

Constructing Communities: Challenging Social Exclu

The Communities Plan – The Patrick Henson Test Shaks Ghosh, Crisis

The Government needs to think carefully about our service users in implementing the Communities Plan. I believe that in order to make the Communities Plan work we must use the 'Patrick Henson Test'.

Patrick uses the Crisis Skylight centre in London. He currently lives on the street having been evicted from the last hostel he was staying at. He is aged between 50- 55 and left the armed forces around twenty years ago with a drink problem. Since then he has had 12 tenancies/ licences and I am not including the many hostels he has stayed in. Patrick has had support to keep some of these tenancies but he hasn't been able to sustain them. He has bouts of serious depression and when he is in one of these depressions he tends to behave in such a way that he loses everything. Patrick wants to live in a community that can accept him as he is with both the good and the bad times. He needs a combination of support and space. Keeping Patrick in mind will ensure that the Communities Plan works for all.

So what's in the Plan for Patrick?

- **200,000 new homes** – This is a crucial point and will one of these homes house Patrick?
- **Shopping centres, transport, health centres** – 1950s projects had all of these facilities and yet this failed to ensure healthy, working communities. On the contrary we have spent the last twenty years overhauling these estates. Have we learned our lessons from these failures? Will these facilities be accessible for Patrick?
 - Good design
- **Performance of the Planning system** – This system needs reform but that reform needs real political will and this isn't evident.
- **No mention of supported housing** - This is a vital element of communities, there will always be members of the community who require support and if this isn't planned in now our service users will be more excluded from the community. There isn't any clarity on provision for single people in the plan.
- **Debate of Supporting People** – Unless the sector can rely on revenue funding how will we ensure the right accommodation is available for those that require support? Therefore capital spend will be focused on building accommodation without support.

My vision is for a community to be full of happy, busy people and not a social housing project! In order to meet the needs of key workers, homeless people and poor neighbourhoods it should comprise of the following elements:

- More housing – but also community development
- Homeless people and workers living in integrated accommodation and housing schemes in order to maximise the homeless getting engaged with working environment and culture
- Integrated services e.g. detox and mental health
- Activities, training and work available in these communities

There needs to be more discussion about what is meant by the term 'community' which isn't just about physical infrastructure as this has been shown to fail in the past. Therefore I conclude with 5 tips for John Prescott:

1. Engage with the most vulnerable
2. Individually tailored support services
3. Tackling daytime homelessness
4. Integrated, tolerant, compassionate communities
5. An Urban Village in every town centre



Supporting People: Value for Money Nigel Rogers, Sitra

ODPM have published guidance in assessing Value for Money (VFM) in service reviews, together with an extensive series of technical appendices containing histograms which highlight existing Supporting People (SP) costs. On first encounter, the sheer volume of information can seem a little daunting and there is something about a graph which seems incredibly objective and scientific. Providers with schemes that seem to be expensive might be concerned that this was a framework for cutting them.

The technical appendices basically summarise the SP funding by each client group by accommodation/service type, for each of the nine English regions and nationally. For each of these categories there is a histogram, a graph/chart which brackets the number of services in a series of price bands and also an overview table which identifies the number of services/accommodation type for each client group.

The basis for making cost comparisons is on weekly funding per head, which for block funded services is based on capacity rather than service users present. Sensibly the ODPM has only chosen to graph data on SP funding where there are more than 20 services in a category. Summarising any less than this would not provide a large enough sample for meaningful interpretation.

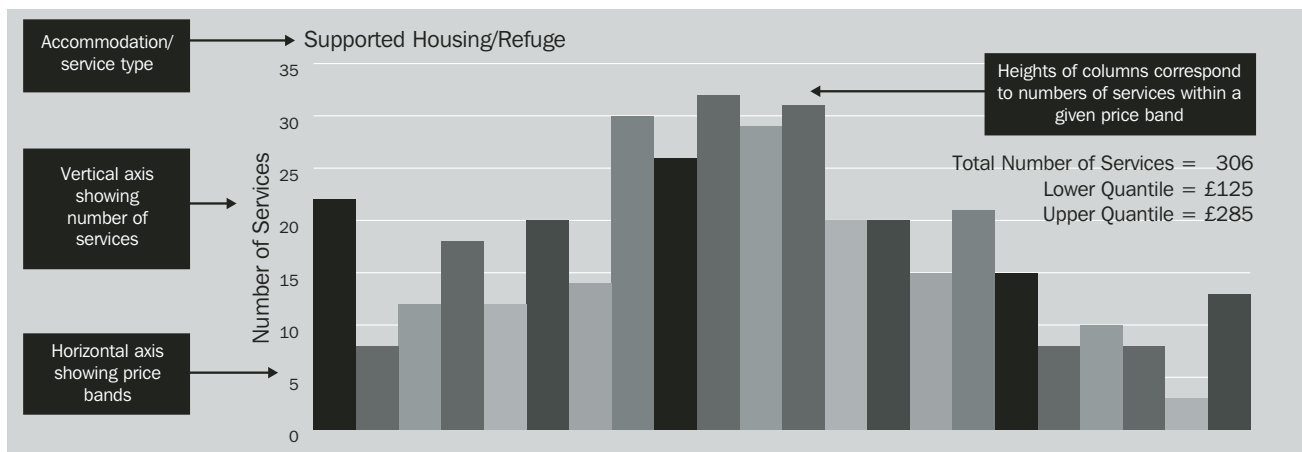
The idea is that Administering Authorities (AAs) will be able to compare individual services with the summarised data, in the form of histograms, from their local region. If the service being reviewed is a shared house for people with mental health needs located in Bristol, then supposedly the weekly SP funding per head should be compared with the histogram in the south west section for people with mental health needs living in supported housing. If the price of a service is found to be well above the upper quartile (top 25%) or well below the lower quartile (bottom 25%) value, then the guidance suggests that AAs concentrate on these services. Whereas services whose funding levels lie between the two quartiles do not need to be investigated further, provided other aspects of the service are acceptable (e.g. quality, performance).

