SUPPORTING PEOPLE: SUPPORTING SERVICE CHANGE IN A TIME OF PRESSURE

Sharing lessons for service reconfiguration and decommissioning
Acknowledgements: CIH and LGA would like to thank all the individuals and authorities who contributed to the research for this paper
CIH/ LGA December 2010
Supporting People: supporting service changes in a time of pressure

Sharing lessons for service reconfiguration and decommissioning

Introduction

The £6.5bn investment for the Supporting People (SP) programme over the next spending review period reflects the government’s commitment to protecting vulnerable people. Nevertheless, given the current fiscal position, a number of administering authorities will still have some difficult decisions to make in relation to Supporting People services. This paper has been produced by CIH and LGA and highlights areas of positive practice which will support authorities when making difficult decisions about future service provision.

The range of approaches set out will support authorities in mitigating negative impacts when implementing changes to service provision. We have captured the experiences of a number of authorities who have undertaken or who are advanced in their current planning. We thank all those authorities who were involved in this exercise for taking the time to talk with us.

The paper includes a number of questions that aim to help shape the overall decision making process. These questions are intended to be useful for a range of officers, key stakeholders, partners, but in particular for local elected members in their role as local leaders and decision makers, to inform their debates locally. The guidance and the questions have been developed from the responses, experiences and lessons of the authorities that took part in the survey informing this paper. The questions are brought together at Annex A, and form a separate short paper for councillors available from the websites of CIH and LGA.

Context

The level of SP funding at a national level over the four year period has had only limited reductions, in line with the government's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable in our society. Supporting People has secured investment of £6.5bn over the next four years, which equates to an average annual reduction of less than 3% in cash terms. This reflects the valuable contribution of housing related support to the agendas of other key public sectors including health, care, community safety etc.

Authorities will need to continue to take decisions informed by local need and strategic priorities in relation to housing related support services. They will also
have greater freedom and flexibilities, as a result of Supporting People being paid through formula grant with effect from April 2011.

At a local level, however, we know that many authorities are facing a greater reduction as they look across the range of services to balance savings and local priorities.

**Aim and methodology**
The aim is clearly some very difficult and challenging decisions ahead of many administering authorities in terms of the impact of the overall CSR settlement. The purpose of this paper is to learn from experiences to date. It identifies where service changes have been made strategically, and shares lessons and ideas from those areas to support strategic decision making in the light of the financial constraints in the short and medium term for all administering authorities and their partners.

The methodology for the paper included:
- A survey of 20 administering authorities to shape awareness of the extent of savings / financial reductions being planned
- Identifying where services reconfiguration / decommissioning has already taken place
- Identifying and sharing the tools and strategic planning that authorities have used to inform that
- Identifying gaps in knowledge or tools that could support a more strategic approach locally
- Sharing the lessons collated from other authorities who have made or are shaping significant service reconfiguration

**Structure**
This paper is based on the information from the telephone surveys that were undertaken over a week in November 2010 with 20 authorities. It highlights:
- Information and evidence to underpin decisions - tools used to assess needs, quality etc
- Weighting given to a range of factors in the decision making (quality, value for money, alternative provision etc)
- What changes have already been made, what are being planned and why (as a result of the modelling and strategic approaches)
- Accountability; how service users, providers and elected members are engaged and involved
- Implementation
- Trends
- Issues for future consideration.

**Strategic planning**
Authorities are fully aware of the advantages of taking a strategic approach to savings based on local priorities and needs, and avoiding a blanket cut which is then applied to all services regardless of quality or cost.

Authorities seem to be looking at efficiencies as a ‘whole package’ as part of the corporate agenda. This appears to be one of the reasons why the savings likely to be required for Supporting People locally are higher than that made to the SP programme nationally. It is also why the changes need to be managed, and some degree of modelling of impacts is necessary to understand fully the potential implications for the local area and other public services.

Supporting People has managed to deliver efficiencies year on year since the programme became operational in 2003. Some authorities have done some exceptional work in driving down costs and now suggest that to cut service costs further would lead to real difficulties in some providers continuing to be financially viable. (In one case from the survey, this had been a very drastic reduction which led to some real difficulties for providers, although service users seem largely accepting of the changes. It leaves very little flexibility for future changes without really large impacts.)

