



COMMUNITY CARE DIVISION

TENANCY SUPPORT SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2009 -2010

Author

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INTRODUCTION

Sandwell Homes Tenancy Support Service has been delivering support to vulnerable people in Sandwell funded by the Supporting People grant since September 2004. During this period Tenancy Support Officers have built up a wealth of experience which enables them to deliver desperately needed support to vulnerable and socially excluded people, many of whom would otherwise be homeless and in some cases back in hospital or in institutional care.

Customer feedback evidences that the support provided has made a real difference to vulnerable people's lives and the case studies further on in the report demonstrate the positive outcomes achieved for people using the service.

In September 2009 the service was recognised as providing a high quality support service winning the Association of Public Service Excellence Award in the social care category. This was a great achievement for both staff and service users reflecting the development of the service and hard work of the team.

In July 2009 the Tenancy Support Service was granted a 3 year, steady state Supporting People contract. The value that the Support Service offers to Sandwell Homes and SMBC is recognised through the many vulnerable people supported to live independently in their own homes each year.

The Service links strategically with the corporate priorities of:

- Safer Cleaner Active Communities
- Every Child Matters
- Economy Skills Jobs

The success of the support provided enhances the work of the Housing Options Service in the prevention of homelessness. It also prevents the need to access more expensive and acute services, Adult Social care and Mental Health services etc

This annual report outlines the achievements and challenges to the Tenancy Support Service throughout 2009/10.

PERFORMANCE

SUPPORTING PEOPLE PERFORMANCE

**97.9% of all service users have established or maintained independent living against a Supporting People performance target KPI 1 of 97.5 % compared to 95.7 % in 2008/09
This target increases to 98.1% in 2010/11**

From the 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010 the Tenancy support Service met the Supporting People contractual obligations for:

- Staffing
- Throughput
- Availability.
- Local Area National indicator (NI) 142 (number of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living).

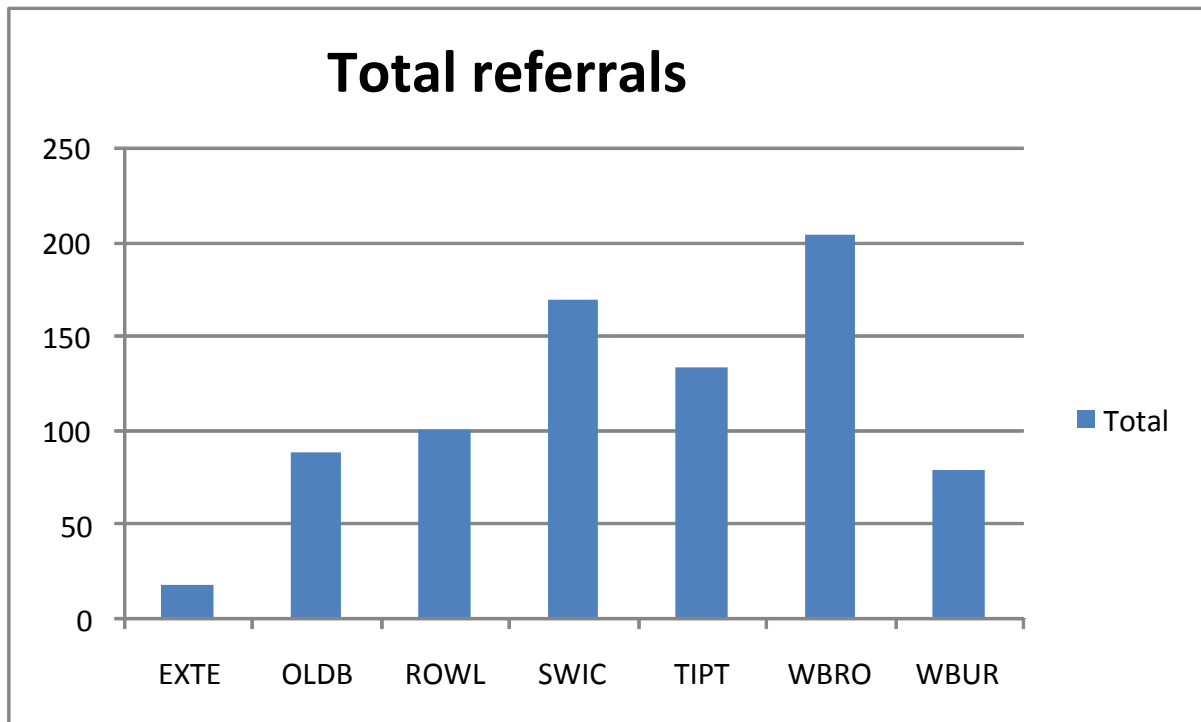
REFERRALS

During 2009/2010 the Tenancy Support Service continued to be in high demand and received a total of 794 referrals compared to 699 in 2008/09

