurate and up to date. There was a comprehensive and user-friendly website and a well publicised Fairer Charging scheme. However printed information such as leaflets and the directory were inconsistently available within the borough and slow progress in commissioning new services meant that access was limited for some users and absent for others.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

**179** This inspection found that strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. There is an improved range of services in place, including easier access to floating support. There is a good range of information for service users, including a comprehensive newsletter. The directory of services has been updated and is available on-line. Fairer Charging is well promoted and complaints are generally well handled, although there are some weaknesses in the processing and analysis of complaints. Also, website content and design is not user-friendly for the public and frontline staff are not always able to signpost people effectively.

### Access and referral to services

- 180** Access to services is through a range of referral routes, including self-referral, and some providers will accept people directly if they are eligible and there are vacancies. The present arrangements are working satisfactorily, but could be made more effective through a more co-ordinated approach to assessment and placement - to ensure that people are placed in the most appropriate service for meeting their support needs. The Council is planning to develop a central allocation system as part of the outcomes from the strategic review of single homelessness. In the meantime, people may not be effectively referred to the most appropriate service at first contact.
- 181** The newly commissioned projects and the remodelling of schemes has resulted in improved access to services and the development of services which better meet user's needs. It is positive that a range of floating support services are provided, including support for people placed in private rented housing through a rental bond scheme.
- 182** It is also positive, from a service user perspective, that a local connection is not required in order to access services, despite Rochdale receiving more out of area referrals than other Greater Manchester authorities. The Council has raised this issue with other authorities in an attempt to find a sub-regional solution. The current approach is helping vulnerable people to access support when it is needed without being shuttled between authorities.
- 183** There are generally effective responses to and signposting of enquiries from service users. Mystery shopping reality checks made by the inspection team received a generally positive response, but with some exceptions, as follows.
- Telephone reception staff were friendly and helpful in answering queries. They offered information in a variety of mediums, signposted to additional help and were aware of confidentiality issues.
  - The Council's housing service<sup>21</sup> was polite and sympathetic.
  - The emergency contact phone number was answered quickly and politely and provided appropriate signposting to the emergency duty social worker or other appropriate information and services.

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<sup>21</sup> Council housing is managed by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing - an arms-length management organisation (ALMO).

184 However:

- the Council's housing service could offer no information about provision to someone in a Supporting People client group (an older woman living alone with mobility problems). This is despite the presence of a display of up-to-date Supporting People information on a nearby desk; and
- a receptionist at the Town Hall was unaware of Supporting People and could not signpost a visitor to services, beyond a general referral to the municipal offices.

185 These results indicate a need to regularly brief frontline staff on the services available and how best to signpost people to them.

### Information and directory of services

186 There is a range of informative and attractive leaflets in place and service users have been involved in their development. They include general information about the Supporting People programme; charges; and how to comment, compliment or complain. Information was prominently displayed at key offices, including the Town Hall. This is helping to ensure that people with housing support needs can easily access useful and relevant information.

187 The service providers we visited had produced appropriate handbooks and other information for their service users. Providers also make good use of posters and leaflets from a range of organisations - to keep their service users well informed. There is also an informative and well-designed Supporting People newsletter for providers, service users and other stakeholders.

188 The Directory of Services was recently updated and is available in hard copy or online. The directory is clear and easy to use and is valued by partners. For example, good use has been made of the directory by Probation offender managers.

189 It is also positive that, to improve awareness of Supporting People services, the Council runs radio advertising on a Rochdale-based community radio station. This encourages people who may require housing-related support to approach the Council and is an innovative expansion into a communication method that will not discriminate against those with literacy difficulties.

### Website

190 There is an informative Supporting People website which can be accessed through the Council's site. The site contains a wide range of information, including contact details for the Supporting People team and service providers, all key policies and procedures and benchmarking data for providers. Minutes of the Strategic Commissioning Board and Supporting People Development Group were recently added to the site. Minutes of the Provider Forum are not available on Rochdale's site, but are available on the 'spkweb' site - it would be helpful if there was a direct link to these minutes from Rochdale's site. Overall, the site is a useful source of information for service users, providers and others.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

**191** The website was one of the lower rated issues in the 2008 provider survey – with 30 per cent of respondents rating it as ‘average’. The design and presentation of the site may be satisfactory for professional staff, but its design does not encourage access by service users or the general public.

### **Service charges and access to Fairer Charging**

**192** Fairer Charging is well promoted. There has been a proactive approach to ensuring that service users receive Fairer Charging assessments. For example, there is a clear leaflet which was updated in February 2009 and is widely distributed; posters are issued to providers; and there have been briefings to the Provider Forum. There is also a link to information about Fairer Charging on the Supporting People website. This is helping to ensure that service users can access financial assistance when needed. (See also the section on Fairer Charging in 'Delivery arrangements', earlier in this report).

### **Complaints**

**193** There is a generally satisfactory approach to dealing with complaints, with some exceptions. A comprehensive complaints policy and procedure is in place and has recently been revised following a review carried out with providers and service users. The complaints leaflet is clear, widely available, and written in plain English. It explains how to make and escalate a complaint in a variety of ways. It also includes response standards, so that complainants understand the procedure and how it should be carried out. However, the complaints form is not freepost, which may deter some service users who are on restricted incomes.

**194** Service user representatives were involved in reviewing the complaints procedure, especially focusing on time scales. Service users had voiced concerns that verbal complaints seldom received formal feedback. One service user has now volunteered to scrutinize complaints to check that procedures are followed and that feedback is provided.

**195** It is positive that the Council records both verbal and written complaints received by phone, in writing or in person. Examination of records showed that complaints are generally dealt with satisfactorily and on time. A summary of all complaints is periodically checked by the Supporting People Development Group and then the Strategic Commissioning Board for procedural accuracy and timeliness. These reports are up to date and detailed, and provide assurance to service users that agreed standards are being met.

**196** However, although complaints are logged quarterly from providers' records and some show evidence of lessons learned by them, there are no comments or annotations from Supporting People to show that the records have been viewed or noted, or that trends have been highlighted. Also, some logged complaints have not been pursued, with no record of whether they were followed up or referred elsewhere. This is mainly due to contact not being maintained with the complainant. Although it is clearly difficult to inform the complainant of the result in these cases, these complaints should still be addressed to benefit other service users.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

**197** There is no set timescale for service providers to alert the Supporting People team to 'notifiable incidents'. In one case from the files seen the incident was only reported eight days after it occurred. This means that urgent incidents may not always be highlighted to the team promptly.

### Diversity

**198** The previous inspection found that strengths outweigh weaknesses in terms of the corporate approach to diversity. However, the programme was not using the Supporting People budget to best meet the housing-related support needs of vulnerable people in Rochdale. There was a strong corporate and service commitment to diversity. The Council had a good understanding of the diverse needs of its communities including traditionally excluded groups. However, whilst the individual needs of service users were being met by providers, the unmet needs of some vulnerable groups were not being addressed by the programme.

**199** This inspection found that strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area. There is a generally strong corporate approach to equality and diversity. Good quality services, including new services, are being provided to some of the most excluded client groups, as outlined earlier in this report. There is an effective approach to improving access for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and disabled potential service users and there are several specific services for members of BME communities. The Council provides mandatory training in diversity for staff, and offers this to service providers, who have a high attendance rate. However, there has not been an effective approach to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and there are limited specific services to meet the needs of some client groups.

**200** The Council has a strong corporate approach to issues of equality and diversity and has achieved level four of the Equalities Standard for Local Government. The Council has a Single Equality Scheme 2007 to 2010 and a procurement policy which includes guidelines on equality and diversity.

