



THE HOUSING & SUPPORT SECTOR BRIEFING

Issue 2: September 2006

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Support Solutions Ltd, Eaton House, 67 Valentine Road, Birmingham, B14 7AJ.
T: 0121 444 6040; F: 0121 444 4988; E: briefing@supportsolutions.co.uk
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Editorial

We're pleased to send you the 2nd Issue of The Briefing. Since July our circulation has rocketed and it's good to know that there are now so many of you awaiting this issue. If you're reading this but still haven't subscribed just click here: http://gm-link.com/s.asp?i=E3C.5319&e=!*EMAIL*!&m=I. It's easy to subscribe and it's free.

In the last Briefing we promised a free online discussion forum to replace the SPKWEB discussion forum which closed at the end of June. On 1st August we launched the Housing & Support Sector Forum at

www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum which we hope will broaden and deepen discussion, debate, networking and good practice within the sector.

Issue 2 of The Briefing has 2 significant changes:

1. It's published in landscape format for ease of online reading;
2. It comes to you as a pdf document, as did Issue 1, but it also comes to you in an alternative online format. This takes the form of a single page which contains links to all the articles and contributions in The Briefing.

Test out both, see which you prefer and let us know on briefing@supportsolutions.co.uk.

Both The Briefing and The Forum are free and both are serious contributions to the sector. We've done it this way because we want to raise our profile within the sector, even though we've been established since 1991. In raising our profile we wanted to give something back to the sector in general and to those of you who've taken the time to be interested in The Briefing and The Forum.



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We also want to add constructively to the debate on the critical and strategic issues which our sector faces. We do this by taking an independent line in commenting on the issues of the day because we feel that there is a need within the sector for an independent voice.

The Briefing and The Forum should also be your opportunity to have your say to a very wide audience. Write us an article or a letter; register on The Forum and post a topic or a reply.

In Issue 2 we've introduced an "In Brief" section for summarised news articles, a space for organisations to advertise services and publications and a letters page.

My colleague Paul Key and I identify some blots on the landscape in the regulation and revenue funding of RSL-owned supported housing. We call for change.

Danny Key touches on the DCLG milestones and the Supporting People ring fencing debate and both he and Mark Best ask what significance and

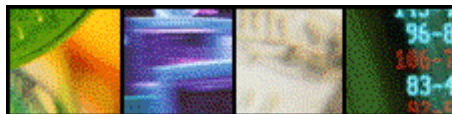
likelihood is there of Supporting People being given a statutory footing.

John Hodges gives an expert view and guidance on how the Supporting People review process is likely to evolve post-transition. Providers and Supporting People teams alike should find this to be a clear and helpful contribution.

Paul Key provides an excellent analysis of the implications of "Turnbull", a recent Social Security Commissioner's decision which may have severe implications for Housing Benefit revenue levels within some supported housing schemes.

Kris Key gives a thorough overview of "resource accounting". It's a methodology which optimises revenue for providers of supported housing, in this case Housing Benefits revenue. Resource accounting is a service which Support Solutions has an unrivalled national reputation for.

Finally, there has been a significant discussion on "intentional communities" for learning disabled people on The Forum (see <http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/viewforum>).



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[php?f=20](#)). Hugh Nelson of L'Arche Community in Lambeth gives a perspective from his life in such a community.

Michael Patterson

michael@supportsolutions.co.uk

The Housing & Support Sector Forum

Just before the publication of the 1st edition of The Briefing we received notification from the DCLG of the closure of the Supporting People KWEB Discussion Forum. We feel that the DCLG had done the sector a significant service in devising and hosting the Supporting People KWEB Forum and we decided to put in place a new Forum to pick up where the DCLG left off and to broaden the scope of discussion beyond Supporting People, albeit that Supporting People remains central.

We promised a replacement Forum within a few weeks and on 1st August, with half the sector on leave, we launched the FREE Housing & Support Sector Forum (but let's just call it "The Forum") at www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum. Even in deepest August the Forum recorded 7,500 hits in its 1st month, which is phenomenally good. Now we're gearing up to administer and moderate what will rapidly develop as an important resource for our sector.

The Forum is FREE! On The Forum you can:

- browse resources



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- ask questions
- join in with discussions and debates
- network
- learn
- contribute

Please join in and participate. The more regular users who contribute new topics and join in the discussion the better it will be. We are also developing the resource library element of The Forum and are always pleased to receive new resources and documents of interest to post on The Forum.

We would like to know what you think of The Forum, what it should include and how it should develop. Please contact us at forum@supportsolutions.co.uk.

Training Events: The Future for Supporting People & How to Survive it

Support Solutions is delighted to announce a new national seminar series entitled "THE FUTURE FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND HOW TO SURVIVE IT"

DATES AND VENUES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- LEEDS 29th September ([West Yorkshire Playhouse](#)) [Location Map](#)
- TAUNTON 3rd October ([Taunton Racecourse](#)) [Location Map](#)
- LONDON 5th October ([The Resource Centre](#)) [Location Map](#)
- BIRMINGHAM 9th October ([BVSC](#)) [Location Map](#)

The cost for each event is ONLY £130 inclusive of VAT, materials, refreshments and lunch. Even at these very, very competitive rates we will give 10% discount for bookings of 3 places or more. Support Solutions has a commitment to small provider organisations and we reflect that in our charges. We're hard to beat on cost and NO-ONE beats us on quality.



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These are all 1 day events (9.30 - 4.30) and will include a valuable Resource CD-ROM which will include a great deal of useful information of direct relevance to the subject matter of these seminars. Delegates who have booked with us before will be familiar with this format and the quality of material and training we provide. You can download a [Training Course Outline](#) here.

You can download our [Booking Form](#) which can be completed electronically or manually. You can fax it to 0121 444 4988, email it to training@supportsolutions.co.uk or send it to: Support Solutions Ltd, Eaton House, 67 Valentine Road, Birmingham, B14 7AJ.

Please remember that payment must be received before bookings can be confirmed. PLACES ARE STRICTLY LIMITED FOR QUALITY REASONS. Please book early to avoid disappointment!

In Brief

Numbers claiming out of work benefits exceed five million

The number claiming out of work benefits in Britain is nearly 5.29 million, according to "The Business" newspaper. This is made up of:

Job Seeker's Allowance	957,000
Incapacity Benefit	2,700,000
Lone parents deemed "not to be in field of work"	777,000
Caring for relatives	368,000
Disabled Living Allowance	314,000
Various other means tested benefits including Income Support	153,000
Total	5,282,000

This is equivalent to 16% of the working-age population. Official unemployment figures amongst those aged 18-24 are the highest since July 1997 which might seem to challenge the success of the "New Deal" initiative.



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While a proper comparison of the full figures over time is not possible because of changed statistical rules, it's possible to show the growth of the combined number of people receiving employment-related benefit, incapacity benefit and lone-parent benefit. There are 4.28m people in those three categories today, up from 4.07m in 1983 and 3.88m in 1990.

