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**SUPPORTING PEOPLE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Bill Dixon,  
Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the Supporting People Commissioning Strategy at **Appendix 1**.

**Information and Analysis**

2. The Supporting People programme offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve the quality of their life by providing a stable environment, which enables greater independence. The programme began in April 2003 when the Council and its partners began the management of a budget to deliver high quality and needs focused services to vulnerable people within Darlington. The Council inherited a range of services providing support to people previously funded by a number of other services.
3. In April 2005, the Council set out its priorities for the programme in the 5-year Supporting People Strategy. The strategy aimed to: -
  - Clearly outline what services currently exist for vulnerable people in Darlington.
  - Identify the need for new or additional services.
  - Identify any gaps in provision.
  - Demonstrate how Supporting People is an effective delivery mechanism for key areas of other strategies.
  - Set out a 3-year programme for reviewing support services.
  - Consider the financial implications of the programme in Darlington; and
  - Define Darlington's priorities for the next 5 years.
4. Between April 2003 and March 2006 the Supporting People team undertook a review of all existing services in Darlington. At the end of this review period in April 2006, 'steady state' contracts were issued to existing providers of support services. The review period helped to inform the length of these contracts, including a separate assessment of the 'value for money' of the services offered the Council. Contracts were arranged by client groups to allow for the future review of similar contracts.

## **The purpose of the Commissioning Strategy**

5. Because of the unique way these existing services were inherited onto the Supporting People programme, none had been formally commissioned by the Council (with the exception of some new services commissioned since April 2003). In addition, these services have never been subject to a formal procurement process. Whilst the Supporting People Team have undertaken significant work with service providers, service users and other stakeholders to review and improve services, the provision of Supporting People Services in Darlington has remained relatively unchanged since 2003. It is widely recognised that innovative and progressive services are required to meet the diverse needs of service users.
6. The Darlington Supporting People Commissioning Strategy is intended to give direction in meeting the vision and the priorities of the 5-year Strategy. It will establish the process for deciding the appropriate method of procurement, how any re-tendering exercises will be undertaken and what outcomes are expected.
7. By looking to procure services we can ensure that we are providing the best outcomes for service users in Darlington. We can also expect the quality of services to be driven up as providers realise they are in a competitive environment. This in turn will encourage innovation.
8. The Commissioning Strategy sets out a timetable by which services for each client group will be subject to discussions around future provision. Working groups, involving providers, service users and stakeholders will be established to design service specifications that both encompass the good working practices of existing services and enable us to add new enhancements which could help meet the needs of vulnerable people, as identified in the 5-year strategy.
9. These working groups will consider an ‘options appraisal’ of the various choices available, including opportunities for joint-commissioning with other services, joint commissioning with other Councils, the amalgamation of services and the testing of services in an open tendering environment. Decisions on awarding contracts will be in accordance with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

10. The Supporting People team have consulted with the following organisations over the Commissioning Strategy:
  - All providers of housing related support in Darlington
  - The Racial Equality Council
  - The Council for Voluntary Services (CVS)
  - The North East Council on Addictions (NECA)
  - First Stop

- Growing Older Living in Darlington (GOLD)
- The Probation Service
- The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)
- The Primary Care Trust
- Members of the Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group.

11. Comments and suggestions received have been incorporated into the final draft document. In addition, the strategy has been presented to members of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee and they have given their support.

### **Legal Implications**

12. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

### **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

13. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

14. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

### **Decision Deadline**

15. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

### **Key Decision**

16. This is a key decision because it will result in the local authority making potential savings in the Supporting People funding which can be reinvested to meet identified gaps in current service provision. As more people will be enabled to live independently in the community it will have a significant impact on improving people's lives.

### **Summary**

17. Whilst this strategy sets out a bold and ambitious programme for the commissioning of existing services over the next 3 years, it also provides a unique opportunity for improving services that will meet the diverse needs for the most vulnerable people in Darlington. Our aim is to create a vibrant market with strategically relevant and robust services, which will assist with achieving the priorities established in the 5-year strategy.

## **Recommendation**

18. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Members note the content of this report.
- (b) The Supporting People Commissioning Strategy be approved.

## **Reasons**

19. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) To enable the effective commissioning of housing related support services.
- (b) To help achieve the priorities of the Supporting People 5 year Strategy.

**Cliff Brown**  
**Director of Community Services**

## **Background Papers**

- (i) Darlington Borough Council's Supporting People 5-year strategy
- (ii) Darlington Borough Council's procurement strategy
- (iii) Independence and Opportunity – the national strategy for Supporting People

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