- Referrals to the service have increased by 13 %.
- 463 vulnerable people were accepted for Tenancy Support.
- 97.9% of all service users have established or maintained independent living
- 100% of service users have had their support needs assessed and have a support plan in place; these are reviewed every three months.
- 29 % of vulnerable people supported were from the BME community.

SOURCE OF REFERRAL

Sandwell Homes continues to be the main source of TSS referrals with Neighbourhood offices making the most referrals.



High levels of referrals are received from the West Bromwich and Smethwick areas.

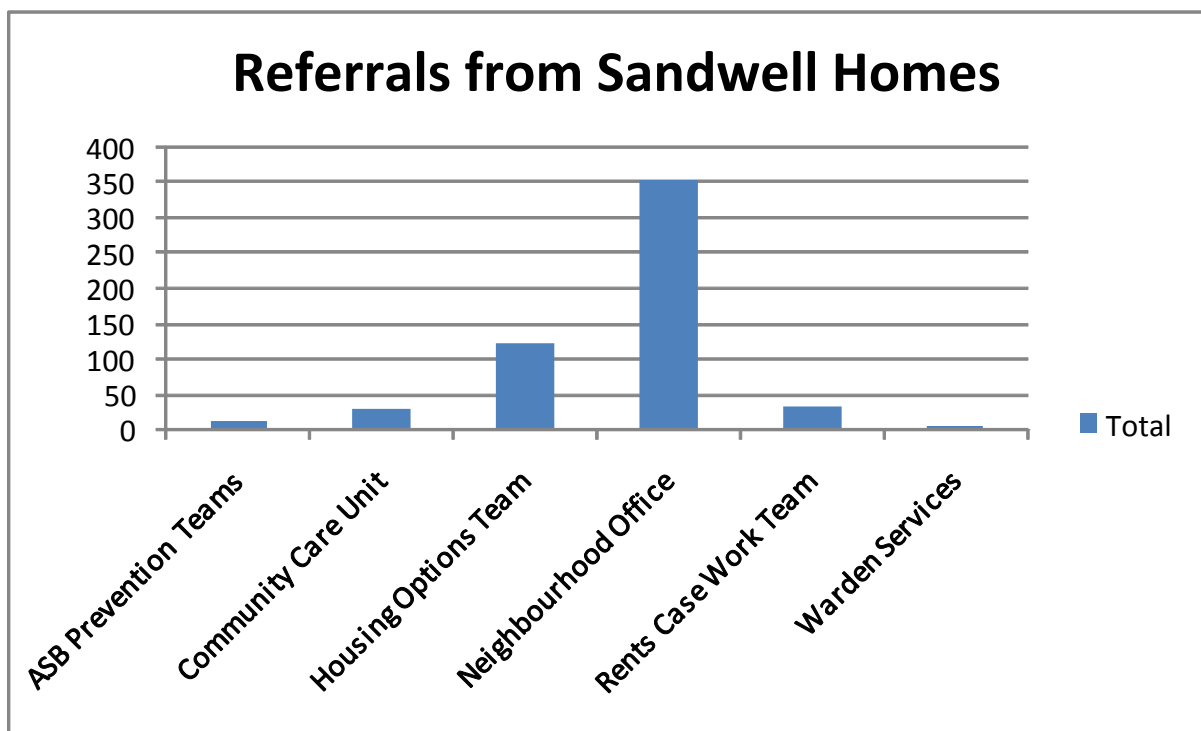
The high level of referrals from the West Bromwich and Smethwick is to be expected. These towns are areas where there is large stock of flatted accommodation and high void turnover and where the most approaches for Housing Options and homelessness are made.