DWP debt recovery service "has large backlog"

According to "Computing" magazine, the government's debt recovery arm has a backlog of more than half a million cases caused by problems with software intended to streamline the organisation. The DWP Debt Management (DM) unit is responsible for recovering money owed back to the government, for example from benefits overpayments or fraudulent claims. A national Debt Manager application was introduced last year as part of plans to rationalise local recovery units into 13 regional centres and replace multiple standalone systems with a

single, integrated software package. But recovery agents using the new system say it has been plagued with problems since it went live last year and is unable to process some common cases, such as claims against the estate of someone who has died. The result, according to official figures seen by Computing, is a huge number of outstanding cases and missed debt recovery targets. The DM unit missed last year's £200m target by more than £26m, and is already more than £8m behind for 2006/7, according to the figures. Despite improvements in performance, the software is still not fit for purpose, say users. "When the system came in it was a complete disaster – there was day after day when we could not do any work", said a recovery agent in one regional office. "Over the past six months it has been getting better, but it still does not have the full range of capabilities and there are areas of work we cannot do."

Despite claims that the whole DM centralisation programme was £10m under budget, costs have spiralled. Sources say the original software budget was £1m, but by last November more than £21m had been spent. The department says it is confident this year's target will be met. "We're pleased with the initial



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rollout of the software and it will provide significant long-term benefits" said a DWP spokesman.

Jam tomorrow perhaps. Does any Briefing reader know of a large central government IT roll-out which hasn't gone over cost and actually does what it is supposed to do?

Blair targets failing children's care homes in social exclusion strategy

Failing local authority childcare homes may be taken over by the voluntary sector under plans considered by Tony Blair at a Chequers seminar recently.

Mr. Blair and his social exclusion minister, Hilary Armstrong, have also been looking at German approaches to helping children in care, including giving them one care worker to take them through education and act as their champion.

The ideas are part of a government plan designed to help the bottom 2% in society, termed in Whitehall "high-risk, high-harm and high-cost families".

The focus on the Labour heartlands issue of social exclusion may do something to shore up the prime minister's political position inside the party before what is likely to be a turbulent party conference.

In a speech Mr. Blair will concentrate on children in care, teenage mothers and mentally ill people on benefit - people who have been "difficult to reach" in previous government programmes. Mr. Blair recently met ministers involved in social exclusion issues along with leading agencies such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Turning Point. Papers from experts on social exclusion will be published on the day of his speech.

Ministers are looking at shaking up provision for children in care, investment in "talking therapies" for mentally ill people on benefits, new strategies to curb teenage pregnancy and compulsory 12-week programmes to improve parenting.

The leader of the government's Respect taskforce,



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Louise Casey, is a strong advocate of parenting classes for people whose children behave antisocially.

The government is looking at new incentives or penalties for care homes that fail to do better, as well as handing more contracts to run them to volunteer groups. Staff ratios and turnover are much higher in British care homes than in Germany or Denmark. Ms Armstrong is also interested in care homes having a single worker or mentor responsible for a child.

Ministers are also concerned that out of 60,000 children in care at any time, less than one in 10 get five good GCSEs, compared with more than half of other teenagers. A previous exclusion unit report committed the government to ensuring that 15% of young people in care homes in every local authority secure five good GCSE's by 2006, but the target is not likely to be met.

Government figures show that the 5% most disadvantaged are 100 times more likely to have multiple problems than the most advantaged 50%, including conduct disorders, police contact,

cannabis use, mood disorders and alcohol abuse. Only 0.2% from the "most advantaged and engaged families" is likely to have multiple problems by the age of 15.

Ministers are concerned many services are failing to reach the most disadvantaged young people. In a recent note to the prime minister, Ms Armstrong said: "The major barrier is the sheer number of services involved in the complex needs of our most at-risk individuals and families, who are the responsibility of no single agency."

The action plan is likely to look at cognitive therapy for mentally ill people on benefits, including for the increasing proportion on incapacity benefit.

Ministers also want to improve sex education in schools. The number of teenage pregnancies in the UK has fallen, but remains higher than in the rest of Europe.

Four challenges:

Cutting teenage pregnancies:



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The government has pledged to halve teenage pregnancies by 2010, but they have fallen by only 11% for under-18s and 15% for under-16s since 1998 and remain the highest in Western Europe; almost 40,000 girls became pregnant before they reached 18 in 2004.

Supporting children in care:

Autumn will see an education green paper on helping this disadvantaged group, who are disproportionately likely to fail at school and to end up unemployed, homeless or in prison as adults. Ministers have already promised looked-after children will be able to go to their first-choice school even if it is full and are supporting a pilot scheme allowing some to attend boarding school.

Tackling chaotic parenting:

January's Respect action plan proposed a national parenting academy, the extension of parenting orders - involving obligatory guidance sessions - and a network of family support schemes. Under

the most controversial proposals, families deemed a nuisance to neighbours could be moved to secure council homes with round-the-clock supervision and support.

Helping benefit claimants with mental illnesses:

Depression and anxiety have become the main basis of incapacity benefit claims, but opinion is divided over plans to speed claimants' return to work. Some fear that rehabilitation will not be funded adequately.



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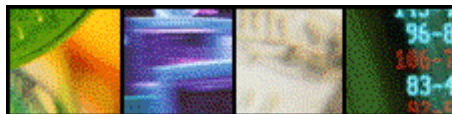


Blots on the Landscape: Michael Patterson & Paul Key call for change in regulation and revenue for RSL owned supported housing.

“It’s ironic in a way that RSL’s and their Agency partners seem to have to distance themselves from the RSL identity and regulatory structure in order to create the possibility to invest properly in supported housing.”

We recently visited some potential RSL clients in the South West to talk about reviewing their Housing Benefit income. Quite often in such circumstances it can be quite a practical and mechanistic process of establishing a time and cost basis for the services in question and then allocating them properly. In this case it was a bit different. One of the potential clients was instinctively not sold on the idea but open-minded about hearing us out, and more significantly, open to a more strategic discussion. As a consequence our discussion went well beyond the mechanics of cost allocation and it explored the regulation and infrastructure for RSL owned supported housing.

Anyone who has had any involvement with supported housing will know about the “hand to mouth” revenue situation. Providers have always had to be astute in identifying and maintaining revenue streams in order for their supported housing projects to stack up financially. For a while it seemed like Supporting People Grant would provide a more stable revenue basis for the support elements of supported housing, however, it hasn’t. Even if it had it wouldn’t have addressed the structural funding problems of the



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housing component of supported housing, especially for RSL's and their agency partners.

If, like us, you have a commitment to investment in both the support and housing elements of services you will explore the hinterland surrounding our sector to identify additional, or more secure streams of revenue and in so doing you will discover flaws in the infrastructure that regulates and funds what we do as well as a failure of "established thinking" within the sector in seeking to remedy those flaws.