**VHG 1st Floor 36 St. Giles Street Norwich NR2 1LL
tel: 01603 617299 fax: 01603 621521**

Email emma@vhg-east.org Web <http://www.vhg-east.org>

tion in the Eastern Counties

The graphs



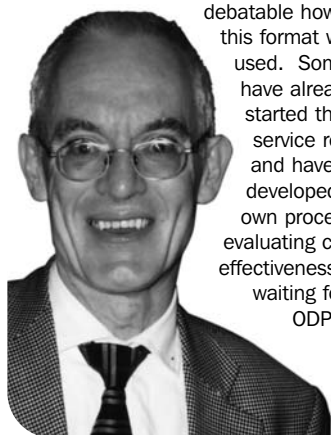
Most of the histograms are similar to the one above. Generally they have a peak either near the middle or towards one end. This shows the price bands in which most services lie.

The numbers on the horizontal axis refer to the UPPER limit of each price band. So the chart below shows that there are 21 services receiving funding of up to £20.00 per head per week. Similarly, it can be seen that there are 32 services receiving funding of between £180 and £200 per week.

The idea is that each service under review is compared to the broad spread of costs for this type of service to see if it is unusually expensive or unusually cheap.

Like any statistics this information should be interpreted with caution. Although they have tried to group services that are similar, there has been no adjustment made for the location of the service, the number of support hours provided, the level of support provided, the outcomes achieved or whether the service is receiving other funding. For this reason the guidance has urged that services that fall in outer ranges of the data can only be said to be apparently high/low cost.

However with so many factors causing possible differences it is debatable how widely this format will be used. Some AAs have already started their initial service reviews and have developed their own process for evaluating cost-effectiveness while waiting for the ODPM's long promised



guidance. Others may take some convincing that a regional summary of funding data can be directly compared with what is happening in their own area. There may not only be significant differences in funding patterns between regions, as the guidance suggests, but also within them.

A messy legacy

In considering all this it is important to be frank: there is no reason to believe that the hugely complicated and messy transfer of support funding from THB to SP was done in a consistent way. So it is inevitable that all sorts of anomalies will exist in the current range of funding. This can be illustrated by looking at the national cost picture for supported housing for two different client groups; learning difficulties and single homeless.

It is very hard to argue that one service should be funded at 30p per unit per week and another at over £9000 without some sort of financial assessment. The problem is, of course, for all their look of objectivity, the graphs are not actually comparing like with like.

More subtle guidance

It is a relief, then, to turn to the written guidance and get a much more subtle explanation of VFM. Three key points from the summary can usefully be highlighted:-

- Value for money is a relative concept and so can only be judged by means of comparisons between services
- Comparisons can be complex and it is important to ensure that they are made on a reasonably like-for-like basis, recognising that no two services are identical
- By comparing unit costs of broadly similar services against staff: service user ratios many services could be reasonably meaningfully compared. Data currently available is not sufficient and does not facilitate robust comparisons of this type

In short, these graphs don't actually tell SP teams what they are paying for in terms of either inputs (staff; service user ratios), or outcomes. So the advice is for SP teams to concentrate on critically assessing the expensive or very cheap schemes, whilst building up a database of costs which can be compared against staff tenant ratios. This is going to take a long time, but, without it, scope for truly comparative VFM measures is limited.

Subsidy?

The guidance recognises that different schemes have different balances of funding. Many still receive support funding from places other than the SP pot so their cost to SP will seem disproportionately cheap.