Overall, from the authorities we interviewed, the savings to the programme that are being modelled range from 0 to 40%; most expected to revisit and implement only minor modifications following the receipt of the formula grant settlement (which was issued by government on 13th December). However, this was also dependent on the impact of the formula grant distribution and its difference from the previous allocation formula.

To date, no authorities are able to confirm that they could take into account any of the additional monies the CSR committed to adult social care. Even where SP sits in the same directorate, it is generally only in terms of jointly commissioned packages that these discussions are likely to occur, or in small / unitary authorities where partnerships are well developed. Many felt that the demands for social care, and the demographic changes in the longer term, would fully absorb the extra funding, rather than allowing flexibility for housing related support.

Our respondents noted:

- A blanket approach to cuts across the board will destabilise services and is unlikely to achieve value for money or continuing quality of service provision
- Adopting a strategic approach is still vital, as is managing the process as well as possible (although all acknowledged the scale of the cuts would make this very difficult and also the timeframe which the savings had to be made)
• The importance of continuing the detailed work – on strategic priorities (needs and aspirations etc) and scheme reviews to inform decision making
• The value of continuing to build the evidence on value and cost benefit to win arguments internally.

Information and evidence

Needs
Authorities have a range of methods by which they assess needs. The level of use of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) varies, as does the extent to which authorities have contributed to the JSNA, largely because the JSNA process itself needs to mature and expand to encompass housing in many instances. In some areas, regional needs assessment have been produced, whilst in most cases, the evidence and data of statutory partners such as police, probation, health and care is an important source of information, facilitated by networks through local strategic partnerships or other partnership hubs. In most cases therefore, the assessments are fairly strong but gauging unmet need is by definition a difficult process.

Practice example: Kent Needs Assessment
Kent SP team undertakes a regular six-monthly update of their needs assessment and analysis to support strategic planning and commissioning. It involves analysis of a comprehensive range of data sources, to identify not only people who currently need services, but who may do so in the future. It is also supplemented by information captured through strategic reviews, and national, regional and local data and strategies. It has been used by other services to inform their decision making and planning due to its comprehensive nature.

To develop a comprehensive needs assessment, consider:
• The use of existing national, regional and local data sources
• Use of the voluntary and community sector as well as statutory partners to provide information of local people’s needs and aspirations
• Maximising the use of all local mechanisms such as JSNAs, Strategic Housing Market Assessments etc to add to knowledge e.g. SHMA having an additional question on aspirations
• How to account for possible double counting when using different measures in combination.

Priorities and modelling
Many authorities use the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) to assess quality, but other factors are often used in addition to provide an overall picture of the value of the services, to ensure that a sophisticated and detailed local picture
is obtained. In one case study, the authority worked with providers to model what an 'A' level looked like in all the core elements, which enables this to be used as a benchmark for decisions being made about services. Other factors include outcomes and accessibility for service users, basing assessments of quality directly on the effectiveness of the service to meet service users’ needs.

Strategic relevance and meeting agreed priorities is high on the list of influencing decisions. These, plus contract compliance, are frequently key priorities for service reconfiguration or decommissioning, although value for money and cost benefit work is also significant. The weighting given to value for money and cost benefits to be achieved from SP services will however, be even more significant going forward.

The Financial Benefits toolkit for administering authorities is one tool available to support authorities in assessing the benefits from services, and how they provide savings for other, more intensive public services. In the survey, some authorities were clear that it had contributed to a more favourable settlement by demonstrating the value and the potential savings for other services. Regional modelling may also be valuable to give a closer understanding of the cost benefits to other partner services, in terms of savings in staffing etc, where the local economy influences the real returns of SP services. For some longer term services, it may be necessary to investigate / assess the cumulative impacts over a longer timescale.

Having a tool to support assessment of value and the impact on other services is of increasing importance in terms of maintaining a focus on prevention, and in winning arguments to gain local political support for the Supporting People programme.

Practice example: Regional cost benefit analysis in Yorkshire and Humberside
The Yorkshire and Humberside Housing Related Support Group commissioned Sitra to undertake research to investigate the value and cost benefit of housing related support services. It demonstrated the benefits of services in relation to:

- Complementing the strategies and agendas of other stakeholders working with vulnerable groups
- Supporting independence and wellbeing
- Offering value for money by avoiding crisis and institutionally based interventions
- Providing a platform for wider service development.