**201** There is a detailed BME housing strategy and action plan which address a recognised under-representation of BME service users in key areas of housing and support services. A BME focus group was held to contribute to the development of the three-year strategy and there has since been joint working with providers on improving access for BME groups and service users with disabilities. As a result, BME access increased from 8.7 per cent in 2006/07 to 14.5 per cent in the first two quarters of 2008/09. There has also been an increase in access by disabled service users from 16.4 per cent in 2006/07 to 29 per cent in the first two quarters of 2008/09 which exceeds the targets set.

**202** The targets set for new BME service users for each Supporting People client group (from 2008/09 onwards) are included in steady state contracts, based on local research and knowledge, local demographics and existing take-up. Action taken to meet targets includes training for providers, sharing good practice, validation of the fair access and diversity elements of the QAF and work through the learning disabilities partnership board to offer greater choice and access. This is making services more accessible to diverse groups.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 203** The Council is promoting positive equality and diversity practice through training. All housing and Supporting People staff are required to attend equality and diversity training. The housing department's action plan includes a commitment to offer this training routinely to service providers and around 80 per cent of providers have attended the Council's training in this area. Trained staff can provide services that better meet the needs of diverse groups.
- 204** Equality Impact Assessments are not consistently undertaken in all relevant areas of Supporting People activity. For example, eligibility criteria, value for money criteria and the commissioning and procurement framework are all key policies that have the potential for differential impacts on different sections of communities. Impact assessments have not been done in these areas. In the case of the Supporting People three-year strategy 2008 to 2011, an abridged (screening) impact assessment was completed in the week prior to our inspection despite the strategy's completion many months previously. This is a requirement of all public bodies that in this case is not being met.
- 205** The Supporting People team has had no forward action plan to complete Equality Impact Assessments, despite housing department guidance that this should be in place. In response to our feedback the Council has acted promptly to put an action plan in place, however, we consider the timescales for some are too long, for example, the procurement framework and value for money policy. Some unintended discriminatory effects may therefore go unnoticed.
- 206** There are a range of services designed to meet the diverse needs within the community, and evidence from QAF scores is that the quality of these services has improved over recent years. For example, there are five services specifically designed to meet the needs of BME groups, including a mixed BME sheltered scheme and a project for Asian women with mental health issues. Also, a two-year floating support pilot for Gypsies and Travellers was recently commissioned and began operating while we were on site.
- 207** The Council has been slow to identify the needs of vulnerable people with HIV/AIDS<sup>22</sup> for housing-related support. Two pieces of research have been carried out over the past year, the first recommended that all Supporting People providers should have an awareness of the issues in this area, and sexual health awareness training was then undertaken with providers. The outcomes of the second piece of research were not yet known at the time of the inspection. This means that the programme cannot yet be sure that it is effectively meeting needs in this area.

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<sup>22</sup> People with HIV/AIDS are one of the groups originally identified by the CLG as potentially in need of housing-related support.

**208** It is positive that consultation on the three-year Supporting People strategy sought the views of diverse groups and that their comments were followed up. Service user focus groups were held for people with learning disabilities and for BME service users. One issue raised was the need for providers and the Supporting People team to improve communication in different languages. As a result of this, the provider performance sub-group organised presentations about translation services for a 2008 provider forum. The Supporting People team also promoted its own arrangements, which include access to in-house language interpreters and the production of information in different formats on request. This shows that action is being taken to respond to concerns raised and to communicate more effectively with service users.

### Outcomes for service users

**209** The previous inspection found this to be an area where weaknesses outweighed strengths. There were significant gaps in provision for a number of client groups, the budget was underspent, there was still significant ineligible funding and only a small number of new services had been developed. However, poor quality services had been de-commissioned, there had been improvements in the quality of services, and outcome measurement demonstrated improvement in some areas.

**210** This inspection found a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Although substantial progress has been made over the past year, a number of needs and commissioning priorities have not yet been met due to earlier delays in the programme. The full impact of commissioning and remodelling plans has yet to be felt by some client groups and there are limited move-on opportunities for service users. However, some new services have opened during the past year and these are delivering effective outcomes for service users. Also, there has been an improvement in the quality of services and a welcome emphasis on training opportunities for service users.

### Supporting People service improvements

**211** There has been significant activity over the past year to commission new services and remodel existing services to better meet identified needs. However, the earlier failure to carry out robust needs assessments and commission new services means that improvements for service users through the commissioning and restructuring of services has only partially been delivered, and people in need of housing-related support have yet to see the full benefits of this work.

**212** A number of commissioning priorities have yet to be addressed (see 'Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance', earlier in this report) which is partly due to the late completion of strategic reviews in some areas (see 'Grant compliance, strategy and needs', earlier in this report). For example, the strategic review of single homelessness services, which now accounts for the highest proportion of Supporting People funding, has only recently been completed and decisions based on this review have yet to be taken and implemented. Meanwhile, the move-on strategy identifies an estimated over-provision of 25 hostel beds and a perceived shortfall of 105 units of homelessness second stage supported housing. The impact of this is that current provision of housing-related support is not best meeting the needs of homeless people.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 213** Similarly, sector reviews of older people's services and learning disability services have yet to start and a full review of mental health services has not taken place (although a 'mini review' preceded the issuing of steady state contracts). This means that several service areas have yet to be remodelled to best meet the needs of service users.
- 214** A high level of underspend has been carried forward through the earlier years of the Supporting People programme and this had accumulated to £3.57 million by the end of 2007/08, with a further £798,000 underspend in 2008/09 bringing the total to £4.3 million entering 2009/10.<sup>23</sup> The cautious approach to committing the grant underspend was identified in the first inspection as a barrier to maximising the provision of housing-related support services. It is positive that commissioning priorities have now been agreed and that, during 2008/09, the underspend has been committed to recent and future commissioning activities. However, the impact of this commitment has yet to be felt for several key areas of provision and the outcomes for service users have yet to be realised.
- 215** There is insufficient supply of extra-care accommodation to meet need in Rochdale. The vision for development of extra-care services is outlined in a joint strategy, and a multi-agency extra-care steering group, which includes Supporting People, was set up in 2007 to take this agenda forward. However, the number of additional places falls well below the planned level. In September 2008 there was an identified need for 354 units of extra-care housing in Rochdale, plus 141 units needed for older people with dementia, but only 24 units in place. Some options for remodelling and new schemes have been drawn up, but there are no firm plans in place for future provision. This means that the current needs of older people are not being met in the most appropriate manner.
- 216** However, since the first inspection a number of new services have been put in place to meet identified needs while other existing services have been restructured to provide better value for money. Overall, since the previous inspection, six new services comprising 124 units of housing support (including floating support) have been put in place. Also, 129 units have been added to the Programme as a result of the negotiations over steady state contracts. There is evidence from outcomes data and from our visits and interviews that these changes in provision have improved the range and quality of services available for service users. For example:
- the newly commissioned rough sleepers' service moved seven people from rough sleeping into accommodation during the project's first five months (from September 2008) and helped others to overcome barriers to sustaining accommodation, such as rent arrears;
  - the new offenders' service is a creative project, developed with extensive input from offenders. It recognises that problems with accommodation following custody are often exacerbated by the breakdown of tenancies immediately prior to custody and places particular emphasis on supporting offenders through this phase. It also recognises the particular needs of short sentence prisoners;

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<sup>23</sup> Figures taken from: 'Supporting People Report to Commissioning Board' 26 February 2009.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- positive outcomes for offenders also include evidence of offenders accessing generic projects and not being inappropriately excluded, including floating support services;
- the floating support service for people with alcohol dependency set up in early 2009 is enabling people to receive support in their own homes, rather than in accommodation-based services;
- the Youth Offending Team and Drug and Alcohol Action Team consider the supported lodgings scheme for young offenders to be excellent, with positive outcomes; and
- the Supporting People-funded 'Bond Board' helped 27 households move from supported accommodation into private rented homes in 2008/09.

