

# **Northamptonshire Supporting People**

## **Five Year Strategy**

**2005-2010**

**Draft Executive Summary**



## **Contacts for the Supporting People Five Year Strategy**

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## **Northamptonshire Supporting People Commissioning Body partners**

Corby Borough Council  
Daventry District Council  
East Northamptonshire District Council  
Kettering Borough Council  
Northampton Borough Council  
South Northamptonshire Council  
Borough Council of Wellingborough  
Northamptonshire County Council  
National Probation Service in Northamptonshire  
Primary Care Trusts in Northamptonshire (represented by Northampton PCT)

## Executive summary

Supporting People is a programme which funds supported and sheltered housing, including hostels, refuges, shared housing and adult placements. It funds nearly 11,000 household units, including services for older people, homeless people, young people, people with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities.

This Five Year Strategy for Supporting People in Northamptonshire provides a short summary of priorities for the programme, and data about supply and needs. Much more detailed information about any client group covered in this document can be downloaded from our website, [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/housing](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/housing), or sent on request from the address given on the inside cover of this document.

At the time of writing, it remains unclear what level of funding will be available to the programme in future years. The bulk of funding comes directly from the Government; and information published shortly before the publication of this strategy suggests that there could be very significant cuts in government grant to supported housing services in Northamptonshire. This five year strategy is based on an assumption that the Northamptonshire grant will reduce by 15% over its lifetime. It will be reviewed annually; if the government sets cuts that are different from this level, appropriate decisions will need to be made each year throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

Supporting People is a national programme which began in April 2003. Its funding was derived from a number of previous funding streams, such as certain government grants and some Housing Benefit payments. It also began by funding services as they existed in April 2003. The pattern of supply and expenditure therefore is inequitable – the services have often been developed, and priced, in a haphazard way.

The vision for services funded by Supporting People is that they genuinely support independence; rather than “doing for”, they enable service users to develop life skills, or maximise their independence, as appropriate. Services must be effective; those that help service users move to their own tenancies, for example, need to be able to demonstrate that this happens. And services must be offering housing-related support; the programme cannot fund every conceivable kind of community support service.

As there are funding cuts, it is important to get the best possible value from existing funds. In Northamptonshire many services offer good value, which can be demonstrated by benchmarking with regional and national data. But a number are too expensive compared with other similar services. Where existing services are in line with this strategy, of the right quality but relatively expensive, existing service providers are given an opportunity to negotiate on price in the first instance. If good value cannot be achieved in this way, a move to retendering the services is then required.

Additionally, the Supporting People programme has developed a policy of paying no more than £330 per unit per week for any service. In some cases – for specialist 24 hour mental health services, for example – this cannot cover all the costs. In these instances joint commissioning approaches are being developed with other funders.

Additionally, and just as importantly, some existing services are not seen as the most effective and equitable way of meeting needs. In some cases, this is because an excellent service is only available in one part of the county. In other cases, it is because research and consultation is leading us towards funding different kinds of services. A theme across all service user groups is to move away from large groups of service users living together and towards smaller services supporting service users in the community. This trend is especially evident in what are called floating support services - services that go to people living in general needs accommodation, rather than requiring them to move to a specific property to receive the service.

Over the past year, there have been a number of consultation events and mechanisms, including sizeable research documents, that have been used to build up the priorities set out in this summary strategy. Despite the messages from this research and consultation, however, it is not feasible to make all the proposed changes to services at once. Partly this is because in many cases people are living in existing services, and expecting them to be a home for life. The pace of change must take account of this. In other cases, new services require new buildings; the opportunities to gain capital are few, and the time taken for building is lengthy. Finally, the Supporting People programme has only a finite capacity; changing services and tendering for them takes time if it is to be done well. Hence this strategy, in line with ODPM requirements, looks ahead for the next five years.

The main proposals for each client group are summarised below.

#### *Older People*

Most Supporting People funded household units are for older people; many are community alarms, and much is for sheltered housing. Some sheltered housing is not popular; bedsits tend not to be in demand, and some stock is in poor condition. The number of sheltered housing units per head of the older population is far higher in some districts than others. In Northampton, for example, some local authority schemes are currently being wound down, and some service users complain that sheltered housing was the only realistic option for them, even though they do not yet require the service.