[Link to report]
To support a strategic and informed approach, it will be valuable to model both the impacts of different decisions, and how services match up to the agreed priorities set by the administering authority. In many cases, the surveyed authorities’ proposed decisions had been arrived at through assessing services against a matrix of these factors, although the weighting for the elements varied, for example; in one approach the cost benefit that could be derived from SP services was weighted 40% in the matrix compared to 20% each for quality, outcomes and performance.

In one case, a traffic light system of assessing the effectiveness of services was used, and statutory partners were also asked to assess the same services with this tool, which revealed a strong degree of consensus that supported decommissioning decisions to date.

Other factors to consider in evaluation include:

- Market awareness; understanding what services and what cost savings it can deliver
- Unit cost (both SP and beyond, measured by national, regional and local benchmarking)
- Geographical location and how it supports access to / effectiveness of the service
- Use of building; is it fit for purpose, is it suitable for other uses, would it be a loss of valuable resource etc
- Impacts; financial for services / individuals, community safety.

Developing a model for decision making requires:

- Robust evidence of needs and population projections
- Evidence of quality and value of services - strategic sector review and scheme specific
- Recognising gaps in knowledge and how to address any shortfall
- Use of other partners’ assessments of services
- Inclusion of risk / impacts of decisions for other services
- Market awareness – understanding what providers can deliver; impacts of decisions for smaller specialist providers etc.
- Needs and aspirations for long term service development
- Modelling and clear decisions on weighting of factors within that – service user needs and political priorities are likely to influence this.

**Alternative solutions to decommissioning**

*Flexibility for service adjustments / cost reductions*

Part of good partnership working is to include providers in ongoing dialogue about how to achieve savings. In some areas providers are working to model alternatives, in others one to one or forum discussions are revealing some creative ideas. For the authorities surveyed strong relationships were particularly evident where there is / has been a strong housing element in the SP team and
where there is a pattern of open, transparent and ongoing discussions between commissioners and providers.

However, requiring ongoing cost reductions from existing services is a particular problem / concern for small providers who have less capacity to keep reducing costs. There is in some areas, a trend to larger and more generic provision with larger providers, which can contribute not only to savings but may also, in terms of reducing bureaucratic burdens, allow for stronger monitoring of quality etc.

- Maintain an open and ongoing dialogue with providers so they are aware of the constraints, priorities and plans of the authority
- Keep on with detailed work with providers to investigate savings, or new ways to achieve outcomes that are more cost effective
- Support providers, particularly small providers, to look at a consortium approach, sharing costs of back office functions etc.

**Service reconfiguration**

The approach taken by one authority was to look at models of service for a particular service area (homelessness), and to focus on one that provided a pathway for services users which would support a quicker ‘move through’ to greater independence. Having developed the model, a tendering process was begun to find the right provider to deliver the service. This included the requirement that the provider take on the whole process including working with service users where some schemes were shut. This approach - model development and tendering - is being used in all service areas, but requires a commitment to developing a strong ‘intelligent client’ approach on the part of the commissioner. This is not an easy or quick option (the whole process taking at least 12-18 months). It has, however, delivered good results to date – with major savings achieved in homelessness provision. The authority is looking to develop other models that are likewise based on maximising the benefits from a mixed / flexible accommodation and floating support model.

**Joint / alternative funding**

An alternative approach to reducing the contract price is to look at the entire level of funding, from all sources, available for certain needs and to invite tenders on the basis of that price, allowing providers to develop different ways of delivering services, where the final decision is made instead upon the quality, accessibility to and outcomes from the proposed service.

Where authorities have clients often with long term conditions where there is a package of support and care jointly funded by SP and Adult Social Care, there is potential for packages to be jointly assessed. This may result in potential reductions, or changes in the level / share of funding or the development, with the service user, of alternative support and care solutions. In one authority these have been reviewed by both partners, with a view to increasing the use of technology (telecare etc.) in the packages and also in terms of ‘assertively
reviewing’ the funding of the package and what it delivers for the client. In these cases they have been able to deliver the same or better outcomes with less funding.