**217** The progress made in these areas is particularly noteworthy as the reconfigured and new services are for the most socially excluded vulnerable groups.

**218** Other improvements for service users include:

- a useful range of services for teenagers/young people including a six-week pre-tenancy course;
- a strong emphasis on training with a view to getting people into employment. A 'Jobs Fair' was attended by 28 service users and 'Employability Training' has also been provided - with some positive outcomes; and
- good performance in the speed of providing aids and adaptations.

**219** The quality of services has improved over recent years. This is evidenced through QAF scores (see 'Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance', above) and confirmed by outcomes data and our own visits and interviews. There are effective procedures in place for monitoring service quality, including obtaining feedback from service users. Poor services have been dealt with or decommissioned. This is ensuring that service users benefit from good quality services.

**220** There has been an overall increase in the number of units of housing support provided, and a re-allocation of resources to meet the need for more floating support. In 2003 the Programme funded 3,100 units of housing-related support,<sup>24</sup> comprising 2,866 accommodation-based units and 414 units of floating support. By March 2009 this had increased to 3,533 units, comprising 2,663 accommodation-based units and 870 units of floating support.

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<sup>24</sup> Excluding community alarms and Home Improvement Agency provision.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

### Choice for service users

- 221** Choice has improved over the past year through the provision of new services, but remains limited for some service users. Choice is also inhibited by the shortage of appropriate move-on accommodation. This limits access to more independent accommodation for existing service users and also restricts access to schemes for new service users, as fewer vacancies arise. A move-on audit in 2008 found that 146 service users were assessed as ready to move but unable to secure appropriate accommodation. A move-on pilot has enabled 19 people to move on from short-term supported accommodation, but work to address move-on is still at an early stage (see 'Grant compliance, strategy and needs', earlier in this report).
- 222** However, new and remodelled services have improved choice of provision for some groups who previously would have had limited access. For example, people with alcohol problems could previously only receive housing support if they were in a supported accommodation project and were 'dry'; 20 units of floating support are now available to people who wish to remain in their own tenancy and the service will also accept people who have relapsed.
- 223** There are also improved options for young people and offenders. The newly commissioned Supported Lodgings Service extends the client groups able to access supported lodgings to provide for young people with substance misuse problems, teenage parents and young offenders. Also, the Bond Board provides a choice of private rented sector tenure for vulnerable people, coupled with increased provision of floating support.

### Support plans

- 224** Support plans are in place, agreed with service users and reviewed with them regularly. Providers are offered advice and support in improving support planning and good practice is shared on the spkweb and through the Provider Forum. Joint support planning is in place for the jointly funded learning disability services, to ensure clarity and a lack of duplication for service users.
- 225** The support plans we saw were appropriate. All service users had support plans and all but one were aware of having their own copy of the plan. This is helping to ensure that service users have a structured and documented approach to support and are supported to maintain or increase their independence.

### Outcome measurement

- 226** There has been an increased focus on setting outcome targets and measuring outcomes over the past year. This focus is evidenced by the employment of a Contract Officer with a specific responsibility for co-ordinating this area of work and helping providers to measure and improve outcomes. Outcomes are captured in several ways: through information for CLG returns; through the Rochdale outcomes tool; through service user feedback; and via a pro-forma format suggested by the Audit Commission.

## How good is the Supporting People programme?

- 227** CLG outcome reports are produced for each service and are discussed during visits to highlight positive outcomes and poor performance. Shared outcomes with partners are agreed where possible; for example, Primary Care Trust managers have worked with the Supporting People team to define shared outcomes from newly commissioned services for people with drug or alcohol dependency. All providers, both those with steady state contracts and those still on interim contracts, are clear about the targets set.
- 228** Outcomes are reported to the Supporting People Development Group and Strategic Commissioning Board and are shared with providers through the spkweb. Also, a log of positive service user outcomes has been set up to enable the sharing of good practice between providers.

# What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

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## What is the track record in delivering improvement?

- 229** The previous inspection found this to be an area where there were more weaknesses than strengths. Rochdale had made slow progress to develop the programme in a number of areas: to deliver services to those with no current provision; to identify opportunities to reconfigure services to offer greater choice; to ensure all users receive quality services; and to achieve value for money in contracted services. However, an improvement programme was being delivered and Rochdale had responded positively to improvement recommendations from external bodies.
- 230** This inspection found that this is an area where strengths outweigh weaknesses. There has been significant progress in many areas over the past year. Governance arrangements have improved, commissioning has taken place, there has been an effective approach to assessing value for money and service user involvement has improved. There has been generally good progress against the Service Improvement Plan and the recommendations from the first inspection. However, the Council is still in a weaker position, after six years of administration, than it would have been if there had not been a poor start over the first three years. Not all needs or commissioning priorities have been addressed and not all steady state contracts have been signed.
- 231** Since 2006/07, when issues around poor commissioning, ineligible services and limited performance management were identified, there has been a clear commitment from the partnership and the Council to deliver improvement. Improvement began early in 2007 following a baseline assessment which found performance to be poor, and accelerated following the appointment of a new lead officer in December 2007. Governance arrangements have been improved and now work well (as outlined earlier in this report) and effective leadership has been provided by the lead officer and Accountable Officer. Additional resources have been brought into the team, including specialists, to help deliver improvements. The providers we spoke to now rate the performance of the Supporting People programme and team highly and feel well supported and consulted.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 232** Generally good progress has been made against a challenging Supporting People Improvement Plan, which incorporates the recommendations from the Audit Commission's 2008 inspection, although not all actions were achieved by the Commission's target date of December 2008 (progress against the Audit Commission's recommendations is summarised in Appendix 1 of this report). Overall, the Supporting People partners responded positively to the 2008 inspection and have used its findings and recommendations to drive improvement, which has brought benefits for providers and service users.
- 233** Progress against the three-year Supporting People strategy (2008 to 2011) has been generally good, but is well behind the progress that would have been expected by now had the original five-year strategy (2005 to 2010) been robust. New services have been procured to meet some of the commissioning priorities (see 'Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance') but not all priorities have been addressed to date. For example, single homelessness services have yet to be reconfigured and the shortage of extra-care provision has yet to be addressed. Work to tackle the lack of move-on accommodation is at an early stage.
- 234** Although the programme is not where it should be after six years, significant progress has been made over the past two years and, in particular, over the past 12 months. The agreement of revised eligibility criteria and the revised three-year strategy and commissioning priorities in 2008 gave the programme a firm basis on which to move forward; this was followed by the commissioning of new services and commitment of the accumulated underspend of £4.2 million.
- 235** The earlier shortcomings of the programme have meant that needs mapping and future commissioning plans are not yet fully comprehensive (see 'Grant compliance, strategy and needs' and 'Commissioning, procurement and quality assurance' earlier in this report) but the programme has taken a pragmatic approach to ensuring that new commissioning moves ahead in some areas alongside the completion of research in other areas. The recent procurement exercises have been robustly carried out and are meeting identified needs.
- 236** There has been an effective approach to the assessment of the value for money of existing and new services over the past two years, with a robust value for money framework implemented and delivering £270,000 in efficiency savings for that period. Cumulative savings from 2007/08 through to 2011/12 total £3 million (including £798,000 from decommissioning over the past two years and the retraction of funding from learning disability services).
- 237** The Council has secured an improvement in value for money during negotiations for three-year steady state contracts, both financially and in terms of added units and outcomes. Average unit costs for accommodation based services fell from £242.56 in 2003 to £77.74 in 2008, and for floating support from £127.00 to £66.47. This frees up funding that is then available for new or enhanced services.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 238** The fact that 44 per cent of steady state contracts were not in place at the time of this inspection is a weakness, but progress over the past year, from a point at which no contracts had been signed, has been at a reasonable pace, given the need to carry out robust value for money assessments and contract negotiations. Similarly, progress with the accreditation of providers has taken place alongside the agreement of contracts; a year ago no providers had received full accreditation, whereas all but three (that are in progress) are now accredited. Contract monitoring has also been more effective over the past year, with an increase in the number of validation visits carried out and agreement of improvement plans with providers.
- 239** Existing contracts have been rationalised and consolidated appropriately. Since the commencement of the programme: 25 services have been extended or remodelled providing 60 additional units of support; 18 services providing 310 units of ineligible support have been decommissioned; almost £1.17 million has been agreed for retraction, mainly from ineligibly funded learning disability services; and in negotiating steady state contracts the Council has made provision for a further 157 units with a bias towards non-accommodation based support. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of units of support provided, due to an increase in floating support. These changes are bringing about a pattern of provision that provides better value for money and better meets service users' needs.
- 240** Many developments and improvements are recent. For example, service user involvement in the programme was until recently inconsistent and limited. It has improved significantly over the past six months, in particular in commissioning and contract monitoring, as discussed earlier (see 'Service user involvement').
- 241** Corporately, there is a track record of improvement. In 2008 the Council was assessed by the Audit Commission as a three-star council (out of a possible four) that is 'improving well' - an improvement from its two-star rating in 2007. Within this overall score, the adult social care service scored three out of four, and housing scored four out of four. An inspection of Adult Social Care Services by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate in 2008 led to a rating of two stars ('good') with promising prospects for improvement, an improvement from the 2007 score of one star ('adequate').
- 242** The direction of travel of performance indicators is also generally positive. Performance Assessment Framework indicators<sup>25</sup> for adult social care in 2007/08 were assessed as 'significantly above average' for four indicators, 'above average' for four indicators and 'average' for one indicator (number of adults and older people receiving direct payments) - for full details see 'social services performance indicators' in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 243** Performance against National Indicators 141 (percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living) and 142 (percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living) was on track to meet targets for 2008/09 at the time of this inspection.

