

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 6 NOVEMBER 2003

THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME

Joint Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services and the Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of the implementation of this Scottish Executive initiative and its operation in East Ayrshire Council since April 2003.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Previous reports to Committee have detailed the policy background to the Supporting People Programme together with the funding being made available to the Council.

3. PROGRESS UPDATE

- 3.1 A programme of visits to those applicants for our sheltered accommodation who do not currently receive Housing Benefit has been substantially completed. Only those applicants who were not contactable despite repeated attempts have not been visited. The purpose of the visits was to advise applicants of the requirement to now charge new tenants in our sheltered accommodation for their warden service if they do not qualify for Housing Benefit. The application process for our sheltered accommodation has been suitably amended to ensure that any new applicants will also be aware of this requirement. A number of the applicants visited were found to in fact qualify for Housing Benefit or other benefits and have been assisted to make claims by the staff from the Supporting People Team who carried out the visits.
- 3.2 All current users of Supporting People Grant funded services who are not protected tenants and who do not receive Housing Benefit (known as self funders) have been written to, to advise them of the amounts due for this year. All of them have been offered the facility to pay by bank standing order and were also offered visits to carry out financial assessments to see if any assistance could be given towards the cost of their services. Of the service users that have taken up the offer of a visit, a number have been found to in fact qualify for Housing Benefit and have been assisted to make Housing Benefit/ Council Tax Benefit claims. Other claims for welfare benefits have also been made with assistance from the Supporting People Team. Payments are now being received from self funders towards the cost of their services. A number of self funders have chosen not to discuss their financial circumstances and are accordingly being charged the full cost of their services.

4. FURTHER GUIDANCE

- 4.1 The Scottish Executive issued further guidance regarding Supporting People Strategic Plans in a letter of the 18th August and again on 13th October when a fresh set of guidance and a statistical template were published on the Scottish Executive's Supporting People web site. Officers are currently working to obtain all the information required to complete the template and this will be submitted to members for approval at the earliest opportunity. The template is a supplement to our existing strategic plan, which is otherwise unchanged from the one approved by members in March 2003.

5. CONTRACTS

- 5.1 Further letters of agreement have been issued to external providers to enable payments of Supporting People Grant to continue pending the successful conclusion of negotiations over Supporting People interim contracts. The new letters of agreement will expire on 31st January 2004.

6. SERVICE REVIEWS

- 6.1 Work on the service review tool previously reported to Committee has been concluded. This standard package has now been made available to all Scottish local authorities through the Supporting People Practitioners Group. It has been constructed in the form of a baseline template that can be used to supplement any existing processes to ensure that all the requirements of the Supporting People review process can be met.
- 6.2 It has been recommended by the Practitioners Group for use by authorities to enable Supporting People reviews to be carried out in a fair and consistent manner. Its adoption will also ease the burden of reviews on support providers by creating a consistent requirement regardless of which local authority is conducting the review of a Supporting People funded service. Its adoption by East Ayrshire Council is being considered through the Supporting People management structures used by the Council and will be the subject of a future report to this Committee.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GENERAL FUND

- 7.1 As previously reported to the Committee, East Ayrshire Council will this year receive a total of £6.03M in Supporting People Grant, all of which can be regarded as additional revenue funding for the provision of housing support services to vulnerable people living in East Ayrshire.
- 7.2 It has previously been reported to Committee that a 5% contribution to Supporting People Grant funding needs to be found from the Council's own resources for that element of Supporting People Grant that stems from Transitional Housing Benefit. Agreement has now been reached between Homes and Social Work regarding how this can be achieved.

7.3 Educational and Social Services would contribute £188,015 for those services delivered in conjunction with services funded from the community care budget. Homes and Technical Services would contribute the amount detailed in Paragraph 8.1 below. This would leave £29,273 arising from those services, provided by Housing Associations that might have been funded from Housing Benefit payments before the introduction of Transitional Housing benefit in April 2000, to be met from the General Fund.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

8.1 The 5% contribution to the cost of Supporting People Grant funding for the Tenancy Support Team and our Homeless Hostel Warden Service would be provided from the Housing Revenue Account. This 5% contribution would total £61,288 for the current year. This is in addition to the previously reported need to fund the cost of services to protected tenants, who are existing East Ayrshire Council tenants getting Supporting People Grant funded services who do not get Housing Benefit.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

James Lavery
Director of Homes & Technical Services
October 2003

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational & Social Ser.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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