EXTERNAL REFERRALS

Referrals received from external sources increased by 23% from 200 in 2008/9 to 246 in 2009/10

Referrals from external sources have increased by 23% from 200 in 2008/09 to 246 in 2009/10. Referrals are received from a wide range of agencies including the Community Mental Health Teams, Community Learning Disabilities Team, Hospitals, SMBC Private Sector, RSL's, Anchor project, and private landlords.

SANDWELL HOMES REFERRALS



HOUSING OPTIONS

Housing Options referrals increased by 58% from 77 in 2008/9 to 122 in 2009/10

There has been a significant increase in the number of referrals of vulnerable people from the Housing Options service one of Sandwell Homes key specialist service area.

The work of the Tenancy Support Service in supporting those at risk of homelessness, supporting homeless people placed in temporary accommodation, and providing support with resettlement is acknowledged as part of the “enhanced” Housing Options service.

The case study below demonstrates the effectiveness of support provided in sustaining tenancies and the prevention of repeat homelessness and abandoned tenancies. It relates to domestic abuse which remains the primary cause of homelessness.

CASE STUDY Homeless case referred by Housing Options Team

Mrs D had been married for 30 years. Throughout the marriage she had suffered extreme domestic abuse, physical, mental, emotional and financial. Everything she did was controlled by her husband and she lived in fear of his reactions. The impact of this abuse left her with no confidence, low self-esteem, no understanding of how to manage her money, or how to deal with bills. She was isolated and fearful of life itself.

In January 2009 she finally plucked up the courage to leave the matrimonial home following a physical assault, which left her hospitalised. She also pressed charges against her husband for assault.

In March 2009, she eventually signed for her own tenancy. This was a huge step for Mrs D as she had never lived independently before or taken on the responsibility of managing her own money and basically having ‘freedom’.

With the support of the Tenancy Support Service, Mrs D was helped with the resettlement process, accessing local charities for assistance with furnishing her home, introduced to the Lighthouse Project to help build her confidence and meet new people in the local area and put in touch with SOADA to support her to cope with the impact of Domestic Abuse.

Regular weekly visits were made to ensure she was managing her tenancy as well as monitoring her health and well being and enabling her to do things independently. Initially Mrs D found it difficult to use the telephone, deal with her correspondence, and feared going out alone.

Mrs D now feels safe and secure in her property, has her home fully furnished to a high standard, and is managing her money well but more importantly feels confident to deal with matters independently, from dealing with basic day to day tasks to more complex issues. Her new found 'freedom' is a positive way forward for Mrs D.

Without the support received she would have been tempted to go back to her previous way of life enduring endless control and abuse.

RENT CASEWORK TEAM

Referrals from the Rent Casework team have reduced from 50 in 2008/09 to 31 in 2009/10

Referrals from the Rent Casework team are of the more complex cases where it is recognised that there is vulnerability and a need for additional support. These referrals are joint worked with the Rent Casework team to prevent eviction. The Tenancy Support Officers will provide support to access a Welfare Rights Officer where appropriate and provide support and assist with accessing the Citizens Advice Bureau where there are debts and provide support with budgeting and developing life skills.

Of the total number of Service Users 65 % were identified as at risk of losing their tenancy through rent arrears. It is significant this year that the majority of referrals of vulnerable people experiencing difficulty managing their finances and getting into difficulty paying their rent were referred by the first point of contact, the Neighbourhood Offices. This suggests that staff have recognised the benefits of an early referral as providing an opportunity for a more timely intervention preventing homelessness, loss of tenancy and housing crisis.

The following case study demonstrates the effectiveness of support provided which resulted in the service user clearing his rent arrears and sustaining his tenancy.

Case study referred by the Rent Casework Team

PW had a history of not engaging and keeping appointments, not completing forms and complying with requests from benefits for information and he was at risk of losing his home.

Following a needs and risk assessment the Tenancy Support Officer identified that PW had always worked until his health deteriorated and that he simply did not understand the benefits system and since April 2009 he had not been not in receipt of any income.

He had a lot of debts which included a total of five crisis loans, two budget loans; he also had debts with Council Tax which had been passed to the bailiffs.