Several authorities have identified areas such as services for people with learning disabilities as areas for improved and more cost effective services, as part of the modernisation of social care agenda, and by supporting increased independence in the community (moving from specialised housing / group homes for example).

Many SP teams sit within Adult Social Care and the commissioning is now incorporated in to the overall ASC commissioning function rather than done by a specialist team. One authority is mainstreaming SP with the funding and the team being integrated into housing, adult social care, and children, families and schools. This tripartite division allows for the retention of some funding for vulnerable people who do not register in terms of care needs, but who can benefit immensely from housing related support.

Some services funded by SP may be able to be integrated more easily into another area of the authority’s work; for example financial inclusion work may sit more effectively within a wider housing options team.

- Map services across authority responsibilities
- Map contracts up for renewal on geographical basis (or individual basis with the personalisation agenda, see below)
- Look at how to work more in partnership across responsibilities when re-commissioning / re-tendering contracts
- Look at what services might ‘fit’ more effectively in different parts of authority
- Where services are transferred, map clients and access / referral routes to ensure that none are lost in the transfer of responsibilities.

**Personalisation**

The level to which personalisation is further driving service development in SP varies. Some authorities are working with providers to develop models that incorporate greater choice and personalisation though a menu of service levels, or through a core level of funding / services, with additional funding reflecting additional outcomes, to provide a degree of certainty and stability for the service whilst increasing its flexibility. One authority has included a small penalty element into the contract as well, to encourage better response on performance and contract management compliance. In many cases these approaches have increased service responsiveness to service users and / or to contract managers.

**Voluntary and community groups**

For most authorities the opportunities for looking at the voluntary and community sector involvement, apart from as providers, is in very early stages. However,
with the government’s emphasis on developing more active and involved citizens, it has clear potential for future development in local areas. One authority is considering the possibility of a social enterprise model for handy person services, and how this might reduce its reliance on public funding. Another is working actively with service users to investigate a community developed scheme, ‘Friends and Neighbours’ which is seeking to help people to maximise the use of their own budgets to access support in different ways, e.g. through a timebank.

- Map what voluntary and community groups and services exist (other than as current SP providers)
- Work with service users to investigate different ways of delivering support
- Look for any correlation between the two, or for groups that have potential to deliver different services
- Investigate different flexible structures that might work (e.g. social enterprise models)
- Investigate how small amounts of funding (directly or through pooled budgets) might support the development of these new services
- Consider how SP commissioning structures might help / hinder different provision and what changes are required
- Look at how to support more direct and personal commissioning by groups of clients.

Practice example: hact’s Up2Us pilots
Six housing associations are piloting ways to work with service users to pool their support and care budgets to maximise their control over the services they want to receive but also to ensure that, by pooling resources, they do not lose the advantages that come from larger contracts in terms of negotiating on better quality and value for money.

Link to more information.

Service user involvement
Most authorities have retained a strong level of service user involvement through service reviews and through a service user forum, but some have gone beyond these mechanisms. Many seek to involve service users in service design; where this has occurred it has significantly influenced the final service for the better. For example; in a floating support service for people with mental health problems where user input led to the inclusion of an out of hours help line.

Others involve service users in procurement panels, and in one authority there is a standing group of 20-30 service users, who regularly input into the discussions about services at all levels, acting ‘as an arm of the SP team’.
Many authorities refer to the input of service users via their providers; however, clearly this does not allow the same level of direct input that has shaped services in other areas for the better, bringing what they consider to be significant value for money. For example; contact via face to face and telephone meetings with service users during one service review confirmed other evidence of the lack of quality and outcomes and led directly to decommissioning in one authority.

A number of authorities choose to involve service users only once strategic decisions have been made; where this is the case, it is important to be clear about the level in which user input can shape services in the future.

There is also the fact that service user involvement will not preclude authorities having to decommission or significantly change services when users do not want this. In these cases, clear and open discussions with service users is necessary to help them through this, for example; in providing essential support via other providers and extending existing contracts. For some sheltered schemes, there are often tenants who do not require or even use some of the support services that are considered integral. Where these services are being changed, there is much evidence to demonstrate that the methods used to involve and help people through that process can make a significant difference to satisfaction with the outcomes.¹

Authorities should consider how to:
- Develop contact directly with service users
- Build on the current mechanisms of service user forums and service reviews to increase involvement
- Look at the decision making processes to increase user involvement and influence at key points – through focus groups to shape service design where reconfiguring for example, or on procurement panels
- Be clear and transparent about what can and cannot be changed by service user involvement and why
- Keep service users aware of the outcomes from their involvement – give feedback.