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<sup>25</sup> Assessed in 2007/08 by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (merged into the Care Quality Commission from April 2009).

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

244 There is also evidence of improvement in the quality of services over time. The individual services visited provided good quality services to users and there is evidence of the overall quality of services increasing annually over the past four years, as measured by the Quality assessment Framework.

**Table 1 QAF improvements over time<sup>26</sup>**

Level	2005/06	2007/08	2008/09
A	2 per cent	10 per cent	14 per cent
B	18 per cent	44 per cent	49 per cent
C	78 per cent	44 per cent	37 per cent
D	2 per cent	2 per cent	0 per cent

### How well does the Council manage performance?

245 The previous inspection found this to be an area with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. There were clear aims and priorities for the programme, with comprehensive improvement planning linking the overall objectives to staff work plans. However, performance management was recent and overall targets were still to be broken down to inform the management of performance in the programme.

246 This inspection found this to be an area where strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses. Clear improvement plans are in place that address the correct priorities. Progress against plans is regularly and widely reported, although current traffic light reporting is not robust in all areas. There is a clear link from high level plans to individual plans. Staff are skilled, well motivated and effectively managed. They receive appropriate training, and leadership of the programme and team is strong. The programme has increasingly used learning from others.

### How good is the service's improvement planning?

247 There are clear aims and priorities for the programme in place and these are set out in the three-year strategy 2008 to 2011. A comprehensive Service Improvement Plan has been in place since 2007 and this was updated in the light of the three-year strategy and the first Audit Commission inspection. This plan is structured to address the descriptors for an organisation delivering an excellent programme described in the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for Supporting People.

248 The Service Improvement Plan was produced with input from stakeholders. It contains details of lead officers and target dates. Detailed project plans underpin the Service Improvement Plan and these contain milestones and detailed timelines. There is also a separate plan which specifically shows progress against the recommendations from the first inspection. These high level plans address the correct priorities and are being used to deliver continuous improvement.

<sup>26</sup> Data taken from: 'Analysis of QAF self assessment 2005/06, 2007/08 and 2008/09' provided by Rochdale MBC January 2009.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

249 There is clear evidence of the high level plans being linked through project plans to individual officers' work plans. For example, the actions within the Service Improvement Plan which address the need for move-on accommodation are linked to a detailed 'move-on project plan', which is in turn linked to actions in individual officers' annual work plans. This ensures that high level priorities are delivered and that day-to-day work is linked to the priorities for improvement.

### **Are there arrangements and a culture in place to support continuous improvement?**

250 There is strong and clear leadership of the programme from the lead officer and accountable officer. This is recognised by Supporting People staff who value the openness and commitment of managers.

251 Performance is reported and monitored through the Supporting People governance bodies and the Council's internal structures. Progress against plans is regularly reported to the Strategic Commissioning Board and the Supporting People Development Group with commentaries on any targets that have not been met for two consecutive reports. These bodies also receive reports of the outcomes of annual value for money assessments, and this is published on the spkweb.

252 Within the Council, performance is regularly monitored by the accountable Officer and through a monthly 'Supporting People improvement plan performance board' attended by the executive director who chairs the strategic commissioning board, and is then reported to the council's performance board - which looks at the outcomes of inspections among other issues. At a higher level, the Chief Executive has formal quarterly meetings with the executive director who chairs the strategic commissioning board and has regular informal contact – through which any key issues surrounding Supporting People and the implementation of the improvement plan are raised. This is ensuring that progress against plans is closely tracked.

253 However, the traffic light reporting against plans is not fully robust. For example, the Supporting People improvement plan updates<sup>27</sup> do not distinguish between items that are 'on track' and those that are completed (both are green). Also, where final completion dates have been moved or passed, items may still show as green. This makes it difficult for more senior managers and governance bodies to monitor performance, particularly as this plan is monitored on an exceptions basis by the monthly Supporting People improvement plan performance board. This means that weaknesses in performance may not be apparent from all performance reports. This weakness has been recognised and managers have given an assurance that it will be addressed.

254 There is routine member scrutiny of Supporting People progress. The portfolio holder receiving regular briefings from the Accountable Officer. He provides a monthly report to all members which includes Supporting People information. The elected members group meets monthly in its consultative role and has ensured that quarterly reports from the programme are submitted to the scrutiny committee. This has ensured effective senior accountability and driven progress.

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<sup>27</sup> The example seen is the 'Supporting People Improvement Plan Update' February 2009.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 255** The Supporting People lead officer and accountable officer regularly visit services with elected members primarily to develop and maintain relationships and increase understanding but also as an opportunity to identify any issues providers may have with the Supporting People programme.
- 256** The Council's Cabinet receives reports on key Supporting People issues and on performance against the two Supporting People national indicators. Supporting People is also part of a quarterly balanced scorecard report to the overview and scrutiny committee.
- 257** Performance monitoring of service providers is effective and has strengthened over the past year (see 'Delivery arrangements' earlier in this report). Work with providers focuses on achieving continuous improvement and the outcome of this is monitored through the QAF and outcome measures. The team has worked effectively with smaller and struggling providers to enable them to maintain and improve standards. This has led to improvements in the quality of services for service users.
- 258** Financial reporting is robust. A finance report is taken to each Supporting People Development Group meeting and a finance officer attends the group and presents the report. Financial projections are in place through to 2011/12 and projections are reviewed regularly to reflect savings and changes in commissioning.
- 259** There is effective performance management of staff. Supporting People staff have clear individual work plans, receive regular one-to-one supervision and annual Performance and Development Reviews. Information sharing is promoted through monthly team meetings and the contract managers and officers also meet fortnightly. Team away-days are used to develop and review the Service Improvement Plan.
- 260** The programme has increasingly used learning from others. For example, it has sought assistance from local high performing authorities, which informed the development of the elected members group and assisted in the development of the improvement plan, and from specialists within the Council and partner organisations. Rochdale has also identified and shared good practice through involvement in regional groups and through the national Supporting People website. This approach helps to identify solutions that have already proved effective elsewhere.

