

Commissioning for Inclusion

The Supporting People programme in Southampton

Background

In Southampton, the Supporting People programme provides housing related support services for people who are vulnerable and have been identified as unable to live independently without advice, support or training in developing skills or managing their housing.

The Supporting People programme began in 2003, bringing together seven housing-related funding streams from across central government. It has since become a wholly decentralised programme, administered through 152 top-tier authorities who have complete discretion over where to direct their funds to best meet local needs.

The Supporting People in Southampton Five-Year Strategy (2005-2010) was developed at a time when local authorities were first given control of these support budgets. The strategy set out the priorities for the services and how they would be achieved in Southampton. Setting priorities for the services enabled the strategic aims of both the programme and of the city to be achieved whilst investing the resources wisely. It was also hoped that achieving better value for money would enable the programme to make the case that investing in support services saves organisational (Local authority, health, probation etc.) resources in the longer term.

The programme in Southampton had two key objectives:

- To commission services based upon evidenced housing related support needs
- To maximise value for money from support services and manage the Supporting People programme within budget limits

Re-evaluating Homelessness Services

In 2005, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister initiated the Value Improvement Pilot programme. The programme invited bids from administering authorities of Supporting People funding to undertake schemes which would secure efficiencies through a re-evaluation of procurement, contracting and contract management. The scheme also aimed to substantially improve outcomes for service users.

In Southampton, the pilot aimed to achieve greater value from projects that supported homeless and vulnerable people by developing an options appraisal to assess ways of achieving the best services to meet evidenced needs for the best cost to the local authority .





Homeless services were chosen as the target for the pilot due to:

- a) Difficulties in the management of the homeless services, which included 30 separate services provided by 11 different organisations with little co-ordination between neighbouring authorities. This resulted in difficulties in providing services for homeless people moving from area to area.
- b) There was a high cost of provision (£2m per year - 12.5% of the total budget) with little investment in preventive and resettlement services.

Strategic and operational issues included:

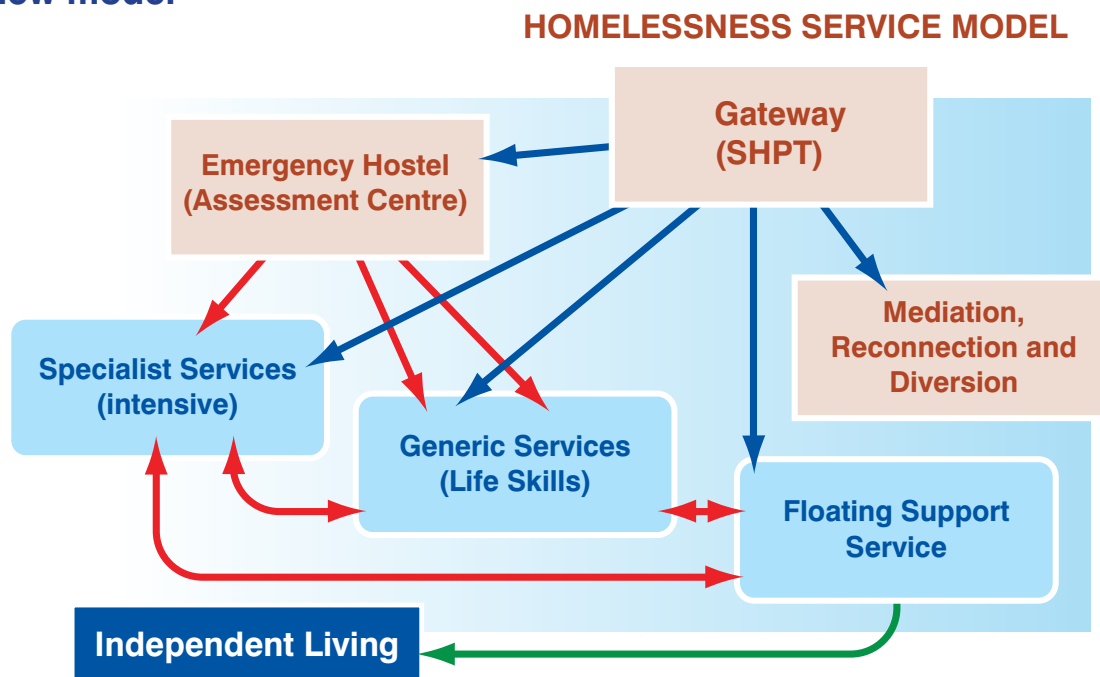
- 74% of departures from hostels were unplanned.
- 59% repeat homelessness.
- No central database about residents or their support needs with different approaches to managing access to hostels.
- The proportion of residents moving on to independent settled accommodation was only 11%, showing little focus on finding longer term solutions to homelessness.