As a consultancy we developed a lot of expertise in Transitional Housing Benefit from 1997 and have always had expertise in Housing Benefit revenue and Supporting People Grant. We began to look again at Housing Benefit regulations in the light of the retrenchment of Supporting People Grant and the moves to load some costs back into the Housing Benefit budget. We know, amongst other things, that there exist Housing Benefit regulations which enable some organisations which accommodate and support vulnerable people to charge the **full cost** of Housing Benefit eligible charges within the

organisation's rent levels to Housing Benefit. These are not "loopholes" these are regulations which were devised, and retained subsequent to the amendments in the regulations in 1996, to ensure that the Housing Benefit eligible costs of managing, maintaining and servicing supported housing are fully met. Of course, knowing about the regulations is one thing; ensuring they are properly implemented is quite another... (But that's where we come in).

So what are these "flaws in the infrastructure" to which we refer?

Well, if you are an RSL or an Agency working to manage RSL property you have to comply with Rent Restructuring. This puts a cap on the core rent that can be charged in order to maintain a similar rent charge to local authority social housing.

Rent Restructuring was first proposed in April 2000¹ and within the RSL sector the Housing Corporation had responsibility for implementing Rent Restructuring.

¹ The then Green Paper: "Quality & Choice: A Decent Home for All"



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Regrettably there appears to have been a failure to grasp the fact that supported housing routinely costs more to manage, maintain and service than does general needs accommodation. Rent Restructuring caps the core rent element, not the housing services charge element of the rent or weekly charge. The core rent elements of Housing Benefit fund things like planned & cyclical maintenance, housing management, buildings insurance, and mortgage repayments etc.

So what happens when, as is so often the case that the amount of rent charge allowable under Rent Restructuring is less than is needed to pay for the maintenance, management and mortgage costs? What happens is underinvestment in supported housing. What happens is that some of the most vulnerable tenants in the RSL sector have to put up with poor physical environments because the RSL or its agency partner isn't allowed to charge sufficient levels of rent to manage and maintain their property to the standards they'd like. We feel that there is an obvious link between the quality of physical

environment and support outcomes for vulnerable tenants.

Not every supported housing scheme is the same of course. We shouldn't compare a sheltered housing scheme for elders with, say, a women's refuge. The costs of each scheme will be different and routinely a refuge will have a significantly higher unit cost than a sheltered scheme. The point is that a supported housing scheme should be able to lever in the levels of Housing Benefit revenue it needs to manage, maintain and service its accommodation to the high standard that vulnerable tenants should be entitled to expect, even when they exceed core rent levels.

This would make a huge difference to most supported housing tenants and their RSL or agency provider, but what about supported housing tenants who want to work and may therefore have their Housing Benefit entitlements affected and be unable to pay this "high rent"? In RSL property this would be a problem, even if you gain exemption from Rent Restructuring because RSL's and their agency partners can't charge differential rents.



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There are therefore 2 fairly obvious fault lines in the systems within which RSL owned supported housing has to operate. The Rent Restructuring rules allow supported housing a 10% margin of flexibility in relation to the established core rent charge, but this margin simply doesn't reflect the true cost base of supported housing which is what the rent charge should reflect.

Rent Restructuring did not adequately consider the economics of supported housing whilst being implemented within the RSL sector. The Housing Corporation did introduce Circular 05/03 which deals with exemptions from Rent Restructuring. However, the exemption criteria are really stringent: you can see them here: <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/circularshandnpha.pdf#search=%22rent%20restructuring%20supported%20housing%22>. In brief, if you accommodate very dependent people in accommodation which wasn't funded to any significant extent by the Housing Corporation and was developed in line with local statutory and Supporting People priorities your accommodation may qualify for exemption. Also some temporary

housing schemes are eligible under some circumstances.

Support Solutions has for some time promoted the idea that RSL's should consider the setting up of a non-RSL subsidiary to manage their supported housing and agency arrangements, which subject to certain conditions, can charge the actual costs of providing (the non-support elements of) a supported housing service. Furthermore, they could charge differential rents and, within limits, subsidise the rent of working service users. Of course, it's not a simple process but it's feasible and it's not about "high rents". We always cringe when the term "high rent" is brought out of the cupboard to scare everyone. As most people in supported housing know there is no such thing as a high rent. Rents should reflect the actual costs of housing people, and they should be completely transparent and evidence-based. Sadly we have all been beaten down for so long in relation to various mechanisms for rent control that some of us have forgotten this simple fact.

There are only two types of rent. The first is the rent which is artificially lowered to meet blunt regulation criteria, and which bears no relation to the actual cost



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of housing. Extended use of this approach results in poor housing services, a poor experience for tenants and additional bureaucracy costs. The second is where all of the actual costs are individualised and calculated, based on the Housing Benefit regulations, and using resource-accounting principles which are open, and provided along with detailed back-up to aid audit. (Kris Key gives a more comprehensive explanation of Resource Accounting in "Resource Accounting – An Overview" on page 31.) This rent arrangement results in sustainability, good housing services and a good experience for the vulnerable tenants that use supported housing.

Anyone foolish enough to propose unsupportable rents which are not evidenced, justified or based on real costs would never get away with it for long. Unsustainable rents are a risky strategy and certainly not recommended by us.

It's ironic in a way that RSL's and their Agency partners seem to have to distance themselves from the RSL identity and regulatory structure in order to create the possibility to invest properly

in those crucial core rent funded areas of supported housing. It seems to us that the Housing Corporation would do well to review how it regulates supported housing with a view to seeing it as a distinct activity which requires a more "fit for purpose" regulatory framework. Sometimes we get involved with large RSL's which have a supported housing function which is managed as a "bolt on" to general needs housing management, maintenance and finance functions. It doesn't work in the same sense that bolting supported housing on to an inappropriate regulatory framework doesn't work either. Rent Restructuring and rigidity over differential charging are just 2 examples of that.

Any change in the regulation and funding of RSL owned or funded supported housing will need to be born from new thinking about what supported housing is and where it sits. But it's not just the Housing Corporation that needs to develop new thinking on this. Our sector as a whole is riddled with entrenched thinking which seems prepared to accept the regulatory and funding status quo for supported housing even though it might mean mediocrity or worse for vulnerable tenants.



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Support Solutions has a track record of finding creative solutions to the problems caused by inappropriate regulation and funding systems in spite of them. Still some commentators urge caution, sensibly, but then disappointingly try and discredit new thinking from the comfort of an establishment position. Times have changed, what used to be radical has become established as it often does. It's time for new thinking.

What do you think?

Michael Patterson & Paul Key
michael@supportsolutions.co.uk
paul@supportsolutions.co.uk



Milestones, Ring Fences & a Statutory Footing: Danny Key reports on the recent DCLG Milestones Report and where Supporting People may go.