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## Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

- 261** The previous inspection found this to be an area where strengths outweigh weaknesses. Recent changes in the leadership of the Supporting People team had led to a positive, fast moving and improving programme. There was an increasing and positive profile of Supporting People within Rochdale, the Supporting People team had access to appropriate skills, there was effective financial planning and issues of staff sickness had been addressed. However, there had been no commissioning to date.
- 262** This inspection found that this is an area where strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses. The corporate commitment to the programme is supported by a financial commitment to allocate the current level of funding and underspend to future housing-related support. There is strong staff capacity, high staff retention and low sickness. The capacity of providers is enhanced through training and support, and partnership working is adding to capacity.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 263** There is a clear commitment to continue to deliver improvements in housing-related support from the Supporting People partnership and the Council's members and officers. This commitment is evident from the Strategic Commissioning Board and Supporting People Development Group, but also from the Council's Chief Executive and other senior officers.
- 264** The Council's commitment is demonstrated by a substantial financial commitment to the programme. The Council's Cabinet has given a commitment that Supporting People funding, although no longer ring-fenced nationally, will continue to be locally ring-fenced for the Supporting People programme for the next two years (2009/10 to 2010/11) so long as the programme continues to contribute to Local Area Agreement priorities. It has also taken steps to ensure that the accumulated under-spend of £4.2 million is reserved for investment in the programme - this sum is now committed to fund existing and specific planned projects over the next three years. Financial projections are in place through to 2011/12, by when the annual surplus would be reduced from the present £4.2 million to a contingency of £250,000. These projections are reviewed regularly to reflect changes in commissioning, savings and other circumstances.
- 265** The programme has the financial resources to continue to invest in new and remodelled services in line with the three-year strategy. The three-year grant allocation of £15 million a year from 2007/08, together with the Council's decision to continue to ring-fence this sum locally, has provided the programme with more certainty. This, together with the surplus carried into 2009/10 and savings achieved since 2007/08 due to decommissioning, ineligible services and efficiency savings, has enabled the programme to commit £6.1 million for the commissioning of new services in 2008/09. This will be funding three-year contracts which will better meet identified needs.
- 266** The Council has provided financial support to fund extra resources for the Supporting People team in order to deliver improvement over the past two years. This amounted to £440,000 in additional administrative funding in 2007/08, £547,000 in 2008/09 and £508,700 in 2009/10. This funding has brought the much needed extra capacity to the programme. For example, a procurement specialist has been seconded from the corporate procurement team, a second contract manager has joined the team from a neighbouring authority and the permanent location of a value for money specialist within the team from January 2009 (previously seconded from central finance).
- 267** Since the last inspection, the implementation of the procurement framework, together with the continued application of the value for money framework, has delivered efficiencies and savings for both new and existing services. This has both raised the quality of services and achieved savings which can be invested in new services.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the Supporting People programme?

- 268** The staff team is strong and is committed to service improvement. The team is motivated, staff retention is high and sickness levels are now low (in 2006/07 sickness averaged 42 days; this fell to 1.2 days in the final quarter of 2008). Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that the team's capacity to deliver improvement will be sustained when the additional temporary resources, including specialist expertise, are withdrawn over the next year. For example, two staff already have procurement expertise and two more are being trained, and the team will be able to continue to call upon corporate procurement and finance expertise. A temporary officer is being retained on an extended contract as this post focuses on capturing outcomes, which is an area that the Supporting People team wants to continue to extend.
- 269** Training needs are identified and are being met and staff are encouraged to attend internal and external courses. For example, two officers are working towards an NVQ in procurement, another has attended homelessness seminars and all have been trained on child and adult protection. This is increasing staff capacity through training and development opportunities.
- 270** The capacity of providers has been enhanced through training and support. Training is organised by the Supporting People team and providers are also notified of other training opportunities across the region. A supported housing NVQ is now running and is attended by some providers' housing support staff; this is free to small providers. The programme has also levered in £19,000 'skills for life' funding for service user training. This is helping to maximise providers' capacity to deliver effective housing-related support to service users.

# Appendix 1 – Progress against recommendations from the previous inspection

Recommendation	Position in February 2009
<p>R1 Improve the performance management framework to ensure the monitoring of progress, the identification of slippage and the driving of improvements within the programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using outcome measures and shared targets with partner agencies to drive improvement in services;</li> <li>• identifying and monitoring existing, related and joint targets with partner agencies;</li> <li>• regularly tracking and benchmarking unit and sector costs both locally and regionally and reporting this information to Supporting People governance structures;</li> <li>• establishing targets and measures for efficiency and value for money improvements for both individual services and the programme as a whole;</li> <li>• provide support and guidance to providers to enable them to meet the QAF targets set by Rochdale;</li> <li>• capturing and reporting on the outcomes the programme delivers for service users; and</li> <li>• identifying and tracking service users who are ready to move on and how successfully they do so.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target date December 2008</b></p> <p>Mostly achieved.</p> <p>New performance framework in place. Reporting arrangements in place. Some shared outcomes still to be agreed. Both Supporting People National Indicators included in LAA. QAF targets set and support provided. Move-on data collected through MOPP audit. Outcomes data collected and reported.</p>
<p>R2 Improve service user involvement in the strategic and operational development of the programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building links for service users into existing user groups within RMBC;</li> <li>• offering opportunities for service users to help direct the future development of the programme;</li> <li>• ensuring service users set the agenda to reflect things that matter most to them; and</li> <li>• expanding the service user group to ensure it has membership from all client groups, or that there are additional forums at which hard to reach groups can make their views heard.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target date December 2008</b></p> <p>Mostly achieved.</p> <p>Links made with existing service user groups. Involvement through SPDG, People Supporting People and Service Improvement Groups. More to do on involving hard to reach groups. Service users influencing commissioning and contract monitoring. (CLG's training and CRB check concerns addressed)</p>

## Appendix 1 – Progress against recommendations from the previous inspection

Recommendation	Position in February 2009
<p>R3 Address the difficulties service users are having in moving on from supported accommodation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying and keeping current the level of need for move-on accommodation;</li> <li>• identifying and implementing options for improving the availability of accommodation by working closely with providers of permanent housing;</li> <li>• extending the availability of floating support to promote tenancy sustainment;</li> <li>• challenging inappropriate exclusion policies or practices;</li> <li>• developing systems that ensure support for individuals is linked to preparing to move on ahead of their exit from supported accommodation;</li> <li>• setting and monitoring targets; and</li> <li>• delivering a comprehensive move-on accommodation strategy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target date December 2008</b></p> <p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>MOPP audit completed, providing data on level of need for move-on. Improvement in availability of permanent housing at early stage. Use of private renting through Bond Board.</p> <p>Some increase in floating support. Move-on strategy agreed (in March 2009). Annual targets for move-on not yet agreed.</p>
<p>R4 Develop the system for contract monitoring by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuing with the roll out of the new contract monitoring framework;</li> <li>• developing an action plan for future contract monitoring to ensure the framework is achievable and there is capacity to deliver;</li> <li>• introducing a system for ongoing QAF validation, improvement plan development and monitoring for providers;</li> <li>• develop performance measures to enable progress and outcomes from contract management to be monitored; and</li> <li>• ensure the diverse needs of all users are understood and met by providers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target date December 2008</b></p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>Contract monitoring framework in place. QAF validations taking placed on a risk basis. Performance targets set. Needs of BME communities considered and BME access targets set.</p>
<p>R5 Rapidly drive forward the programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quickly developing detailed plans to utilise the accumulated underspend of Supporting People grant, using modern methods of procurement where appropriate;</li> <li>• carrying out strategic reviews, initially of the single homelessness services, followed by other client groups to ensure that strategic decisions are made about the needs of all client groups;</li> <li>• ensure that the current strategy is clear about the ranking of priorities given to each client group within it; and</li> <li>• carrying out research into the needs of those users about which there is not currently enough information.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target date December 2008</b></p> <p>Partially achieved.</p> <p>Procurement framework implemented and services commissioned. Underspend committed. Mixed progress on strategic reviews. Priorities ranked. Needs research carried out - but further research needed and planned.</p>