**Working with providers**
It is very clear that, where authorities have an ongoing, open and transparent dialogue with providers, there is generally a more positive and partnership approach to dealing with service changes. From the survey authorities, this was the case even where one authority had taken the decision to tender all services when contracts expired; at first an unpopular decision. In many cases, changes, cost reductions etc can be achieved most effectively where providers are clearly kept informed, advised of the need for savings and where they are able to develop / shape solutions that meet the need but that also ‘fit’ with the providers’

¹ For more examples of different service models, and for guidance on tenant involvement in sheltered schemes see *More than just a few kind words*, the NHF’s guide to changing support services in sheltered housing, and *Effective Resident Involvement and Consultation in Sheltered Housing* by CHS/TPAS..
business plans. Frequently providers will seek to respond positively and with some very innovative and creative solutions. It is, however, a process through which authorities may need to give additional support to small providers. In some cases, such work is leading to increased amalgamation of services into larger and more generic contracts.

There are also complications to strategic plans where decisions taken by neighbouring authorities, and the impacts of this on providers, affects the providers’ capacity or inclination to continue other services. In one London borough, their strategic decisions were affected by provider decisions to withdraw from SP. Cross authority information sharing, on strategic priorities, as well as on provider relationships can help to mitigate the impacts, at least in terms of awareness. In the instance above, cross authority working had become weaker due to the loss of a specific SP team, absorbed into the main Adult Social Care commissioning unit. This resulted in a loss of cross authority contact and awareness of other decisions and the repercussions it could have.

By comparison, in the NW several authorities are working across boundaries to develop key services, for example for offenders, to ensure they maximise the benefits and share the costs.

- Maintain clear, multiple routes for ongoing discussions with providers (forum, one to one meetings etc) particularly when responsibility for SP is being transferred in the authority
- Be clear and open about the decision making process, and the direction of travel of strategic planning at all times
- Be clear and transparent about what they can and cannot influence and why
- Work in partnership with providers to build awareness of needs and changing aspirations
- Address the challenges and find solutions with providers, encourage their involvement in finding mutually acceptable solutions
- Keep neighbouring authorities aware of strategic priorities, and where services are important but potentially high cost, and for smaller numbers, consider the benefits of jointly commissioning and funding.

**Working with councillors**

In some areas the SP Commissioning Body remains the decision maker, and there is often the involvement of a councillor, predominantly the cabinet member with the relevant portfolio, directly with this. However, in some cases there is a more full and formal process involving councillors. For all authorities, with the challenging financial situation going forward, the framework in which commissioning takes place will be informed by the wider budgetary decisions made by councillors.
The significance of political understanding of, and support for, SP services is critical in going forward. This is evidenced by the authorities surveyed, where there is a positive relationship that has resulted in the delivery new developments such as supported housing for people with complex needs. Where understanding of SP is less robust there are likely to be more difficulties in decision making, and achieving full effectiveness from the programme.

- Officers need to maintain ongoing and open dialogue with councillors
- Robust evidence of the cost and community benefits of SP needs to be developed and shared
- Encourage a wider awareness of the programme (beyond the portfolio holder), particularly with councillors who have schemes in their wards, or where schemes might be developed

**Implementation**

In many cases only limited decommissioning has taken place and therefore the experience of implementation is relatively limited, from the authorities surveyed. In many cases it is largely an issue of addressing scheme by scheme with the provider how changes are to be made and how service users will be supported through the process. In some areas, where services have been decommissioned, other service contracts have been extended to take up the most critical support needs for individuals from schemes. The expansion of floating support into larger and more generic services has been another route through which support is maintained to some service users on the ending of the original SP service. There is generally a heavy reliance on providers to manage the process; in one instance the tendering contract includes the expectation that the successful provider will manage not only the new service but the winding down of the previous service as well.