"It's not that people don't think that a statutory footing would be a good thing; it's more a question of clarifying that it's only at the stage of preliminary discussion right now and that there remain doubts as to whether it will ever happen."

The latest Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) milestones figures have revealed



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that 1 in 10 Supporting People funded services have been decommissioned and are serving out the remainder of their interim contracts.

This represents a loss of housing support for a crude figure of over 100,000 vulnerable people, taking into account the number of household units in receipt of Supporting People funding at the commencement of the programme in 2003, as suggested by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). A number of services may have been transferred to a different local authority budget or merged as a result of the service review process, although taking into consideration the stretched local authority social care and health budgets and the uncertain Supporting People future grant allocations it is fairly safe to say that the number of vulnerable people losing their housing support provision is significant.

The news was released at the same time as it was revealed that 138 out of a total of 151 administering authorities have also failed to spend their 2005/06 Supporting People budgets, amassing a combined under spend of £12.3

million. It has been commented upon that administering authorities had been cautious due to fears that grant allocation would be reduced if the DCLG introduced their much consulted distribution formula and that new supported housing schemes awarded revenue funding, identified as pipeline schemes in the approach to inception of the programme, had suffered delays. The service review process may have identified areas of immediate concern initiating the serving of default notices and termination of funding during the reviews of services, which could also be responsible for some of the underspend in 2005/06 budgets.

The recent announcement from MP Phil Woolas, stating that Supporting People funding will retain the ring fence, ensuring the funding is reserved to spend on housing support provision, and that housing related support may become a statutory obligation on the local authority to provide should, on the face of it, offer renewed confidence and stability to the sector. In relation to the ring fence, surely any relaxation of this (which was proposed by the then ODPM in March 2005 in the "Jarvis Letter". See: www.supportsolutions.co.uk/docs/jarvisletter.doc) would lead to the inevitable demise of the Supporting



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People programme as a distinct function as local authorities divert Supporting People money into other budgets.

Mark Best, in his article on Page 36 points to the wider funding and infrastructure problems of local authorities which prevent them giving any long-term investment commitment. Furthermore, the ring fence isn't guaranteed over the long term anyway so this is an issue which needs watching.

There is an active discussion thread on this on The Forum at:

<http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?t=52>.

There are already dissenting voices being raised over the prospects of putting Supporting People on a statutory footing. There is currently a significant and well-informed discussion thread on the Support Solutions Forum at:

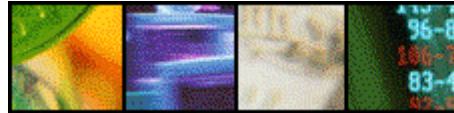
<http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?t=13> which people are welcome to join.

It's not that people don't think that a statutory footing would be a good thing; it's more a question clarifying that it's only at the stage of

preliminary discussion right now and that there remain doubts as to whether it will ever happen.

Danny Key

danny@supportsolutions.co.uk



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Service Reviews: John Hodges sets out what happens next now that the 'transition period' has ended?

"One frustration that is still coming across from the Providers that I am talking to is the fact that there is often a lack of overall cohesion between the various disciplines within the Commissioning Body partnership and the other structures within the Administering Authority"

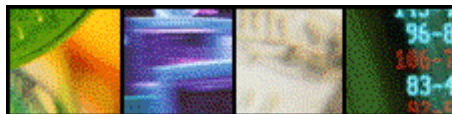
(This is the first of a series of discussion articles)

History:

As most of you will know, during the initial three years of the Supporting People programme (i.e. period ending 31st March 2006), all Administering Authority (AA) areas that weren't deemed by ODPM/DCLG to be 'excellent authorities' (i.e. about 80% of them) were required as part of their 'grant conditions and directions' to have carried out a review of all of the services they 'inherited' on the 1st April 2004.

'Excellent authorities' did not have the same explicit requirement set by DCLG, but were expected to have completed a service review if they wanted to "change the service that an individual receives"

This obviously did not mean that every AA (in either grouping) carried out their review process in exactly the same way or that they dealt with post review Appeals etc in anything like a similar fashion – even where the AA's were actively involved in any of the 10 regional discussion groups that DCLG encouraged, there were still different approaches in neighbouring AA's.



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Though the DCLG's 'Quality Assessment Framework' (QAF) underpinned the review structures, some AA's adopted only the 'core' QAF measurements whilst others increasingly took on board the 'supplementary' QAF's that were developed nationally. Also many Supporting People teams were effectively being trained and gaining first hand experience as they carried out the reviews and local procedures were still being developed during the life of the initial review programme (particularly in matters such as Appeals). This was partially down to the reasonable flexibility in approach that DCLG tried to give AA's in how they carried out the review process, and also to some extent dependent upon how much influence/interest the existing system disciplines within the AA had in the early development of Supporting People.

Position after 1st April 2006

Though some AA's didn't quite complete their entire review programme in time and had to carry forward some individual reviews, most did,

even if they had to switch their methodology during the later part of the programme and carry out some as more 'desk top reviews', with accompanying 'validation visits'.

Now that the latest DCLG's published 'grant conditions and directions' for AA's have lifted the explicit requirement for an ongoing review programme (and Providers could gain a lot by having a reasonable understanding of the latest DCLG output – see: http://www.spkweb.org.uk/subjects/legal_framework/grant_conditions_directions_and_statutory_guidance/Grant%20Conditions%202006%20-%202007.htm) there seems to be two specific approaches being adopted by AA's, either:

- continuing with an detailed review programme, re-assessing each scheme over a 2/3 year cycle
- Or
- adopting a more 'contract management' approach

Though obviously neither approach is mutually exclusive and both will have obvious and better linkages now to the developed Supporting People Strategy for that locality/region and the still developing 'needs' and service users requirements data capture.



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Common issues for service Providers

There are certain common 'key issues' that Providers need to now bear in mind, irrespective of which approach their AA adopts, these include:-

- Supporting People teams are now more experienced/knowledgeable - I know this is stating the obvious, but what I mean is that most team members will by now have experienced a number of 'hands on' (rather than just a 'desk top') reviews and many will have been involved in some form of funding re-adjustment - perhaps falling short of actual de-commissioning. This means that they will be more confident in their approaches and will feel able to challenge more the well established schemes, rather than perhaps just the obvious high spending ones or the ones created in the period shortly before April 2003
- AA's will have got to grips with the consequences of the Supporting People

budget diminishing in 'real terms' and have begun to better understand and quantify the needs and un-met needs in their areas (though obviously this knowledge will vary greatly between AA's). This again means that the 'well established' schemes could be threatened as new local strategic priorities emerge and it is important that Providers do not rely on the fact that they have a long term working relationship with one of the Commissioning Body partners - they must cultivate that relationship with the Supporting People Strategy as a whole and be able to demonstrate this.