## Appendix 1 – Progress against recommendations from the previous inspection

Recommendation	Position in February 2009
<p>R6 Further improve relations with providers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring service providers have access to performance management information on the achievements of the programme;</li> <li>• ensuring a clear understanding of issues raised by service providers and give a balanced response to them;</li> <li>• supporting providers to access and improve complementary services for users;</li> <li>• developing understanding of the needs of different client groups to inform relationships;</li> <li>• reducing uncertainty for providers by developing a clear programme for issuing steady state contracts enabling them to be put in place at the earliest opportunity but without limiting future commissioning plans; and</li> <li>• ensuring providers are clear about the actions they need to take to improve their QAF scores.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target date Dec. 2008</b></p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>Performance information shared with providers. Good communication established with providers. High level of support and training in place. Issuing of steady state contracts on course; due to complete in June '09. Effective improvement planning with providers.</p>

Source: ' Supporting People Improvement Plan Update' February 2009

# Appendix 2 – Performance indicators

## Demographic information

- 1 This section includes demographic information relevant to Supporting People, comparing the Council with England.

Measure	Rochdale	England
Population (mid-2007) <sup>28</sup>	206,100	51,092,000
Percentage of the population aged 65+ (mid-2007)	14.31	15.97
Percentage from minority ethnic groups (all groups other than White – British) <sup>29</sup>	11.40	10.44
Percentage unemployment (claimant count rate) <sup>30</sup>	5.40	2.3
Deprivation Index (1 highest, 354 lowest) <sup>31</sup>	25	-

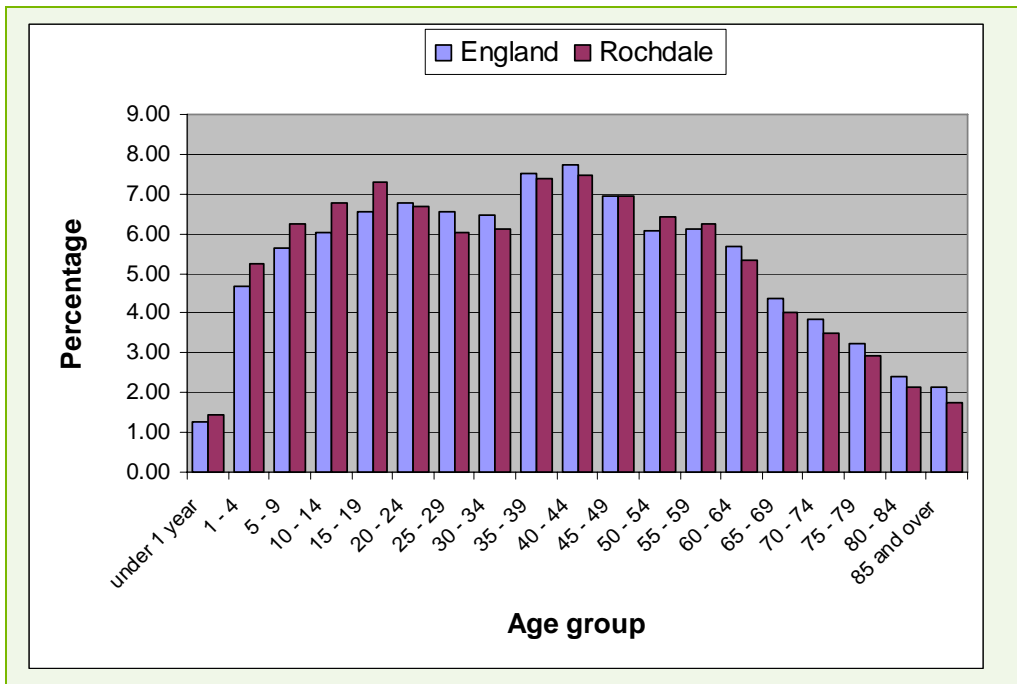
<sup>28</sup> Source: midyear population estimates (2007)

<sup>29</sup> Source: census 2001

<sup>30</sup> Source: claimant count with rates and proportions (December 2008)

<sup>31</sup> Source: deprivation Index 2007, average ward score for the authority.

**Figure 2 Percentage of the population<sup>32</sup> in each age group compared with England**



**Figure 3 Households accepted as homeless between 2004 and 2008 compared with the region and England (acceptances per 1,000 households)**



<sup>32</sup> Source: midyear population estimates (2007)

**Performance information**

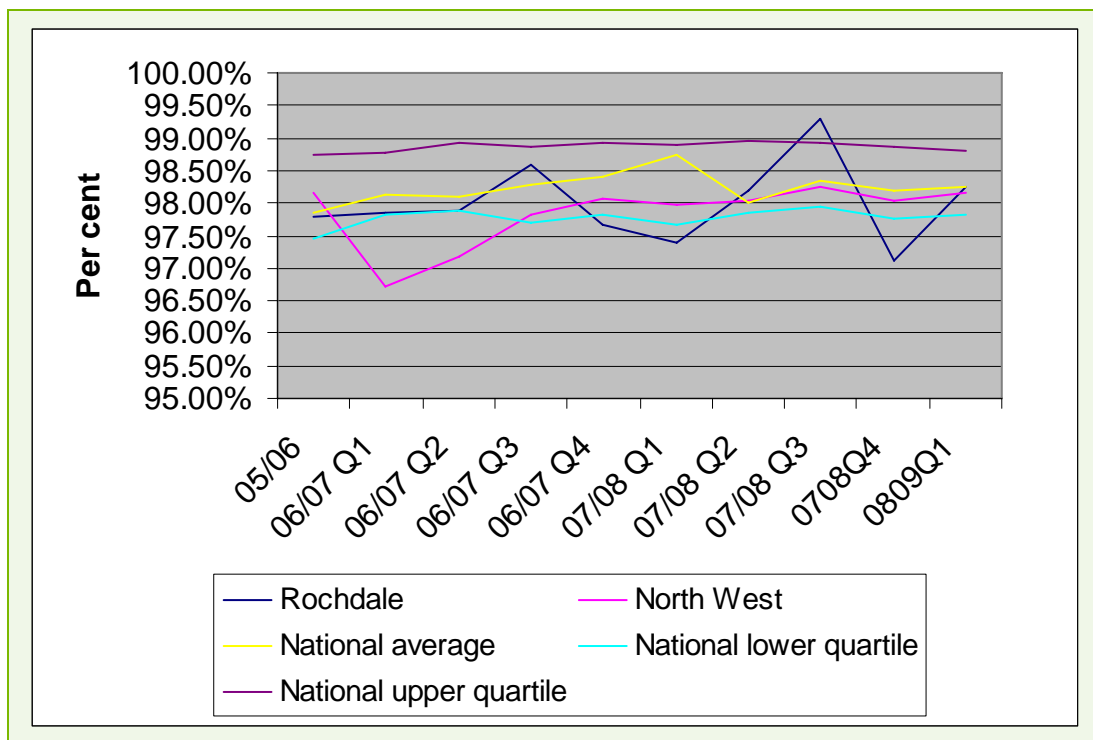
2 This section highlights strong and weak areas of the Council’s performance in services that are relevant to Supporting People. We have used the following information to help us reach our judgements.

- Data for services funded through the Supporting People programme.
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment scores.
- Star ratings for social services.
- Performance Assessment Framework indicators for social services.
- Relevant best value performance indicators.