Models of support such as extra care schemes and Very Sheltered Housing are a good way of increasing the ability for housing-related services to support older people; they require joint funding with social care and health services. Within this strategy there is an aim for at least four more VSH schemes across the county, and a further extra care scheme in the north of the county. Ideally, there will be greater numbers than this bare minimum, but the scale of increase will depend of the availability of social services funding, and detailed consultation with existing service users in particular schemes and residential services.

At the other end of the support scale, community alarms and floating support (or dispersed wardens) are valued by many people as a means of allowing them to continue living independently in the community. This strategy supports such schemes, and aims to make them available and funded by Supporting People in every district – currently not the case in Northampton, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire.

In order to create new Very Sheltered Housing, extracare, community alarms and floating support schemes, there will need to be a reduction in the number of sheltered housing units that are funded. In many cases, this will be achieved by identifying and winding down unpopular schemes, such as those which have bedsits or stock in poor condition. In some cases, new schemes will provide an alternative, improved service. In Northampton, which has a high level of sheltered

housing, investment in the new extra care village currently being built in Northampton would provide an alternative to some existing sheltered housing units.

Additionally, there needs to be better value across some sheltered housing services. Local authority services tend to cost more than Housing Association services; and for sheltered housing, some authorities charge double the unit cost of others. In the interests of equity, this strategy proposes a clear maximum subsidy for standard (category 2) sheltered housing; this will also reduce the amount that those older people who pay for their services are charged.

#### *Home Improvement Agencies*

These services (known as Care and Repair) support vulnerable owner occupiers in keeping their properties in good condition. The Supporting People programme has now allowed services to be provided in every district. The intention remains to combine the agencies in the north of the county into one, to ensure robust service provision. A further goal is to increase the capacity of HIAs to provide signposting about equity release schemes, and to encourage partner funders to build on HIAs for handyperson schemes and other schemes with health and social care benefits.

#### *Physical Impairment*

Currently there are few services for physical impairment funded by the programme; one service is a very high cost one. This strategy aims to reduce funding to this high cost service (in Corby), on a planned basis simultaneous with part-funding being introduced from social care; and to part fund a transitional housing service in Northampton. Another aim is to ensure that, as far as is reasonable, all Supporting People services can meet the needs of service users with physical impairments.

#### *HIV/AIDS*

There are currently no specific Supporting People services for this client group. Within this strategy the goal is to ensure that generic floating support services across the county provide fair access to people with HIV/AIDS who need housing related support.

#### *Learning Disability*

Supporting People funds a variety of services for people with learning disabilities, but funding is currently unduly concentrated in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough. Over the next five years, social care services will be moving some funding from residential care into supported housing, for service users for whom this is an appropriate option. Higher cost services currently funded by Supporting People, and effectively operating as an alternative to care, will in future be funded by social care, assuming that they offer value and are relevant to the County Council strategy.

Increasingly Supporting People will fund lower level services across the whole county, typically for service users who do not meet the eligibility criteria for social care services.

There is currently Supporting People funding paid to residential care services; this will be withdrawn. Savings gained from these measures will allow Supporting People investment in low level services across the county, and to part-fund medium cost ones.

The Adult Placement Scheme could benefit from extension, but consideration needs to be given to using a tender exercise for gaining best value.

This strategy aims to provide low-level floating support in every district in the county. Apart from floating support, low-level or moderate accommodation-based support should be available in every

district. In some cases this can be achieved by remodelling sheltered housing schemes; in other cases shared housing or a small group of flats are a more appropriate model. Early developments should be in the south of the county.

The availability of shared ownership properties should be increased, recognising that some service users have significant assets.

The Supporting People programme will also aim to develop, with social care partners, shared models of support and care, such as extracare approaches, with the aim being for one service in the north of the county and one in the south.

### *Mental Health*

Mental health services currently account for 28% of expenditure, an unfairly high percentage when compared to other service user groups. Much of the expense is in Northampton. Some services are very high cost – in the region of £750 per unit per week. There are also several services which accommodate large numbers of service users in one shared building, which can affect the quality of the service and lead to increased risks and neighbourhood difficulties. There are a very wide range of costs, not all consistent with quality. Some services appear to be of poor quality, and a significant number are not well focused on supporting independence. In some cases cost models are used that result in service users being charged for meals, laundry and other services to the extent that users are left with relatively little income and do not have the chance to develop budgeting and other life skills.