- Techniques such as 'benchmarking', 'outcome measurements', 'impact assessment's' etc are being developed, sometimes jointly with all Providers in the area, sometimes with just the Providers who 'put themselves forward' and sometimes still largely set by the AA themselves with little or no outside influence. It is obviously important that Providers do not adopt a 'head in the sands' approach on this. They must ensure that they have an active involvement in these local developments (if necessary look to set up your own 'benchmarking clubs') and don't wait



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until the AA have already set the parameters and rules for their area.

- Some AA's will be exploring more usage of the DCLG Supplementary QAF's (others may be drawing back from earlier experiments with total adoption) – it is important that you don't just wait till shortly before any review date to find out the approach locally and assume that a second round of reviews will follow the same line as perhaps a review carried out in 2004. Supplementary QAF requirements can be daunting at first glance. There is new jargon involved and different interpretations that can be applied, and getting new techniques implemented and understood by staff and service users can take time. It is important that you begin your planning of this early.
- Appeals processes to deal with post review decisions: again there is a wide variety of approaches being adopted throughout the country. Some AA's have approaches that appear entirely independent of the initial review decision; some may appear at first

glance not to be so. It may be useful for each Provider to better understand and if necessary attempt to influence their AA's approach before they have to consider an Appeal, as the timescales between service review decision and Appeal deadlines are often very short

- Some AA's have been very good in publishing summary details of review work completed, savings achieved/budget pressures and future review programme timetables etc – if yours haven't then you could look to get details of decisions and papers considered within the AA, via a 'Freedom of Information' (FOI) request (details of how to do this will be published on your local authorities corporate web site). Alternatively, talk to us as we have used FOI requests before.
- All AA's will be more stringent in their contract compliance systems now that the general transition phase has ended. This might be partially because the other monitoring/control sections in that local authority have become more interested (or aware) of the large amounts of grant money involved or purely because the



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Supporting People team has now become more confident and directed their own attentions to this important theme. To some extent, Providers may have felt (as many did with the 'Interim' Contracts) that they had little or no opportunity in negotiating on the various clauses with the 'Steady State' contracts, but it is very important that they now take the time and trouble to understand the implications of each and every clause within that contract. This is particularly important with regard to any penalty arrangements for delays in regular completion of monitoring returns or arrangements for requests for service changes or dealing with termination and re-tender arrangements.

A key aspect that AA's ought to give more consideration to?

One frustration that is still coming across from the Providers that I am talking to is the fact that there is often a lack of overall cohesion between

the various disciplines within the Commissioning Body partnership and the other structures within the Administering Authority.

This can obviously take many forms, but one particularly frustrating issue is the case in some areas where the local policies on homelessness and rough sleepers (and hidden homelessness of 'sleeping on friend's sofas) are not helped by the way that the local funding regimes (e.g. Supporting People and Housing Benefits) interpret arrangements needed for Providers who want to have a better system to enable for move-on arrangements to be attractive to 'short term' service users, particularly if that service user still needs some form of diminishing floating support for a short period of time. Evidence for this is materialising from the comparative voids elements that are being scrutinised as part of the service review and contract monitoring processes and there are dangers that Providers will be criticised and perhaps penalised (and not for the first time) for issues outside their control .

It would be very useful to get a debate going to highlight different approaches within AA areas and



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perhaps use this to try to highlight 'best practice' and encourage it elsewhere.

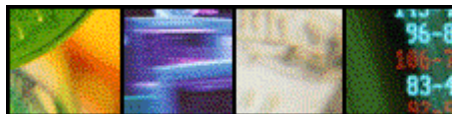
What is your thinking on the above? I would like to hear your views and also what other key considerations now need to be borne in mind. You could either post your views to the various subject themes contained in the Support Solutions Web Forum (<http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/>) or e-mail me direct at John@Supportsolutions.co.uk

Support Solutions is running national training events on "The Future for Supporting People & How to Survive it" in September and October. These events will include a lot of material of relevance to this article. Read more on Pages 7-8 of this issue of The Briefing or go to www.supportsolutions.co.uk/training.htm.



Crisis in Supported Living: Paul Key interprets the implications of a significant Social Security Commissioner's ruling

"In several areas housing providers have been given notification that the rents in specific schemes will be reduced at a given future date. In some areas individual rents have already been arbitrarily cut".



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Readers of this issue of The Briefing may want to acquaint themselves with an article I wrote on the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities forum on 1st August 2006. This article was subsequently signposted on the Support Solutions Housing and Support Sector Forum on the 8th August. You can locate it here: <http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?t=33>.

The crisis in focus relates to a Social Security Commissioners decision in Sheffield (the Turnbull decision) in July 2006 which has confirmed an extremely narrow interpretation of regulation 10(6) in the Housing Benefit Regulations.

This article covers briefly some of the fall-out observed so far across the country following the publication of Turnbull.

One of the defining features of supported living, since its introduction in the early 1990s, has been the idea of separating out the provision of housing from the provision of care, support and supervision, where supported housing is arranged for vulnerable people as tenants. Whilst this is

seen as 'good practice' it is, in reality more than that as it describes what most of us see as an inalienable right we have as householders/tenants to sole occupancy of our personal space and quiet enjoyment of it. Supported Living was meant to mirror what we all take for granted by confirming peoples right to occupy, and removing the possibility that those charged with the task of care, supervision and support could have any say or control over the accommodation rights of the people receiving support.

The essence of regulation 10(6) however is that such a property can only be exempt from the determination of the rent officer, i.e. affordable, if the landlord provides the care, support and supervision as well as the housing, or has someone do it on his behalf. The new and extremely rigid and narrow interpretation of Turnbull has created a very difficult situation that seems to cut across government guidance through the DoH, particularly in terms of the Valuing People White Paper (2002) and subsequent guidance.

The drafting of regulation 10(6) may well have been completed as early as the 1970s and deals with a situation where there was no such thing as supported living. At that time there were only residential care



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homes and hostels where, in both cases, vulnerable people *did* have their care, support and supervision provided by, or through the landlord.

So what has been happening since July? It is important to say that these are early days. Firstly Parliament has been closed while Ministers and MPs are on leave so there has been little organized or public response to the plight of potentially homeless vulnerable people as yet. Secondly cautious public servants will usually wait to see some written guidance from central government on such radical changes, and there does not appear to be any definitive guidance as yet from any government source.

The issue was picked up in 'Inside Housing' magazine on 28th July in an article where the specialist housing solicitors Trowers and Hamlins said the Turnbull decision had 'serious and wide ranging' implications for organisations outsourcing care and support services to third parties. They went on to say that 'Housing providers.....risk losing revenue to the extent that schemes may become unworkable, which

could result in disabled people losing their homes' and 'Clearly an urgent review of the relevant regulations is essential. Housing providers should review the structure of their schemes in the light of this decision'.

For the full article go to:

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/2006/news/article.aspx?articleid=1447876>.