**Supporting People data**

**Figure 4 Key performance Indicator 1<sup>33</sup>**

NI 142 – Per cent of vulnerable people supported to maintain achieving independent living

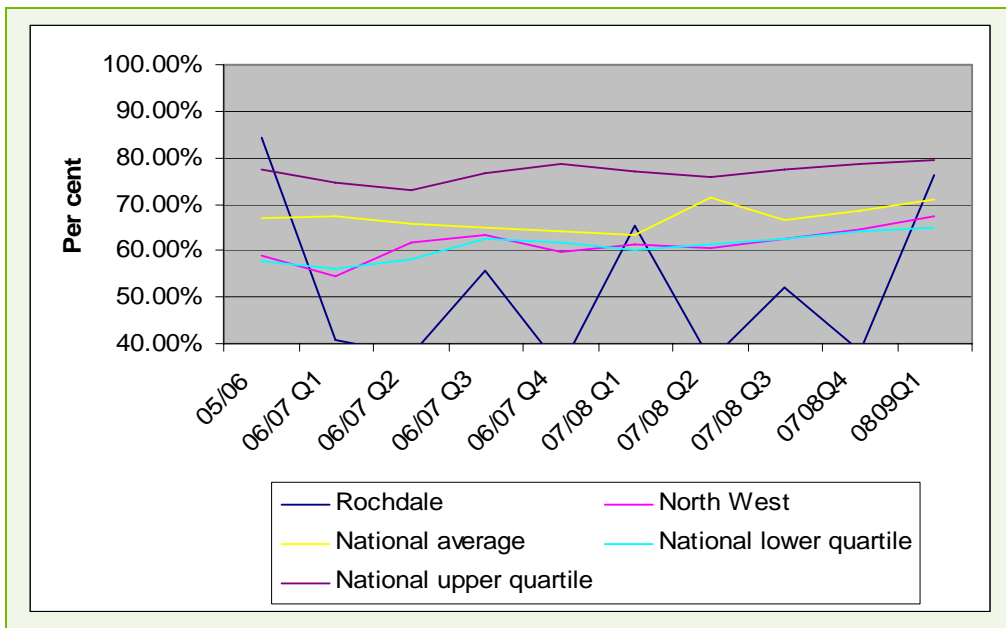


<sup>33</sup> Source: CLG, 2008.

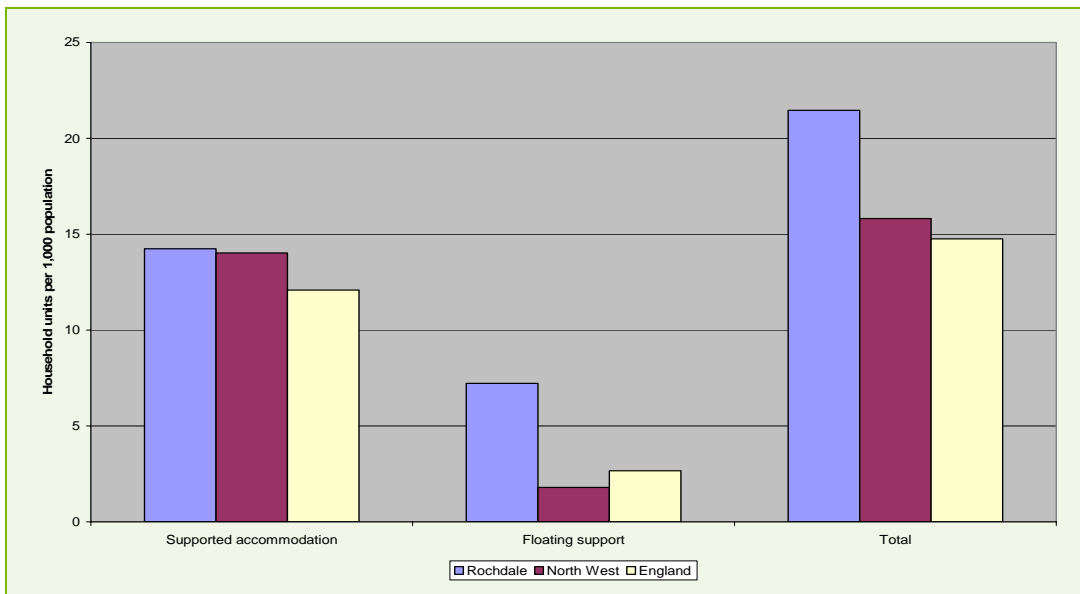
Appendix 2 – Performance indicators

**Figure 5 Key performance indicator 2<sup>34</sup>**

NI 141 – Per cent of vulnerable people achieving independent living



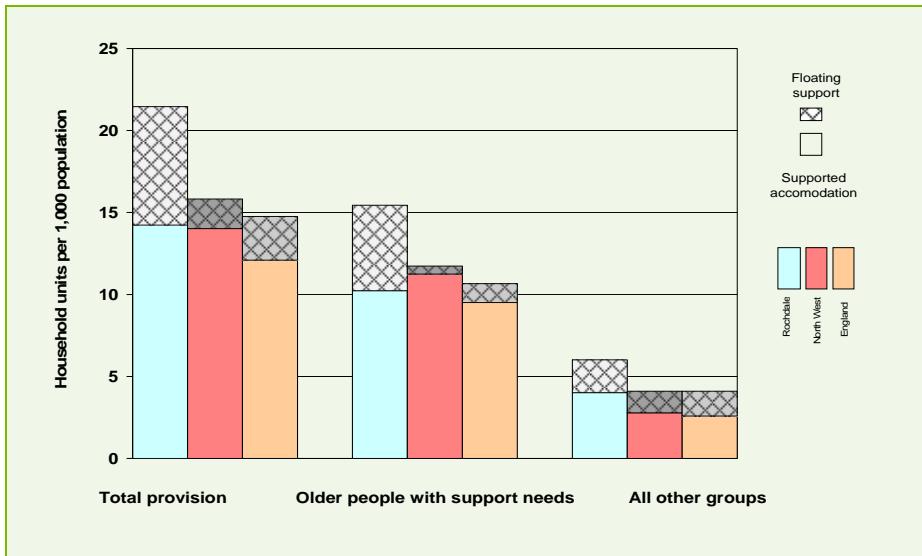
**Figure 6 Total service provision funded through Supporting People<sup>35</sup>**



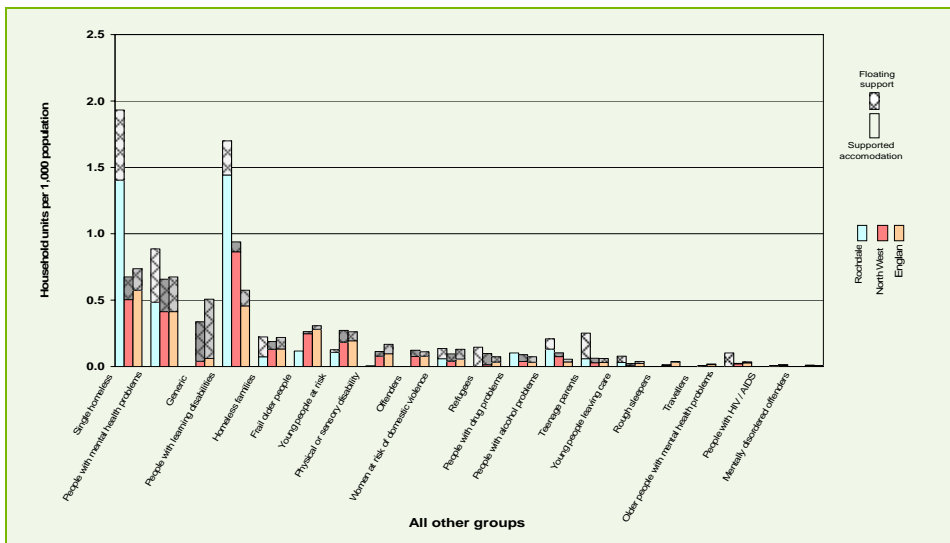
<sup>34</sup> Source: CLG, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Source: CLG, 2005/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

**Figure 7 Services for older people with support needs compared with the region and England<sup>36</sup>**



**Figure 8 Services for other groups compared with the region and England**



<sup>36</sup> Source: CLG, 2005/06. Excludes community alarms, home improvement agencies, leasehold schemes and pipeline services.

