

# Supporting People Programme – 2011 Consultation Report

## Executive summary

- **Consultation Details**

Following a number of informal meetings between November 2010 and January 2011, the formal consultation for Supporting People organisations ran from 25<sup>th</sup> February to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 and for users of services from 4<sup>th</sup> March to 8<sup>th</sup> April. Those taking part contributed through a range of different channel including separate user consultation and sector provider meetings; by corresponding with the Council; or filling out consultation surveys. Providers were also encouraged to hold their own consultation events, with many choosing to do so. Supplementary and follow-up meetings also took place. Accessibility issues were addressed during the consultation in order to ensure that people with protected characteristics were able to participate.

There were over **1500** direct responses to the consultation including, as at the time this report was produced, **1391** completed surveys. In total, over **300** providers, users, relatives and carers attended the various meetings that we held. Also, we received a petition from HAGA with **283** signatures. All of these responses have been read and analysed.

- **Brief summary of key findings highlighting the key themes, impacts and responses for client groups across the various sectors**

### The key findings are these:

**Users of Services** overwhelmingly would prefer it if ‘much needed’ services remained as they were and ‘strongly opposed’ or ‘opposed’ the proposal. Not too many individuals therefore contributed to the debate about how we might do things differently apart from suggesting ways in which we could or should be spending more rather than less on the SP programme.

Many people who responded to the consultation did so with personal stories outlining their experiences of their support to date and what life would be like for them should that care and support not be there or in its present form, including how they would struggle to cope or continue to live a normal life without services they’d come to depend on. Users of services expressed how they could be made homeless, experience physical or mental health issues, end up in hospital or prison, suffer a setback or be at risk or even a threat to themselves or others. There were worries too how these proposed changes would impact on partners, children or other family members.

Further details including the main sector differences are contained within the main body of the consultation report, however, the most highly rated services ranged from accommodation-based services, to advice and information, to help with overcoming language and cultural barriers, daily support and/or contact or help with other every day tasks.



Across the majority of sectors more users of services understood the reasons for the cuts than did not, even if they did not necessarily agree with why or how they were to be implemented. However, understanding of what was going on was roughly 50:50 within the BME and LD sectors and even less clear to younger respondents, teenage parents and Domestic Violence survivors.

Over two thirds of those users of services who responded said that they did not receive support from elsewhere. Moreover, the majority of consultees said that where they did so, this additional support came from the Council, a health professional, voluntary organisation or a similar source rather than a family member or carer. Of the remainder, almost a fifth had identified an alternative source of help. Less than 5% of service users said they would be made homeless or end up in prison.

Several core themes emerged from the responses we received from those **providers, Voluntary Sector organisations and advocacy services** whom we consulted.

**Commenting on the Proposal**, some organisations expressed their opposition to any cuts in funding that threatened services for people within the community. They also said they struggled to do all they wanted as things stood or thought the proposals were disproportionate, regressive or something of a short term economy and worried for the future health and well-being of the client groups that they supported. Several providers made the case for their strategic relevance and the contribution they made.

**Commenting on the Criteria Used**, many providers understood the need to make savings in the current financial climate and supported plans to protect the Borough's general provision of accommodation-based services over floating support services despite the difficulty of separating SP funding from other funding streams, many of which were also, (they said), facing cuts. The proposal was not however without its critics, some of whom saw the focus on accommodation based services or the application of the scoring mechanism as not without its problems, favouring paradoxically smaller and larger providers, arbitrary in nature or not necessarily in their clients best interests. These points were addressed during the various contractual negotiations.

**Commenting on the Way Forward**, the majority of providers confirmed that they were happy to work with the Council to reach a mutually acceptable outcome. Others were reluctant, as they saw it, to 'barter' one service against another. Several welcomed the fact that there had been an extension to existing contracts to cover the consultation period but were also worried about potential future cuts and implementation timescales.

Providers also said they were worried that their clients would have fewer opportunities or have a reduced voice in the community. Others raised safeguarding concerns or pointed to the extra demand for statutory and non-statutory services across the Borough and (as they saw it), the wider social impact of the proposals: e.g. rent arrears, a rise in neighbourhood safety issues, substance misuse, rises in hospital admissions, debt and financial problems, unemployment levels etc.

Providers stated concerns that "unique" or specialist services would be lost as would the local knowledge-base. The notion of retaining only large scale generic floating support programmes would, (some argued), diminish specialist knowledge in some sectors.