From the point of view of legal advice it is worth noting that some legal practitioners are suggesting that their interpretation of Turnbull means that housing providers do not have to show that all care, support and supervision are provided by them, only that some of it is. In the South West a tribunal did accept this argument; however this case was heard in June, before Turnbull, and was heard at the lower level than the Commissioners Appeal. Prior to formal guidance being issued, it is up to individual housing providers and their legal representatives to determine for themselves whether this is the right course of action. There can be very little doubt that, in supported housing, all landlords do provide some elements of care, support and supervision. Whether this is enough to satisfy the Turnbull criteria is, however, a matter of conjecture at the moment.



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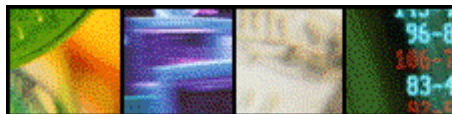
Early forays by Housing Benefit Teams in some areas attempted to find out more information on individual schemes by sending out questionnaires. One such document asked the question 'do you as the housing provider have the power to sack the service provider?' Clearly based on Turnbull, this leaves little room for equivocation. Clearly if the answer is no then the rent will be likely to be reduced to the level of the local reference rent.

In several areas housing providers have been given notification that the rents in specific schemes will be reduced at a given future date. In some areas individual rents have already been arbitrarily cut. In the most worrying example so far a Council in the Yorkshire and Humber region has carried out a blanket cut of a large swathe of supported living scheme rents in a completely arbitrary fashion without any warning to Housing, Social Services, Health and Supporting People partners.

Council legal advisers in that case are considering whether it is possible to transfer the purchasing

power to the landlords, thus meeting the letter of Turnbull in relation to Regulation 10(6). Their deliberations are awaited with interest by Councils believing themselves to be in a similar position.

In some areas there have been early meetings between Housing Benefit Teams and their local authority colleagues to address the potential crisis prior to any precipitate action. Whilst Turnbull is entirely clear and persuasive it remains up to each HB administering authority to decide whether to take any action based on the decision. In quite a number of authorities it has been decided that no action will be taken whatsoever. This has tended to happen where there has been a long history of corporate partnership within authorities, and where the fate of vulnerable people with high housing costs is seen as a corporate responsibility. A key determinant of the real effect of Turnbull will be the capacity of parties to understand the implications of not doing anything, and the implications of not seeking partnership and agreement over the use of public funding, from whatever source, to continue to sustain vulnerable people in good accommodation.



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One worry is likely to be where Social Services is based in a County Council with Housing Benefit being administered by a District Council. Whilst it would be unfair and incorrect to suggest that there is generally a problem in relationships between authorities in this type of arrangement, it has to be said that there is likely to be a very significant amount of work needing to be done to come to an agreement over who pays for what, if rents are cut.

The limited evidence available so far is that the most aggressive approaches from Housing Benefit Teams have come from the smaller District Councils whereas the most corporate approaches have come from the larger unitaries and metropolitan boroughs.

These few snippets of information are all there is so far, and this article is not meant to give the impression that there is any formal research underpinning this anecdotal evidence. The government, including the DWP, the DoH and the DCLG are all being approached for guidance on the present unsatisfactory situation, although it may be already too late for a few people who

may have to move on before a concerted effort is made to take action.

Readers of this short article, and the documents from which it springs, are welcome to contact me at Support Solutions if there have been any developments in your area, or if you need any further references or information. I will collate any further information, and make sure that it is reported in the November issue.

Paul Key (paul@supportsolutions.co.uk)

You can follow this discussion on The Forum. Go to: <http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/viewforum.php?f=10>.



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Resource Accounting – An Overview: Kris Key takes us through the *correct* way of optimising Housing Benefit revenue

“As an article of faith, Support Solutions maintains that every organisation it works with is left in a better financial situation at the end of the contract.”

The optimisation of Housing Benefit for Supported Housing providers in the private, voluntary and quasi-public sectors has been a

service that has been offered by Support Solutions for a number of years, and, with it becoming increasingly established and necessary, it is time to present an overview of this service:

The work

Upon agreement of an initial contract, Support Solutions will analyse an organisation’s financial information, historical rents, previous Housing Benefit claims, future housing costs, housing need and the make-up and management of the organisation’s tenant/client base. Following this initial information-gathering stage, and in tandem with the organisation, we will produce a rent breakdown, or breakdowns, for the organisation to implement following tenant participation and consultation. This process is known as ‘resource accounting’. We will then present this new schedule to the local authority responsible for paying benefit, and explain, in great detail, the requirement for a full cost recovery and the reasoning and finances behind it.

The first thing to notice about this service, and what possibly sets it apart from other similar services is



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that we work on the basis of becoming a genuine partner to the organisation and sharing the risk of optimisation work. There is no fee to be paid upfront for this work and no hourly rate. Payment is only be made once the work has been completed. The financial risk to any organisation that works with us is negligible.

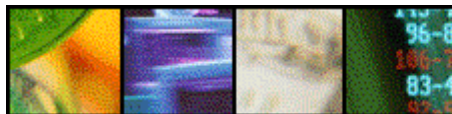
'The organisation' referred to in the above paragraphs can be a local authority, charity, a private company, an RSL, in fact, any form of organisation that provides Supported Housing. We have extensive experience of working with all of the above and the ramifications for each organisation regarding finance (rent restructuring, operating bursaries/relief fund, differential rents, liaising with the Charity Commission, etc.). An increasing number of RSL's in particular are coming to us for help with optimisation of housing revenue, including the example (b) examined below. We have extensive experience in working with a diverse range of client groups, such as the frail and elderly, learning disabled, people with mental health problems, homeless people with support needs, people with drug and alcohol problems and

refugees and are therefore experienced regarding the differing circumstances each client group poses when approaching the tenant about a proposed change to their service.

Support Solutions are also experts in the regulations that govern the Housing Benefit system in the UK, along with governmental guidance, case law precedents and Social Security Commissioners decisions that have occurred since the inception of the Housing Benefit regulatory framework. We are therefore in a learned position to challenge any unfair decisions on behalf of the tenants regarding their Housing Benefit entitlement.

Background

As is discussed elsewhere in this month's Briefing and on The Forum, we are now in a situation where 1 in 10 providers of Supported Housing or other models of support services are falling foul of Supporting People service reviews resulting in their services being decommissioned. Many services have suffered significant reductions in Supporting People funding.



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This is largely due to the fact that the goalposts have moved regarding eligibility. The original 'sizing the pot' exercise was carried out between 2001 and 2003, when thousands of providers applied for funding, and it became immediately clear to the government that this new funding stream was going to cost them a lot more money than they had anticipated. As a result of this, and as a result of the Supporting People reviews that organisations have experienced over the past couple of years, the definition of what constituted housing-related support has been defined more narrowly by revised "eligibility criteria" than described within the DWP circular A10/2001 (www.dwp.gov.uk/hbctb/circulars/2001/a10-2001.pdf), which obviously causes financial problems for Supported Housing providers when monitoring reduced income against budgeted expenditure.