## Appendix 2 – Performance indicators

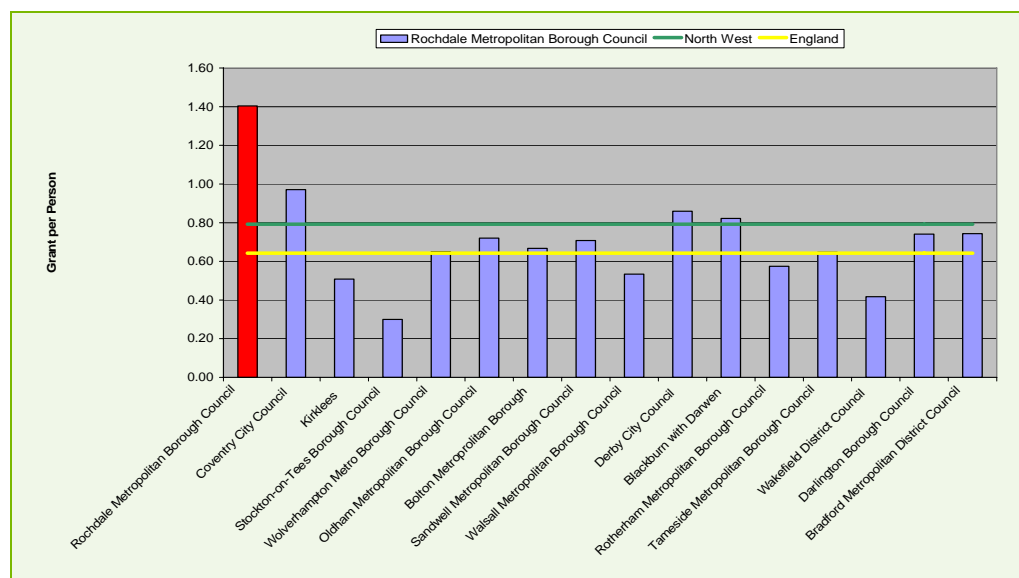
**Table 2 Funding for Supporting People** <sup>37</sup>

Rochdale	2005/06 (£)	2006/07 (£)	2007/08 (£)	2008/09 (£)	2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)
SP Grant	15,369,828	15,104,048	15,076,659	15,076,659	15,076,659	15,076,659
Admin Grant	233,178	233,178	233,178	221,519	204,031	174,883

**Table 3 Unit costs of Supporting People services in 2007/08 (£ per week)**

	Per head of population <sup>38</sup>	Per household unit <sup>39</sup>
Rochdale	1.40	62.02
North West	0.79	37.57
England	£ 0.64	£ 30.64

**Figure 9 Supporting People grant per head of population per week compared with nearest neighbours <sup>40</sup> and all English councils (2007/08)**



<sup>37</sup> Source: Grant allocations, CLG.

<sup>38</sup> Midyear population estimates (2007)

<sup>39</sup> Source: CLG

<sup>40</sup> A comparator group of similar councils.

**Table 4 Social Services star ratings 2008**

	<b>Delivery of outcome</b>	<b>Capacity to improve?</b>	<b>Performance rating (CPA equivalent)</b>
Adults' Services	Good	Promising	☆☆

**Social services performance indicators****Table 5 Performance Assessment Framework indicators 2007/08**

This table shows how the Council's social services performed on indicators relevant to Supporting People.

<b>Rochdale</b>	
Significantly above average (★★★★)	Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home (C31) Adults with physical disabilities helped to live at home (C29) Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home (C30) Percentage of items of equipment and adaptations delivered within seven working days (D54)
Above average (★★★)	Older people helped to live at home (C32) Adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met (D39) Adults and older clients receiving a review as a percentage of those receiving a service (D40) Delayed transfers of care (D41)
Average (★★)	Adults and older people receiving direct payments at 31 March per 100,000 population aged 18 or over (C51)
Below average (●●)	
Significantly below average (●)	

## Appendix 2 – Performance indicators

### Best value performance indicators (BVPIs)

**Table 6 Performance on relevant indicators in 2007/08 compared with Metropolitan Borough councils**

This table shows how the Council performed on BVPIs relevant to Supporting People.

<b>Rochdale</b>	<b>Level of the equality standard for local government (BV2a): 4 of 5 (on level 0 – 5)</b>
Within the best 25 per cent	Domestic violence refuge places (BV225)
Average	-
Within the worst 25 per cent	Length of stay in hostel accommodation (BV183b)

### Not yet available

Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (BV78a)
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# Appendix 3 – Reality checks undertaken

- 1 When we went on-site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
  - a questionnaire survey which was sent to all providers of housing-related support services;
  - focus groups with service user representatives; elected members; service providers; and the Supporting People team;
  - visits to ten supported housing schemes, to talk to service users, scheme managers and front line staff;
  - file checks of service reviews and complaints;
  - mystery shopping exercises to test how easy it is to access services;
  - review of leaflets and the Council's and Supporting People 's websites;
  - interviews with key staff and managers, including the Chief Executive of the Council;
  - interviews with members of the Commissioning Body, Core Strategy Group and the Accountable Officer;
  - observation of Commissioning Body meeting; and
  - interviews with a range of stakeholders, including senior managers from the Primary Care Trust, Probation, Youth Offending Team, Drug and Alcohol Action Team and the Council's Adult Care service.

# Appendix 4 – Positive practice

**'The Commission will identify and promote good practice. Every inspection will look for examples of good practice and innovation, and for creative ways to overcome barriers and resistance to change or make better use of resources'. (Seeing is Believing)**

## Training and learning

- 1 Rochdale's Supporting People programme has worked with a local college and partners to develop innovative ways of providing learning opportunities for staff and service users at no financial cost. These opportunities are available for all service providers and their service users. Supporting People looked to find the most appropriate courses and qualifications and chose to work with Hopwood Hall College, the main further education college in Rochdale, which offered the flexibility they needed with a steering group to oversee early pilot activity.
- 2 An example of the training available is bespoke ICT training to meet the needs of service users wishing to produce their own newsletter. Nine service users had attended this course at the time of the inspection. Four had successfully completed a basic course, having never previously used a computer. One said:  

**'It was like sitting at a spaceship to start with, but it's easier than I thought'**
- 3 Others are using a number of different computer packages and are about to start the presentation section of their programme, which will help to improve their communication and written language skills.
- 4 There is increasing take-up from both providers and service users, and evidence of the training delivering longer-term benefits for service users. A case study of this initiative has been presented to the Board of Business Link North West and the Skills Minister, as an example of best practice in partnership working.

## Greater Manchester Offenders Project

- 5 Rochdale is leading the joint commissioning of a Greater Manchester Offenders Project and has been instrumental in negotiating funding from all ten of the area's local authorities and from the Probation Trust. Rochdale is leading the procurement of this service and will be the lead authority for contract managing the project. The project includes joint targets and outcome measures. Research was undertaken with existing providers, prisons and service users which has influenced the development of the service specification.
- 6 The main purpose of the project is to increase the number of offenders, both male and female, having suitable accommodation to go into when they leave prison. This will reduce homelessness and reduce re-offending. Housing advice and assistance will be provided to, for example, protect existing tenancies, arrange benefit payments and apply for housing if necessary.

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