With the support of his Tenancy Support Officer he was supported to claim Job Seekers Allowance of £64.30, make a claim for rent rebate and request a backdate of benefits to April 2009. He was eventually granted a backdate of benefits amounting to £1554.53 and WAS ABLE TO clear his rent arrears. As his income was low his Tenancy Support Officer also liaised with his creditors to get his payments reduced and debts sorted out.

His TSO encouraged him to deal with his health issues and supported him to see a GP and to apply for Disability Living Allowance. He was also supported to visit the Optician's and an appointment was arranged for him as he was found to have an eye defect which meant he could not see well enough to deal with correspondence.

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

In 2009/10 83 service users (18 %) disclosed they had a problem with anti social behaviour even though this was not the primary reason for the referral.

All of the 83 vulnerable people supported by the Tenancy Support Service because of ASB were successful in sustaining their tenancies.

The case study below demonstrates how targeted support and joint working with other agencies can result in vulnerable people who are at risk of losing their tenancy because of ASB can turn their life around.

Case study ASB referred by the local housing office

Mr and Mrs A had a history of alcohol abuse (Mrs A had been an alcoholic for the past 25 years) they were referred by the local housing office as they had been served with a NOSP (Notice of Seeking Possession) for Anti Social Behaviour.

They were always fighting and making a nuisance within the area, there were also problems when their drinking friends visited. There were issues with the state of the property as neither of them showed much interest in the property and they slept in the lounge on a double bed. They had also previously had a child who had been taken into care and adopted.

With the support from Tenancy Support Mrs A was referred to Anchor and completed a Detox programme and with ongoing support of both agencies she has not drunk alcohol for 8 months.

Her Tenancy Support Officer also applied for a Community Care Grant and with that grant Mr and Mrs A has been able to totally redecorate their lounge, buy some new furniture and they are now able to sleep in the bedroom. Harborne Parish Lands Trust also donated a cooker a, fridge and chest of drawers.

Their drinking friends no longer come around and there have been no more incidents of noise nuisance from the property. The ASB team are no longer involved with the family. The couple are now getting on really well, without the arguments that drink brings. Their home is now totally transformed and really looks very nice. The happy ending of this story is that they are now expecting a baby and are working well with Children's Services and there is every chance that they may keep this baby.

COMMUNITY CARE DIVISION REFERRALS

The TSS received 64 referrals from the Community Care Housing Officers.

The development of the move on process and hospital discharge protocol has resulted in 64 referrals from the Community Care unit and supported housing.

These include referrals from:-

- hospital discharges
- move on from supported housing
- moving into supported living
- leaving care

Once re-housed by the Community Care Unit vulnerable people referred to the Tenancy Support Service are supported for up to two years with resettlement and ongoing support to regain their independence and ensure they resettle in the community. Without this support which is tailored to individual needs many may fail to live independently and return to hospital or become homeless. The linking of floating support to vulnerable people moving on into independent living minimises the risk of failure and avoids more costly interventions by Adult Services.

Warden and community alarms refer cases to the Tenancy Support Service where there are complex needs and where the service user requires additional support for a short period of time. In these cases once the service users additional support needs have been met the Tenancy Support service withdraws support and the support is provided by the Warden Service.

PRIMARY SUPPORT NEED

207 of vulnerable people referred had mental health as their primary support need

Analysis of referrals received show that there is year on year a high level of referrals from people whose primary support need is mental health. These referrals range from people who may be experiencing their first episode of mental ill health to people with enduring mental health problems referred by their CPN or by their social worker.

Workforce planning over the last few years has focused on developing staff knowledge and skills to equip the Tenancy Support Officers to effectively provide support to service users with mental ill health.

SERVICE USER OUTCOMES

Since June 2007 all Tenancy Support Officer's have been reporting on the Communities and Local Government outcomes for each service user.

These outcomes are measured nationally. They were last reported on nationally in 2008/9 unfortunately Supporting People have been unable to provide these for this report.