For mental health, one goal of this strategy is to ensure consistent countywide availability of low-level floating support ; but not to sole fund higher level floating and community support. The programme would part-fund higher level floating and community support only if other agencies are able and willing to part-fund.

The programme will also part-fund three high level accommodation based services, with joint funding from mental health services. It will continue to fund medium level accommodation based services, but with a lower proportion in Northampton. It will reduce the number of accommodation based services with more than 8 unit of shared accommodation so that there are less than 50% of such large services funded after 3 years.

The strategy aims to ensure that services which are funded are focused on maximising independence, and that the cost model used in such services does not utilise high non-support charges for service users. It aims to ensure that all service providers develop and maintain good relationships with statutory mental health services, and that the more challenging service users are distributed fairly across all appropriate services, rather than disproportionately placed with a few services

### *Domestic Violence*

Northamptonshire has a relatively large number of domestic violence units and is making new investment in Corby. There are some districts, however, that do not have floating support services available. The aims of this strategy are to ensure floating support services are available in each district in the county, commissioning services in Corby and Kettering, and to reshape an existing refuge service to ensure that women with substance misuse and/ or mental health needs are able to access provision in partnership with other agencies. In the longer term, it may also be possible to part-fund a small service able to meet the needs of men who are victims, potentially by specifying this focus within a wider short-term scheme used by men. To afford the new floating

support services, it is necessary to make sure that the costs of existing accommodation services offer good value.

Additionally, the strategy aims to ensure that service providers link effectively with local housing agencies, especially in achieving appropriate and timely move-on.

### *Young People*

A variety of young people's services are available across the county, but the spread across district is inequitable. Northampton in particular has a large number of very high cost units. This strategy aims to withdraw funding from some high cost units, and reprovide in medium level dispersed accommodation in Northampton, Wellingborough and Daventry.

Some services offer very low level support, with the result that the behaviour of service users can regularly cause difficulties for neighbours, and the services are unable to prepare young people for living independently. The programme should not fund ineffective services.

The strategy aims to ensure that floating support services are available to young people within all boroughs and districts, using specific young people's services in the urban areas, but appropriately specified generic floating support in rural areas. It aims to reduce the number of high-cost units funded in Northampton by approximately 20 units, investing in medium-cost, medium-support accommodation, with increased amounts of smaller units, across Northampton, Wellingborough and Daventry. It also aims to expand and remodel existing supported housing in South Northamptonshire.

The intention is to reduce the number of services where large numbers of young people (more than 8) are living in one location so that there are no more than two such services in the county.

The strategy aims to increase the amount of services joint funded by the County Council's Children and Families service, which has been reducing where unit costs in supported accommodation are high.

### *Teenage Parents*

At April 2003 there were very few Supporting People funded services for teenage parents. New investment will bring the number of units up to the average expected for a county such as Northamptonshire, with new developments in Northampton and Corby, and a new service being commissioned in Kettering. Additionally, floating support services should be available across the county, and it is anticipated that following service reviews there will either be a renegotiation to specify such a service more clearly or to use tender processes to achieve coverage through a service in the north of the county and one in the south.

### *Homelessness*

There are no plans within this strategy to fund more, large multiple-unit schemes, with the exception of a potential reprovision in Corby dependent on Corby Borough Council's developing homelessness strategy. The aim is to provide a menu of floating support and dispersed accommodation, linking with existing large services and improving value and partnership working.

The strategy aims to ensure that supported provision remains available in all districts and boroughs of Northamptonshire, but to reshape and rationalise existing provision to ensure outcomes are delivered by good quality, cost effective services. This primarily means changes in floating support

services, which are often small and unco-ordinated. Floating support for homelessness should be provided by generic services across every district in the county.

The strategy also aims to influence district allocation policies to gain increasingly improved alignment with Supporting People transitional services – seeking to increase the availability of move-on housing.

The strategy will reshape the funding of homelessness services in Corby in conjunction with the Borough Council's revised homelessness strategy, funding at least a hostel and floating support, and ensuring that homeless women are provided for.

The strategy also seeks to increase dispersed supported accommodation in Wellingborough.

#### *Ex-offenders or people at risk of offending*

There are very few specific services for this client group, although services for other client groups do offer places to people who have offended. The strategy aims to develop a countywide floating support service to risky offenders within a tenancy compliance model, and provide additional funding to accommodation based services able to work with this client group.