Some authorities, in expectation of financial restrictions to come, have given notice on all schemes, in order to be able to respond flexibly to the circumstances following the CSR and settlement. In these cases, providers are expected to manage the discussions with service users. This is an area where, as more changes are necessary, there will be increasing pressure on authorities and provider partners alike in how they handle discussions and decommissioning sensitively, and in most areas, there is currently limited experience.

**Trends**

Authorities will have already addressed many of the key service areas in previous rounds of efficiencies and savings. As such, most will also have identified areas where there is still the potential to make strategic changes which will have less negative impact than other areas. From the authorities surveyed it is clear that there was a large range of service areas that had been addressed to date. In many cases the next round of savings would mean tackling services which had already, to a large extent, had any excess removed, and that had
strategic relevance. Where there were some common themes from past or future planned action, these included:

- Having to consider older people’s services / sheltered, although the difficulty (tenancy rights) and political sensitivities of this were acknowledged. The experience of one authority was to take a very localised approach allowing for close discussion and engagement with service users rather than a ‘big bang’ approach
- Floating support – many had looked at incorporating services into larger, generic contracts, balancing the advantages for ease of management, cost reductions etc against loss of specific expertise
- Many were now looking at an increasing focus on short term services, and being more focused on moving to greater independence, linking it more directly to education, employment and training opportunities
- Reducing number of contracts (and often providers), widening remit of contracts, reducing bureaucracy, contract management, and easing access / pathway for service user. This is also happening when contracts are up for review and renewal, with some being subsumed into existing services.

Issues for future consideration
There are significant areas of policy outwith SP that respondents raised as having potentially significant impacts on SP. Authorities need therefore to consider how, corporately in the new localism agenda, they respond to some key areas including:

- HB / shared rent changes – in particular respondents reported potential implications for move–on.
- Changes to social housing and flexible tenure / intermediate rents – again particularly in relation to move-on services.
- Changes to PCTs and health commissioning. Respondents suggested that, where a GP consortium was co-terminus with the authority, there may be better links. This may be an area where SP teams could provide support or even take up service commissioning for GPs, particularly around multiple disadvantage, mental health, substance misuse etc. These are areas where GPs may feel they lack expertise, and the provision of teams with this could ensure continuity of services and minimize potential expensive and harmful impacts (from loss of services or poor services) for individuals, communities and the public sector.

Conclusion
The importance of seeking to maintain a strategic and managed approach, even with the pressures both in resources and time constraints, is critical. Knowing the local area, the future projections of needs, and the aspirations of local people will be vital for local authorities in its leadership role in this and many other service areas. Finding ways to evaluate the impacts of decision making, and to win arguments within authorities and with partners, will be needed, to maintain investment in SP services which are vital contributors to health, wellbeing,
community safety and prevention of intensive interventions. This paper provides some ideas and shares lessons learnt to support that, but more is likely to be necessary as the CSR period progresses. CIH and LGA are keen to continue to support authorities and providers alike to continue to develop services that support individuals and communities. We welcome ongoing comment from professionals in the sector to shape the support we can give, and will continue to work together and with other key partners such as Sitra and the NHF to do this.
Annex A Supporting People: supporting service changes in a time of pressure.

Questions to ask

This section is intended to provide councillors with a framework of useful questions for discussion with SP lead officers, in order to ensure that:

- A planned and strategic approach is being taken to service reconfiguration and decommissioning, within the wider corporate financial framework
- Councillors are fully aware of the underpinning principles and the outcomes of the decision making process
- The impacts for other public services and for local communities are understood and communicated appropriately

These questions are also intended to provide guidance for officers implementing service configuration/ decommissioning.

A strategic approach

Avoiding a blanket approach which could jeopardise valuable and strategically necessary services will be important to maintain successful communities and maximise benefits for individuals, as well as, in the long term, reducing the call on public services.

- Are we maintaining a strategic approach? Are we looking at how we manage changes across the full Comprehensive Spending Review period?
- Are we looking first at less effective and efficient services, so as to allow more time to explore alternative funding opportunities for more effective and efficient services?
- Are we still maintaining the detailed work – on strategic priorities (needs and aspirations etc) and scheme reviews to inform decision making?
- Are we continuing to build the evidence on value and cost benefit to win arguments internally and with partners?
- Are we taking an approach that will minimize the potential to destabilise services and risk not achieving value for money or quality?
- How does the approach we are taking reflect our strategic priorities?
- What evidence is available (nationally, regionally and locally) on cost benefits, value for money, benchmarking quality and outcomes for services and people?
- How are we factoring this into our strategy and action planning?