Unfortunately, this part of the guidance doesn't go into the very different situation that now pertains in terms of rental income. Rent restructuring in the social housing sector is no longer a question of whether housing subsidises support or vice versa it is a question of social landlords increasingly having to accept a given price for their housing, and budget, or pool budgets, accordingly.

Provider response

Providers of SP services should identify where their service fits in terms of these histograms. If your level of funding appears to be well above the above quartile or well below the lower quartile, then you may have to give good reasons why this is the case. Remember to consider the factors that haven't been taken account of in the analysis (such as staffing levels), as possible reasons for the difference. It may be up to you to justify that your service is value for money.

RESOURCES:

Homelessness

www.crisis.org.uk Crisis is the national charity for solitary homeless people. Crisis work year-round to help vulnerable and marginalised people get through the crisis of homelessness, fulfil their potential and transform their lives.

www.homelesspages.org.uk Produced by the Resource Information Service – this website is a searchable database of information, training and resources to do with homelessness. It is extremely easy to navigate and highly recommended for those working in the homelessness field.

www.shelter.org.uk Shelter is a national organisation with local solutions working to improve the lives of homeless and badly housed people. We provide free, professional and independent advice to over 100,000 people each year throughout England and Scotland.

www.odpm.gov.uk The ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) website houses Government briefings, policy and information on Homelessness, Housing, Sustainable Communities and the Social Exclusion Unit.

VHG Managing Inclusion Briefing 02 – The Homelessness Act 2002: Available in the resources section of our website and hard copies are available free to VHG members.

VHG Directory of Homelessness Services in Norfolk – Priced £18 voluntary sector and £22 statutory sector. Both prices include postage and packaging.

VHG Training Courses in 2004 relating specifically to Homelessness

To book or to find out more please contact Kerry Giles, VHG Training Administrator, on 01603 617299 or email kerry@vhg-east.org

17th February 2004 Domestic violence – Ali Hall

16th June 2004 Housing and Homelessness Law – An Introduction – Carolyn Howell

3rd November 2004 Assertive Outreach – Anne McCrudden

Supporting People

www.sitra.org - SITRA is the national umbrella organisation for providers of Supported Accommodation. They publish a regular 'Bulletin' and training programme which is intended to help providers keep abreast of policy and guidance. All documents are very easy to read and an extremely useful resource with a national focus.

www.spkweb.org.uk – This website is the ODPM established resource base for Administering Authorities and providers. It is not particularly easy to navigate but there is a lot of useful information and guidance which is published on this site.

VHG Training Courses in 2004 relating specifically to Supporting People:

To book or to find out more please contact Kerry Giles, VHG Training Administrator, on 01603 617299 or email kerry@vhg-east.org

4th February 2004

Good Practice in Support Planning – Althea Howarth

10th March 2004

Floating Support – Christopher Wood

31st March 2004

Successful Keyworking – Clare Pastorius

12th May 2004

Involving Service Users – Graham Gardiner

**VHG 1st Floor 36 St. Giles Street
Norwich NR2 1LL
tel: 01603 617299 fax: 01603 621521
Email: emma@vhg-east.org
Web <http://www.vhg-east.org>**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

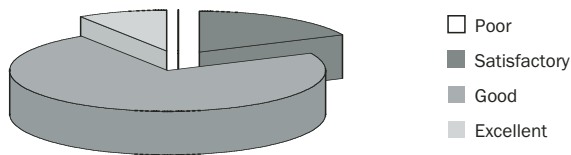
Charity Reg No. 1063142

Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3384777

Conference Evaluation

We have included these photographs and satisfaction graphs in order to provide feedback on what delegates and speakers thought of our 2003 conference. VHG feel that we improved on last year's good performance by listening to the feedback that delegates provided us with and hope to continue to build on this next year.

How do you rate the event overall ?



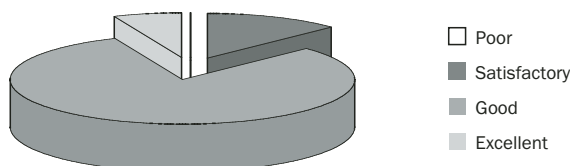
Althea Howarth, ERoSH. Hilary Mansfield, EofE Regional Assembly. Carolyn Howell, Shelter Norfolk.

How useful will the event content be to your work ?



Mick Sanders & Jon Cowdell, Housing Corporation.

What did you think of the Plenary Session ?