The five key outcomes achieved for 2009/10 are listed below:

Achieve Economic Well Being

- 292 service users maximised their income, including receipt of the correct benefits
- 174 service users reduced their overall debts
- 13 service users found paid work
- 17 service users participated in paid work during the last 12 months

Enjoy and Achieve

- 54 service users participated in their desired training / education
- 16 service users achieved a Qualification
- 55 service users participated in Leisure cultural, faith activities, & or informal learning
- 19 service users participated in their chosen work-like activities
- 183 service users established contact with external Services / Group / friends / Family
- 74 service users established contact with friends / family

Be Healthy

- 108 service users managing their physical health better
- 111 service users managed their mental health better
- 49 service users managed their substance misuse issues better
- 50 service users managed independent living better as a result of assistive technical aids & adaptations

Stay Safe

- 161 service users maintained their accommodation
- 148 service users secured / obtained settled accommodation
- 14 service users complied with their statutory orders / related processes in relation to offending
- 11 service users better managing self harm
- 3 service users avoided harm to others
- 40 service users minimising the harm / risk of harm from other

Make a Positive Contribution

- 166 service users supported to develop confidence & ability to have a greater choice & control or involvement

FURTHER OUTCOMES

In 2009/10 Service Users received a total of £241,068.18 in benefits and charitable donations compared to £169,217.22 in 2008/09

Maximising income and improving the economic wellbeing of vulnerable people is one of the strengths of the Tenancy Support Service.

The Tenancy Support Officer will make referrals to the welfare rights team where appropriate to assist with making benefit claims and will write on behalf of service users to charities for grants.

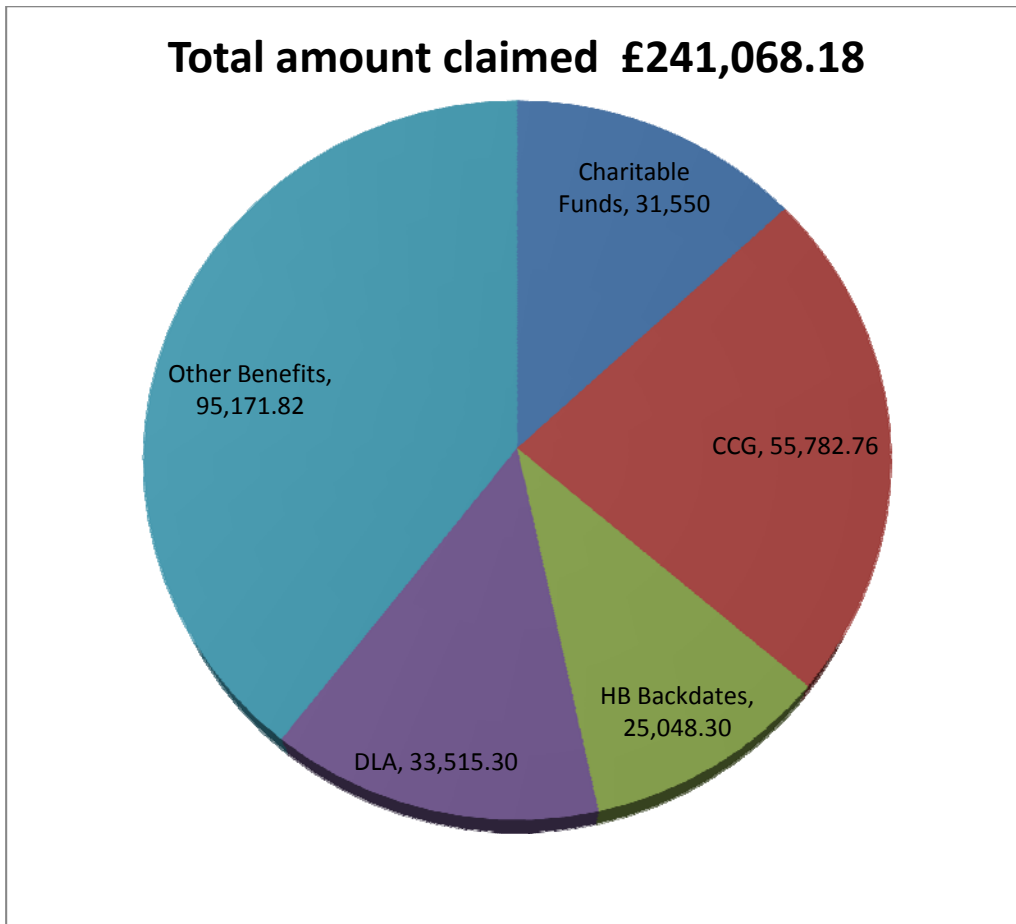
In 2009/10 the Tenancy Support Service obtained a total of £241,068.18 in benefits and charitable donations for service users. As a result many of our service users are now receiving their full entitlement to benefits, had their Housing benefit reinstated, or obtained charitable grants to purchase essential household items for setting up home.