It also aims to specify the ability of generic floating support services across the county to meet the needs of low and medium level offenders, and to improve the ability of services for all client groups to work with and support low and medium level offenders

#### *Substance misuse*

Some services for other client groups are able to provide places for substance misusers, but there is also a need to specify a better mix of specific and generic services across the county. There are only two specific service providers at present. Unit costs tend to be reasonable; however, it may still be appropriate to use tender processes in some instances to ensure that the best quality and value is obtained.

The strategy aims to develop generic floating support services so that they are available to substance misusers in rural districts. Potentially using a tender process, the programme will either provide specific substance misuse floating support services in urban areas, or ensure that generic floating support services in these areas are able to meet the needs of substance misusers.

The programme aims to develop a wide range of more inclusive services that have the skills and confidence to support drug misusers, by building the capacity of landlords and support providers across a wide range of services. It also seeks to provide more direct access units in existing services to respond to emergency access (e.g. discharge from custody).

As set out in the domestic violence section, the programme aims to designate an existing domestic violence refuge so that it can meet the needs of substance misusers; this requires part-funding from the Drug Action Team, specifically in relation to the availability of therapeutic services.

#### *Refugees*

There are no specific Supporting People services for refugees. Within this strategy, the aim is to ensure that floating support services are available to refugees through the generic low-level floating support services that the programme is seeking to make available across the county (see below). Additionally, to ensure that refugees are not marginalised within generic services, providers



will be contractually required to provide performance data to demonstrate that refugees have fair access to Supporting People funded services.

### *Generic*

Currently few services use the label “generic”. However, within this strategy there is a recognition that many services meet multiple needs. This should be reflected through a generic category, with activity data then analysed by primary client groups.

Within this strategy, the aim is to ensure that generic, low level floating support is available across the county. Across all districts, these services should be able to work with homeless people, offenders, low level mental health, refugees and people with HIV/AIDS. In rural areas, the services should also be able to meet the needs of substance misusers and young people, although low-level specific floating support may be appropriate in urban areas. Service specification and analysis of performance data should be used to ensure that the services meet the needs of all appropriate client groups.

### *Black and minority ethnic services*

For many services, there is relatively low take up from black and minority ethnic groups. This strategy aims to improve the ability of all Supporting People funded services to meet the needs of people from black and minority ethnic communities. It will also continue funding BME specific older people’s and mental health services in Northampton and Wellingborough, and carry out a feasibility analysis for funding additional specific older people’s services in Northampton as part of the detailed review of sheltered provision, using data from the current joint research funded by housing authorities and housing associations across Northamptonshire.

### *Floating support*

Across the range of client groups, the importance of floating support services has been repeatedly raised. There needs to be substantial reshaping of floating support services in Northamptonshire. Many of the points below reiterate those made above under individual client groups.

- Generic floating support should be available in every district, covering homelessness, offenders, refugees, HIV/AIDS and low level mental health, plus young people and substance misusers in rural areas. In Northampton, Wellingborough, Corby and Kettering, there should be specific floating support for young people and, potentially, for substance misusers
- Floating support services for learning disability for older people should be available across the county
- Floating support services for domestic violence should be available across the county
- Floating support services for teenage parents should be available across the county
- Higher level mental health services should be part-funded across the county only where other funding sources are available to also part-fund
- Where existing services can match these requirements at the right quality and cost, the first approach will be to negotiate with existing service providers. Smaller services may also be given the opportunity to work collaboratively. Where services are not similar to these requirements, or are not at the right quality and cost, existing services will be ceased and new services provided through a tender process.
- The number of units of floating support should remain at at least current levels, despite funding reductions to the whole programme

- No floating support service should, in future, be less than 10 units in size

*Conclusion*

Despite the very significant reduction in funding that this strategy has to address, it remains the aim of the strategy that the number of units of supported housing funded by the programme remains at the same level by the end of the five year period as at the start. On average across the whole programme, the costs will be 15% less; this will be achieved by a combination of market management, more efficient services, and a move towards lower cost but more widely available services in a number of client group areas.

Services will be of better quality as judged by the national Quality Assessment Framework; the target is that at least 95% of services will achieve level B against at least five of the six QAF Core Objectives within three years. There will also be improved outcomes for service users, against baseline performance at the start of the strategy. For short-term services, over this period there should be an improvement in the percentage of successful outcomes of at least 10%, and at least a 5% improvement in the number of new service users receiving a service, to be achieved within three years.