

By: Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services
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To: Cabinet – 14 January 2008

Subject: **AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION OF THE KENT SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This paper gives information on the outcome of the Audit Commission Inspection of the Supporting People Programme in Kent

Introduction

1. (1) The Audit Commission undertook a full inspection of the Kent Supporting People Programme in September 2007. The report of this inspection was published on 29 November 2007, and judged the service to be 'good with promising prospects for improvement'.

(2) Appendix One to this report shows the result graphically, Appendix Two reproduces the Audit Commission's summary, and Appendix Three shows their recommendations.

Proposed next steps

2. (1) The Audit Commission have given us the opportunity to respond to the recommendations, by 29 January 2008. This formal response must be limited to 2 sides of A4, but it will need to be informed by more detailed work and action plans.

(2) It is therefore proposed to convene a special meeting of the Core Strategy Development Group in January to help to construct the response. The invitation to this meeting will also be open to any members of the Commissioning Body who would like to attend. This will be signed off by Kevin Lynes in his dual role as Cabinet Member for KASS, and Chair of the Commissioning Body. It will then be reported to the next meetings of the Commissioning Body and the Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee (ASSPOC).

Service User Consultation

3. (1) The Audit Commission's recommendations in relation to service user involvement and consultation are entirely in keeping with the Programme's aspirations.

Equality Impact Assessment

4. (1) Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as appropriate throughout the process of implementing the recommendations.

Financial Impact Assessment

5. (1) The Audit Commission does not believe that there will be any financial impact relating to the inspection recommendations. This will be considered in greater detail as the response is developed.

Conclusion

6. (1) We welcome the positive outcome achieved by this inspection, while recognising that there are still improvements to be made. The proposed special meeting of the Core Strategy Development Group will enable us to start shaping an action plan in response. This will be formally reported to the next meeting of the Commissioning Body and ASSPOC, and will also become a part of the Programme's annual plan.

Recommendation

7. (1) Cabinet is asked to NOTE the contents of this report


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Background Information:

Supporting People Inspection Report for Kent County Council, November 2007 (Published by the Audit Commission) available on the Audit Commission website (www.audit-commission.gov.uk), or from either officer named above

Appendix One

	Prospects for improvement?					'a good programme that has promising prospects for improvement'
Excellent					A good programme?	
Promising						
Uncertain						
Poor						
	Poor	Fair ★	Good ★★	Excellent ★★★		

Audit Commission Result

Audit Commission Inspection Report: Summary

1. Kent County Council delivers a good Supporting People Programme with promising prospects for improvement.
2. Governance bodies are well established and effectively run. There is strong input to the Programme from key partners which helps to drive the Programme forward. The Programme is delivered through a well-managed, skilled team supported by clear work plans. Contracting arrangements are robust and understood by providers. The service review process was managed systematically and a continued focus on improvement planning is leading to better quality services. Information about Supporting People is clear and easily accessible and the Programme is well promoted. Service users have been engaged in shaping aspects of the Programme and steps have been taken to strengthen this area further. The Programme supports some high quality services for a broad range of client groups and a Programme of strategic reviews has led to some new provision for some traditionally excluded groups.
3. There are some areas that require further development. Until recently, health has not been consistently involved in the Programme at a strategic level and there are weaknesses in performance management of the Programme. Despite realignment of services across the county, there are still long waiting times for floating support in some districts and some providers are continuing to apply restrictive practices and referral arrangements. Some groups do not yet benefit directly from the Programme and a county-wide approach to move-on arrangements is under-developed. Understanding of the needs of BME groups and other hard to reach groups is still developing.
4. Prospects for improvement are promising. There is a strong track record of managing change within the Council and the directorate and the early stages of the Supporting People Programme were successfully implemented. Service reviews have delivered improvements and challenging standards are set for new contracts. The Programme has clear direction and there are shared objectives and ambitions with partners. Plans are in place to address identified weaknesses. There is a strong approach to financial and risk management and capacity is enhanced through a modern approach to procurement. Partnership and cross-authority working contributes to the effectiveness of the Programme.
6. There are some barriers to improvement. Until recently there has been little progress in developing new services to meet service priorities identified in the five-year strategy and customer-focused outcomes from the recent raft of strategic reviews are limited. There is insufficient focus on performance management of the Programme by the governance bodies and strategic understanding of the Programme among some district and county Councillors requires further development.

Audit Commission Inspection Recommendations

Recommendation One

Strengthen the strategic approach to Supporting People by:

- undertaking further assessments of needs of Gypsies and Travellers, BME groups, refugees and people with HIV/AIDS;
- refreshing the five-year strategy to identify future priorities and show how the needs of BME and other hard to reach groups will be met;
- ensuring that the revised five-year strategy fully reflects the priorities and needs of partners and key stakeholders, including the new PCTs and service users; and
- developing a countywide move-on strategy in partnership with service providers and other partners.

Recommendation Two

Improve performance management and governance of the Programme by:

- establishing a suite of performance indicators which allow managers and governance bodies to measure the impact of the Programme in terms of benefits for service users and the wider community;
- giving performance management a higher profile within governance meeting agendas;
- ensuring that all members of the governance bodies are provided with comprehensive guidance and induction;
- continuing to involve the wider body of elected members in the development of the Programme; and
- ensuring that all plans clearly set out the expected impact and outcome of each proposed action.

Recommendation Three

Improve the approach to value for money by:

- working with other Supporting People partnerships to develop further benchmarking and ensure more in-depth and meaningful comparative analysis;

- ensuring that the financial impact of all decisions taken in relation to the Programme is clearly set out in Commissioning Body reports; and
- developing robust performance reports which clearly draw attention to costs and efficiency savings.

Recommendation Four

Improve service user involvement by:

- developing a service user involvement strategy which includes clear measurable outcomes in consultation with users and advocates;
- carefully planning all major public consultation exercises; and
- ensuring that service users have an opportunity to influence decision making and participate in governance, performance management and procurement.

Recommendation Five

Improve access and information in relation to the Supporting People Programme by:

- ensuring that no providers apply restrictive access and referral arrangements and that all comply with the Programme's agreed reconnection policy;
- ensuring that front-line staff employed by the partners provide a consistent and informed approach to the Programme;
- undertaking mystery shopping of all telephone and front-line access points to the Programme across the county and taking steps to address any shortfalls in performance;
- ensuring that all documents are printed with relevant translation strap-lines;
- providing clear information to providers about financial incentives available to encourage improvement; and
- making hard copies of the local services directory available at all key access points.

All recommendations should be implemented by April 2008.