

Supporting People programme funding cuts – Equalities Impact Assessments

Executive Summary

Background:

The Supporting People (SP) programme delivers housing-related support to vulnerable client groups totalling almost 9000 people across the borough.

Approximately 3000 of those people benefit from services directly provided by the council. The programme aims to support people to live independently, and this takes the form of either “Floating Support” services or accommodation-based provision, and these are provided according to level of need as well as individual circumstances. The SP providers are contracted to deliver against a set of national quality standards and locally agreed performance criteria

Floating Support is characterised as responding to:

- Tenancy attainment/sustainability
- Community Integration
- Access to training, education and employment
- Independent living skills
- Advice, advocacy, emotional support and counselling
- Community safety
- Preventing hospitalisation, residential or secure unit care
- Promoting rehabilitation
- Preventing family breakdown
- Preventing homelessness

Accommodation-based provision is characterised as responding to:

- Tenancy/owner occupier attainment/sustainability
- Independent and domestic living skills
- Developing social skills/behaviour management
- Advice, advocacy emotional support & counselling
- Community safety
- Managing finances and benefit claims
- Gaining access to other services/community organisations
- Establishing social contacts and activities
- Establishing personal safety and security
- Supervising and monitoring of medication, health & wellbeing
- Peer support and befriending

The budget allocation for Supporting People programme in 2010/11 was £17m; of which £3m was spent on council In-House services and £14m on external provision. In order to meet the savings target and bridge the gap between available funding and expenditure on the Supporting People programme, the Council must find savings of £5m.

The council, being mindful of its legal obligations to ensure consultation and Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are carried out in relation to the proposed savings, acknowledged that time should be allowed for the findings from the EqIAs to inform the debate, before final decisions are made on the programme cuts.

The programme is divided into 13 sectors and for the purposes of conducting EqIAs, the different sectors of the SP programme have been considered separately.

EqIA process – consideration of available data, research and information

SP client data is collated centrally by the Supporting People Client Record Office. The latest available data from 2009/10 provides details of over 2250 SP service users in Haringey. It should be noted that some providers are not required to submit this data (dependent on the type of service provided and in line with OPDM/CLG requirements on the national programme).

Although this is a limited sample, it provides an insight into the characteristics of SP service users across each sector.

The basis for the EqIAs was related to the gender and ethnicity of the service users and the SP client sample was benchmarked against the borough profile (ONS mid-year estimates 2009)

An assessment of the impact was measured for each sector on the basis of both differential impact (where service user groups with protected characteristics, may be adversely affected by a reduction in funding to SP provision) and overall impact (on the total user groups benefiting from services in a specified sector).

Where possible, mitigation of the impact has been identified for each sector, and is contained within each of the sector EqIAs.

The consultation process has also informed the results of the EqIAs for each sector, and is supported by a chronology of meetings with service users and providers, and questionnaires which have been used to seek views directly from service users in that process.

Findings from the consultation can be found in the Supporting People Consultation Report.

Summary of findings from EqlAs

The Supporting People report put before Cabinet on 22nd March 2011 essentially fell into two parts.

The first part was a proposal on how to achieve the required cuts of £5m in 2011/12 with the second part proposing a model for how the remaining SP programme could be re-engineered in order to continue to deliver services to those identified as most in need of the services, and in assisting SP providers to identify alternative sources of funding and new operating models/options going forward.

The findings from the EqlAs across the sectors, (and in line with the consultation findings), identified that the proposal which was originally made, was essentially sound as a strategic delivery plan.

Sectors which were considered to be most needed (e.g. accommodation-based provision) were identified as carrying the greatest risk with the lowest achievable mitigation if they were considered for withdrawal.

The proposal favours retaining accommodation-based provision in the programme.

Equally, the EqlAs and consultation process showed that for those sectors of the programme which are proposed for reductions in expenditure/cuts; the risks identified are lower and there is greater mitigation to respond to those risks.

The proposal on a particular sector which has been directly informed by the EqlAs is Domestic Violence.

As a result of the EqlA (and consultation responses), it is now proposed that the SP team works to re-model the combined services in this sector across both floating support and accommodation-based provision to secure improved value for money without the loss of much needed services.

Conclusion

It is evident that any cuts to the SP programme will inevitably carry some level of risk; However, the EqlAs bear out the rationale in the proposal on funding reductions, and where specific evidence of unacceptable risk has been seen, changes have been made accordingly to the proposed reductions in the programme, although there has been a minimal requirement to do so.

The EqlAs have been quality assured by the Equalities and Diversity Officer who is satisfied that the appropriate due diligence has been applied to the process and the findings are sound.

Margaret Allen
April 2011