**DATE FOR YOUR DIARY –
18th & 19th November 2004 –
VHG's third regional conference
Venue – The Peterborough Cresset**

Constructing Communities: Challenging Social Exclusion in the Eastern Counties

The Constructing Communities conference was VHG's second annual regional conference and pulled together national and regional experts as speakers and workshop facilitators. It was held at the Cresset Centre in Peterborough. Over 100 delegates attended this event. In this briefing we cannot provide a summary of all of the plenary sessions and have focused on the following plenary sessions:

Terrie Alafat, The Homelessness Directorate 'Challenging Social Exclusion in the Eastern Counties'

Shaks Ghosh, Crisis 'The Communities Plan – The Patrick Henson Test'

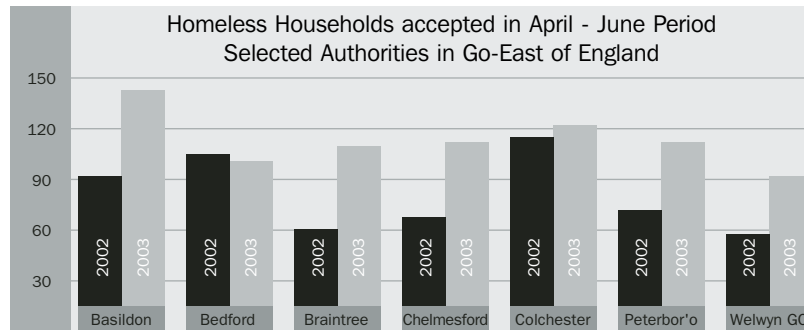
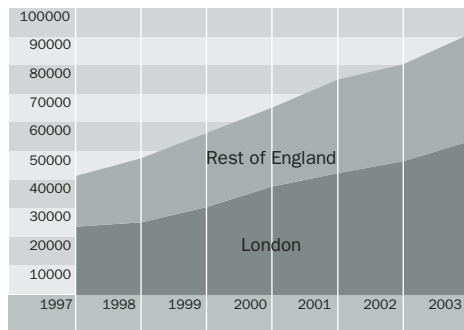
Nigel Rogers, SITRA 'Supporting People – Value for Money'

We have also included feedback and an evaluation of the event on the last page with a list of useful resources and further reading.

Challenging Social Exclusion in the Eastern Counties

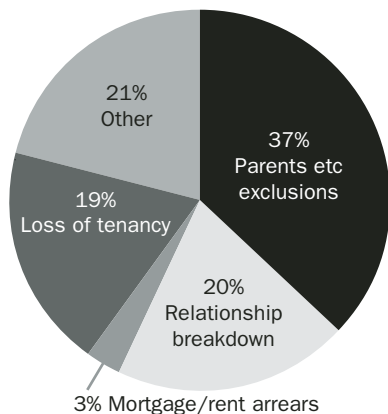
Terrie Alafat, The Homelessness Directorate

To provide some background for the regional picture it is important to note that homelessness acceptances nationally have doubled since 1979 although they are now decreasing overall since a peak in 1990 of over 140 000. In 2003 there were over 90 000 households in temporary accommodation with over 50 000 of these households based in the London area.



The graph above shows that between 2002 – 2003 some authorities in the Eastern Counties have seen their acceptances of homeless households double. In order to tackle this rise in a sustainable way the Homelessness Directorate assert that Local Authorities must look at the reasons these households became homeless. The national statistics show the following reasons.

The Government has laid out the following homelessness policy in order to reduce pressure on the 'safety-net' of homelessness agencies and the unacceptably high reliance



on unsuitable temporary accommodation:

- Set out agenda in 'More than a Roof' March 2002
- Introduced new legislation 'The Homelessness Act 2002' and Priority Need Order
- Targeted action to sustain reductions in rough sleeping and to end the use of B&B hotels for homeless families with children
- Significant funding for every local authority

Delivering the targets in the region

Local Authorities have to build on the progress that has been made so far. They have developed Homelessness Strategies, maintain and build on the two thirds reduction in rough sleeping, continue to strive to meet the Bed & Breakfast targets and highlight positive outcomes.

Local Authorities & the voluntary sector

- Strategic, partnership approach to addressing homelessness - Local authorities and the voluntary sector must continue to work together on the delivery of their Homelessness Strategies and action plans. It is important to maintain momentum in this process.
- Consideration of regional/ sub-regional

issues – Information on the local and regional reasons for homelessness and pressures on services is crucial in delivering successful strategies.

- Shift from processing to early intervention – A culture change is required in local authority homelessness teams. The focus needs to be on prevention rather than the processing of applications for homelessness. Successful Local Authorities have shifted the emphasis of their teams (sometimes called 'Housing Options' teams) so that they have less Homelessness Officers and more Officers who perform advice, home visits etc
- Spend to save – This means that local authorities should spend some of their budgets for temporary accommodation (i.e. B&B use) towards other preventative measures (examples include – budgets for front line staff to use at their discretion of £500 - £800 per household to prevent homelessness or provide a more structured move or, provide a mediation service to prevent relationship breakdown or 'family chuckouts')
- Listening to homeless people – It is crucial to ensure that the services provided are accessible and prevent exclusion as far as possible.