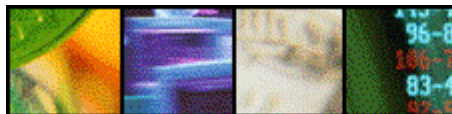
A solution to this problem of reduced income, and one which several organisations have approached us about, is to re-examine the housing costs being put into an organisations rental levels. It is possible that elements of budgeted expenditure that are no longer eligible for Supporting People

funding may actually be eligible as accommodation related charges based on the eligibility of Housing Benefit. We have helped several organisations protect their organisational revenue income utilising this approach.

Continuing Support

The most important part of our work is clarity. We are fully aware that an organisation who has engaged our services needs to be able to understand our work, for purposes of monitoring costs in future years. This is likewise important for the local authority and for other stakeholders to be able to see clearly exactly the process we have undertaken. Every element of what we do and every figure that we quote comes with an explanation, in writing, of what it represents and where it came from, ensuring a transparent sustainable approach.

In addition, our contracts are now in place for a period of at least 3 years, longer if the customer wishes, so we will always be contactable should any further work assistance be required to ensure an organisation's revenue costs are maintained. We provide audit trails



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and monitoring capabilities for organisation to implement into their internal systems which assist when managing their revenue effectively.

As an article of faith, Support Solutions maintains that every organisation it works with is left in a better financial situation at the end of the contract. It is our experience that, with many organisations providing Supported Housing, the rent they charge to their tenants has been set many years ago, sometimes by persons unknown, and that it has simply been increased by inflation every year, and has not maintained pace with the costs of actually running the service, leading to a strain on the organisation's finances, that, in some cases, may have become critical. In other cases, an organisation can be quite diligent in the internal work it does on rent increases, but simply does not have the expertise to know what costs qualify for different funding streams. We find that many organisations are running under an implied ceiling imposed by the local authority beyond which rents cannot go. There is nothing in the regulations to support this approach from the local authority, but

organisations will often need assistance in explaining this to the authority.

As a result of our work, organisations will often be able to pay for aspects of the service which have previously been neglected, such as much needed internal repair/decoration, renovation work, a working voids or sinking fund, increased security on site, regular replacement of furniture, fixtures and fittings and even employ part-time staff to undertake maintenance, cleaning or gardening.

Examples

The following are some anonymised examples of organisations we have helped over the years:

- (a) A faith based charity caring for elderly women in the Suffolk area, with a single property accommodating 17 people. We achieved an annual uplift in housing revenue of £41,291 per year. We also helped the organisation deal with the problems of tenants who couldn't claim full Housing



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- Benefit, and worked out a way to make the changes affordable for them, and also for some elderly people who, due to their beliefs, didn't want to claim benefits.
- (b) An RSL running services for young, single homeless people in the lower Midlands area, some with drug & alcohol problems, which could cater for 32 people. We achieved uplift in their service charges of £58,705 per year. We also had to overcome an amount of opposition to the increase in revenue from the local authority, which we did through patient diplomacy and full transparency, explaining the organisation's need for additional funding and the consequences for the organisation and their tenants if they didn't address their financial issues.
- (c) A medium sized provider of Supported Housing to learning disabled people in the Midlands area, providing accommodation for 39 people. We
- achieved an annual uplift in revenue of £101,786 and piloted an inexperienced staff through the legal requirements of their tenancy agreements, and the process of submitting information to and liaising with the local authority, which we often find is not one of the most popular tasks that providers MUST do.
- (d) A large hostel in the Home Counties, catering for 157 single homeless people with support needs and substance misuse problems. We achieved a combined annual increase of £345,240, which was required for, among other things, substantial work on the building which was falling into a dangerous state of disrepair. Opposition from the authority was overcome, again without the need to go to appeal. This was achieved mainly by successfully using regulations and case law to argue that the increase was justified and should be implemented.

Kris Key
kris@supportsolutions.co.uk



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Phil Woolas and the Future for Supporting People: In a personal capacity Mark Best tells us about why putting Supporting People on a statutory footing may not be so effective.

“LA’s are unable to make long term commitments to revenue funding of supported housing schemes and a legal duty won’t change this”.

Phil Woolas has suggested Supporting People should be put on a statutory footing with supported housing becoming a legal duty for LAs. While he has made the case for retention of the ringfence for three years he has not ruled out Supporting People funds being moved into local area agreements in future. This will not necessarily meet all current and future support needs as there is no guarantee of sufficient resources.

When service users were legally entitled to HB to fund support costs capital investment in development or new services was more likely because there was a guaranteed revenue stream.

LAs are unable to make long term commitments to revenue funding of supported housing schemes and a legal duty won’t change this. The way social and health care is allocated gives a clue as what can be expected.

As a recent Panorama investigation showed Health Trusts increasingly assess what you or I might regard as a health need as 'social care' in order to deny free NHS care. Social services departments and Health Trusts have shunted liability for personal care costs into the Supporting People system partly because the proper budgets for social care were stretched and because they could (the way Supporting People was implemented virtually encouraged them to do this).

It is not hard to understand why Supporting People teams might drag their feet over stopping the funding of ineligible service charges. They would have more money for general counselling and support but social services would need to meet the personal care needs



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of clients whose services had been withdrawn; an additional financial burden on their LA.

The rationing of resources forces LA's to discharge their duties with reference to strategies and assessment criteria which set the bar according to available funding. In the end this may lead to greater strain on the public purse as social problems/needs emerge which require intensive and costly interventions. Low level housing related support not only promotes independence and positive social outcomes it probably saves both money and heartache.

Mark Best markb@asbah.org

Mark Best is the Scheme Manager and Housing Support Worker on a small supported housing scheme mainly for people with physical and sensory disabilities and some clients with mild learning difficulties.

The Experience of L'Arche, an Intentional Community, As a Provider of Support, Care and Housing: Hugh Nelson gives a view as someone who lives in an "intentional community".

This article stems from an invitation to write "in defence of intentional communities". Intentional Communities differ widely, and this article is about the nine L'Arche UK Communities. Other organisations do things differently, and must speak for themselves. L'Arche communities were founded to enable people with learning disabilities to live ordinary lives, supported by people who respected them and engaged with them as fully as possible. Over 40 years later, L'Arche continues to build communities based on these values.

The invitation to write this article arose from an on-line discussion as to whether intentional communities might be facing funding difficulties because they were perceived as being out of tune with preferred service models. That the invitation was to "defend" this type of service provision is indicative of the perception that



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intentional communities are out of touch with current thinking in the learning disability field. However, the stereotype of such groups as being isolated from normality, with a strong evangelistic faith, which deny people basic choices over their daily lives is crude and inaccurate.