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The new model



After a consultation period, which included current and ex- service users, a new service delivery model was designed that included a single gateway with an initial assessment followed by referral on to a range of services, including:

- Preventative services including housing advice, floating support, reconnection and mediation services
- Generic supported housing for low level needs, including developing life skills.
- Specialist supported housing to provide more intensive support for needs related to age, mental ill health, substance misuse or physical disability.
- Emergency accommodation if required that day.

Access to services is now managed through the Street Homeless Prevention Team (SHPT) with service delivery being commissioned and awarded on a 3 year contract.

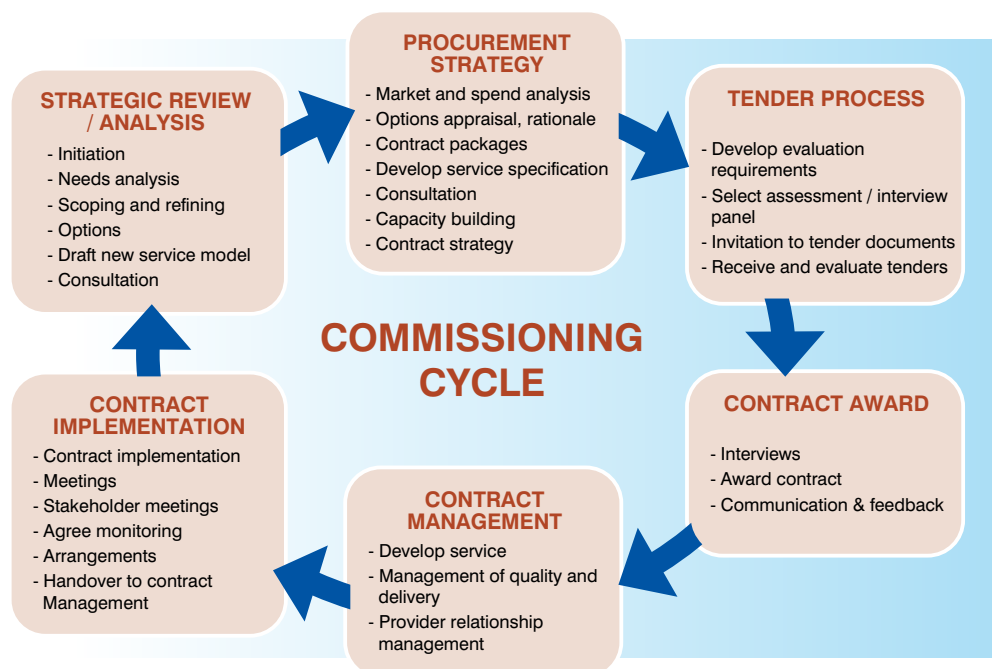
With the introduction of a single access point, an initial assessment, and effective client records, tailored pathways could be identified and supported by all the providers. The collection of data has enabled refinements to improve efficiency and to identify changing patterns of need. Performance is monitored to identify effective operational practice and highlight changing patterns of demand.



By redesigning the provision it brought together a number of separate services to operate collectively. By packaging these services it allowed better co-ordinated delivery and more flexibility in use of resources e.g. a single service using a single assessment and support planning system enables information to travel with the resident therefore retaining an effective and positive relationship with the individual.

Performance by providers is monitored and any under or over performance explored to identify effective operational practice or the root causes of changing patterns of demand. This information is then used to inform future service design and any decision to increase or decrease levels of investment.

The Supporting People commissioning cycle



For more information on the **Supporting People programme in Southampton**, please go to

http://www.southampton.gov.uk/living/adult-are/Help_and_support_for_independent_living/supportingpeople.aspx

or contact - marie.woodhouse@southampton.gov.uk