Needs assessments

It will be important to have robust and up to date information and future projections to inform service planning in the long term, to direct investment.
• How comprehensive / up to date is our needs assessment and how can we fill the gaps within the time constraints?
• How well are we working with the voluntary and community sector and statutory partners to provide information on local needs and aspirations?
• Are we using all available local mechanisms such as JSNAs, Strategic Housing Market Assessments etc. to add to knowledge e.g. SHMA having an additional question on aspirations?
• If we are using many secondary sources, how are we ensuring robustness for example; are we taking account for possible double counting when using different assessment measures in combination?

**Priority factors**
- What are our priorities for decision making?
- In what areas do we have further scope for savings?
- What areas would be at serious risk if we required further savings to be made?

**Models for decision making**
*Having clear and open criteria against which decisions are made will support discussions with providers and service users*
- What model do we have to evaluate / weigh these priorities in making decisions? Developing a model for decision making requires:
  - Robust evidence of needs and population projections
  - Evidence of quality and value of services - strategic sector review and scheme specific
  - Recognising gaps in knowledge and how to address the shortfall
  - Use of other partners’ assessments of services
  - Inclusion of risk / impacts of decisions for other services
  - Market awareness – understanding what providers can deliver; impacts of decisions for smaller specialist providers
  - Needs and aspirations for long term service development
  - Clear decisions on weighting of factors within that – service user needs and political priorities are likely to influence this
  - Modelling the impacts of different possible solutions

**Alternative solutions**
- What alternatives to decommissioning have we considered?
- Have we looked at making all possible savings in current contracts been made? E.g. hourly rates / additional levels of efficiencies from providers.
- Can we reconfigure services to offer them in a different way?
- Are there other routes to provide similar services in different (out with SP)? E.g. through housing options?
- Are there other funding streams we can access and are there joint funding possibilities?
• Can we achieve savings through internal efficiencies (reducing costs of administering the programme / back room costs)?
• Has personalisation and / or payment by results been considered? Will these routes provide efficiencies? Will the change of approach bring additional costs (short, medium, long term)?

• Are there new models of providers, or possibilities from working with voluntary and community groups? For example cooperative or mutual models, or more flexible volunteering based schemes)

Service users
• How have we involved service users in the decision making process?
  Have we considered:
  o Building on the current mechanisms of service user forums and service reviews to increase involvement
  o Looking at decision making processes to increase user involvement and influence at key points – though focus groups to shape service design where reconfiguring for example, or on procurement panels
  o Being clear and transparent about what can and cannot be changed by service user involvement and why
  o Keeping service users aware of the outcomes from their involvement – giving feedback

Provider involvement
• How are we working with providers? Are we:
  o Maintaining clear, multiple routes for ongoing discussions with providers (forum, one to one meetings etc)?
  o Being clear and open about the decision making process, and the direction of travel of strategic planning at all times?
  o Being clear and transparent about what they can and cannot influence and why?
  o Working in partnership with providers to build awareness of needs and changing aspirations?
  o Addressing the challenges and finding solutions with providers, encourage their involvement in finding mutually acceptable solutions?
  o Supporting providers, particularly small providers, to look at a consortium approach, sharing costs of back office functions etc.?
  o Looking at how they might diversify in to different areas of Supported Housing or wider if they wish to remain in the market?

Implementation
• How are we implementing changes and giving feedback to all involved – including service users?
• How are we incorporated the lessons into future strategies and action plans?

Other impacts
Considering the long term factors that may also be significant in the future to encourage a long term and strategic approach to service development
• What other policy changes are likely to impact on SP services and their effectiveness, and how are we planning for them? These include:
  o Housing benefit changes, and proposed changes to social housing tenures, with implications for move on from supported housing
  o Changes in health commissioning, requiring new relationships with GPs
  o How can we / partner authorities corporately / across boundaries, plan for and mitigate the negative impacts of these challenges?