The chart below evidences the total amount of benefits and charitable donations achieved on behalf of service users.

These benefits include:

- Housing benefit

- Disability living allowance
- Incapacity benefit
- State Pension
- JSA
- Income Support
- Community Care Grants
- Donations from local charities



SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- Improvements made to service delivery last year with the introduction of a 28-day assessment period for new cases have reduced the numbers of service users we have lost contact with. As a result our performance has improved and ensured we have been able to meet our target of 97.5% of service users maintaining independence.

- The restructure of the Tenancy Support Service at the beginning of the year into two Teams North and South based at the Millennium centre and Bristnall Neighbourhood office was completed without any disruption to the service. The restructure has been beneficial for service users as it has enabled the teams to improve consistency in the delivery of the service.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Secured Supporting People funding for the Tenancy Support Service for the next three years with the awarding of a 3 year Supporting People contract in July 2009.
- Won the APSE award for best social care team in September 2009 and in 2010 was a finalist in the Chartered Institute of Housing “Housing Heroes Awards”.
- The Pilkington case and “Baby P” case highlighted this year has made it increasingly important that all staff are able to identify and refer to appropriate agencies where there are concerns about a vulnerable adult or child. All Tenancy Support Officers have attended Vulnerable Adults and Children Safeguarding Training and are now able to work safely and effectively with vulnerable people and children.
- A Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children’s policy has been developed.
- Improved access to the service for vulnerable service users with a hearing impairment. Two Tenancy Support Officers have achieved BSL level one, British Sign Language qualification.
- One Tenancy Support Officer is continuing with their study and has been funded to study for BSL level two British Sign Language qualifications the standard required for supporting people with a hearing impairment.
- Three Tenancy Support Officers successfully completed the Institute of Housing Certificate in Supported Housing.

- This year the Tenancy Support Service has provided a one year placement for an Apprentice.
- Introduced a joint protocol with the Family Intervention Project to provide ongoing support to vulnerable families exiting the Project to ensure that their ongoing support needs are met.
- The Tenancy support service user group continues to be well attended. The group meets on a quarterly basis at SCIPS in Oldbury with support from Tenancy Support Officers. Through these meetings we have worked with Service Users to assist with the recruitment process and identify the qualities and skills required for the post of TSO. The group have also reviewed our information leaflet on safeguarding vulnerable adults, our service user newsletter, and general information relating to the Tenancy Support Service and assisted the service to identify areas for improvement.
- Completed the information requirements for the SHAPE CUBE and the TSS data base. We are now able to run the Supporting People quarterly returns reports automatically.

30/07/2010

FUTURE PRIORITIES

Key priorities for the Tenancy Support Service improvement plan for 2010/11 include:

- Support to attend basic DIY skills training
- Investigate emerging issues with hoarders to improve the knowledge and skills of staff.
- Improve the Marketing and promotion of the service.
- Develop a post with probation for offenders
- Reshape a post to provide short term intervention.

CHALLENGES

Over the next three years Local Authorities spending cuts may result in the Tenancy Support Service facing a reduction in Supporting People funding and potentially having to remodel the service provided.

Anticipated cuts to Social Services funding will potentially generate an increase in demand for the Tenancy Support Service as Adult Services raise the critical or substantial access criteria for personalised budgets and vulnerable people who do not qualify for personalised budgets will be referred to the service

At a local level as a provider the Tenancy Support Service will need to evidence that the service offers value for money, performs well and is delivering the intended Local Area Agreement outcomes for service users in order to continue to receive funding. The Tenancy Support Service will need to be performing at the best level excellent (level A) by 2013.

SUMMARY

Overall the Tenancy Support Service is achieving its aims of supporting vulnerable people to sustain their tenancy and maintain independence in the community and improving the outcomes for service users.

The case studies demonstrate how dedicated, well trained and motivated employees can turn people's lives around and have a positive impact on their lives.

The Service continues to demonstrate high levels of customer satisfaction and to provide value for money.

The focus on prevention and on housing related support delivers real cost savings - every £1 spent on Supporting People services saves over £2 on other locally commissioned services.