When the debate on “ordinary living” versus “village communities” first surfaced, someone remarked that L’Arche managed to straddle the great divide between these two apparently polarised ways of addressing the accommodation and support needs of people with learning disabilities. Then as now (though now sometimes with supported living rather than residential care funding), those L’Arche supports live in ordinary houses in ordinary streets, use local resources, have local friends, often attend local churches, have independent local advocates. When they die (and the older first generation L’Arche UK residents who came to our Communities up to 30 years ago are dying), their funerals are supported by many neighbours and friends as well as by other Community members.

L’Arche in this country, and in over a hundred other countries, is an intentional community in the sense that:

- We provide opportunities for regularly coming together as a community – not instead of links with the local neighbourhood and with family and friends but in addition to and alongside these external links. (Our Community celebrations are attended by friends and neighbours, are often based on local church communities, and are often made possible by local support.)
- L’Arche communities are built on a fundamental belief that all people, with and without learning disabilities, have the same fundamental needs and hopes. Amongst our most important needs is the opportunity to have a network of strong, engaged and respectful friendships. An attractive environment, choice over the basic aspects of day to day life and well trained paid support is important, but it is the quality of relationships that is most important to most people. By providing a context in which such relationships are encouraged and nurtured L’Arche



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communities enable people with learning disabilities to get to know a wide range of people and to make friendships with them. In this way, people with learning disabilities in L'Arche avoid the experience of isolation and loneliness that faces so many, and are able to meet and make friends with people other than those paid to support them.

- L'Arche assistants (staff) are recruited not just to work for and with people with learning disabilities, but to live alongside them in shared houses and flats.
- Both people with learning disabilities and assistants often come to L'Arche (and stay with L'Arche) because they want to be part of a faith community – though we cater for and welcome people from all faiths and none. (Some of those who have been with us for many years, and have contributed hugely, do not identify with any formal religion.)
- Being part of a worldwide movement is not just an organisational fact. Both people with learning disabilities and assistants treasure these wider links, and

visit other Communities in the UK and overseas. Big assemblies, such as that in Italy last year, are attended by people with learning disabilities from all over the world. (Language does not seem to be a barrier, even for those without any formal spoken language.)

- People with learning disabilities, on behalf of their own Community and on behalf of the wider L'Arche, are involved in choosing the leaders of L'Arche at local, national and international level.

It sometimes requires extra effort to explain ourselves in conventional community care terminology – because we have developed our own terminology. However, there is nothing inconsistent between living L'Arche and complying with current requirements and living up to “Valuing People” ideals. We have invested a lot of thought and energy into person-centred planning, and being person-centred includes the ability to opt into or opt out of Community activities. Looking back to earlier ways of measuring these things, I believe a L'Arche house achieved an almost uniquely high rating under the PASS standards



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for integration into the local community and ordinary/valued life.

Life for all of us, with and without learning disabilities, requires an ongoing dialogue between independence and dependence, the freedom to choose and areas in which choices are made for us. Life in L'Arche is no different; by choosing to be in L'Arche, community members choose the inevitable give and take that comes with living with and amongst other people. This can make life more difficult at times, and does mean giving up some of the things that you might otherwise choose. However it also means receiving all the benefits, expected and unexpected, that being with and amongst other people brings; Friendship, laughter, shared experiences, the chance to give and receive care, the things that make life really worthwhile for most of us, whether or not we have a learning disability.

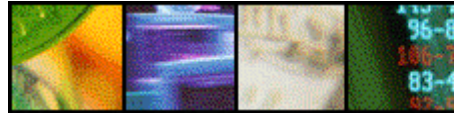
We are still learning – not least from those we serve, including those now part of a L'Arche Community from a base in their own flat; and we see a bright future for our sort of intentional community that reflects the intentions and the

values of all our rich diversity of members. A nurse in the major teaching hospital where one of our originating members spent some time before coming back to his L'Arche house to die commented "He's really part of a family!" We like to think so. Families of course change; and not everybody chooses to live for ever with their family. We support those who wish to move on, as well as supporting new ways of living for those who wish to stay and who need more support or less support, or simply different support.

Building community with people with learning disabilities means just that.

Hugh Nelson
L'Arche Lambeth

Interested in this article? There's a thread on the Housing & Support Sector Forum at:
<http://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/forum/viewforum.php?f=20>. Join in and contribute to the discussion.



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"Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young People in Supported Housing - A practical guide for providers of supported housing and health services" and *"Promoting the Health and Well-being of Young People in Supported Housing - A training manual for staff and managers"* are available from NCB Book Sales priced £16.00 (£13.00 for NCB members). Call 0207 843 2029, email booksales@ncb.org.uk

New National Children's Bureau resources to improve the health of young people in supported housing.

It is well established that young people who live in supported housing are amongst the most disadvantaged in society and are vulnerable to a range of physical, mental and emotional health problems. The National Children's Bureau has published two new resources that aim to help providers of supported housing and their key partners build positive approaches to promote the health and well-being of this vulnerable group.



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Letters

Dear Editor

I have recently signed up to your publication and I am very impressed with the range and content of the articles.

I am less than impressed with the screen layout as I find having to scroll back up the page for column 2 really annoying.

I guess that is the way it is done but I for one find it tiresome I'm afraid. Just felt you would want to know this feed back from a very new customer.

Geoff Thomas
St Monica Trust

Thanks for the praise and the criticism Geoff. We hope you find the new layout to be better.

Dear Editor

I thought I would contact you to congratulate you on the Housing & Support Discussion & Resource Forum, which I have just had a look at. I was also impressed by the Briefing. The Forum is just what is needed to fill the gap left by the removal of the Supporting People Kweb discussion forum, and in some ways it is much better as it gives free access to various resources.

Thanks once again!

Elizabeth Barnard
Democratic Services Officer
Barnsley MBC

Dear Editor

Just a quick email to say that I do look forward to receiving "The Briefing", and commend you for persevering to get it right. It's good to see consultants battling through to support "supported Housing"

Kind regards

Trevor Palfreyman
Chief Executive



Support Solutions

Adullam

Dear Editor

One of our homeless services was decommissioned last year by an Supporting People team for no good reason. The other Supporting People teams we work with seem happy with the same service to the same people in the same region of the country. Now, a year on, we're still getting exactly the same level of referrals we used to get a year ago (i.e., we're full). The local authority in which we were decommissioned still makes the same referrals as it always did; we still provide support and accommodation. The difference? We can't support people to the extent we want to and they need us to, and the local authority in question has saved itself a fat wad by paying (via HB) a lot less than it did through Supporting People.

If anyone who's anyone in Government reads this can they tell me whether this is a good thing or a bad thing?

Name & Address Supplied

Support Solutions Ltd, Eaton House, 67 Valentine Road, Birmingham, B14 7AJ.
T: 0121 444 6040; F: 0121 444 4988; E: briefing@supportsolutions.co.uk
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