

NOTE OF A MEETING HELD WITH CHAIRS OF RIGs AT ELAND HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2009

Attendees:

Shehla Husain (SH)	CLG (Chair)
Carol Bailey (CB)	CLG
Amy Campbell (AC)	CLG
Eileen McMullan (EM)	CLG
Gemma Penn (GP)	CLG
Rob John (RJ)	CLG
Andrea Cannon (AC)	Surrey / South East
Greg Roberts (GR)	Westminster
Paul McKeown (PM)	Yorkshire and Humberside
Jackie Phillips (JP)	LB Havering
Ian Ramshaw (IR)	Stockton / North East
Max Sillars (MS)	Devon
Glyn Meacher (GM)	North West
Hari Pillai (HP)	West London
Adam Newman-Pring (AN)	South East London

Welcome and introductions

1. Shehla Husain (SH) outlined the scope of the meeting which was to discuss:

- Government response to the SP Select Committee Report
- Supporting People Transition package, including feedback from the first meeting of the SP Transition Board

Following suggestions for the agenda from members, SH explained that the following agenda items would also be discussed.

- SP Distribution Formula
- relationship between SP and the recently established TSA
- Personalisation and SP
- National Indicators

2. SH explained that the Government's Pre-Budget Report was due to be published on 9 December and that central and local government would be expected to operate in a continuingly tight financial climate. £1.63 bn has already been announced as the indicative allowance for SP for 2010-11, but the allocation for the period after this will only emerge through work on the next spending review. This will involve CLG putting a bid to HMT in the same way that other Government Departments will do for their own programmes. Concern was expressed that cuts in grant will result in cuts in services and that quality of service provided will also suffer. PM commented that those

sitting on LSP Boards need to be made aware of the potential impact on services of cuts in SP grant.

3. SH said that the Government was acutely aware of the concerns expressed by the RIGs Chairs and added that CLG had commissioned further work to demonstrate the potential impact of cuts on SP services which formed part of the Department's Public Value Programme work for HMT.

Select Committee Report

4. CB explained that the Government was working to a very tight timetable to respond to the Select Committee. The Report had been received on 3 November and the response was due by 18 January. CLG felt the tone of the SC Report was positive overall and CLG were currently looking at the detailed recommendations. In developing the Government response, CLG will also consider the recommendations from the Audit Commission report. One submission had already been put to Lord McKenzie (the SP Minister) and copied to John Denham. This led to an early discussion with the Minister and a further detailed submission will be put to Lord McKenzie by 4 December. The final version of the Government response will need to be agreed by early January to allow sufficient time for printing and submitting to the SC by 18 January.

5. GR asked whether sheltered housing would remain within the SP regime (SC recommendation 20). CB said that, at this stage, this could not be ruled in or out, although CLG's initial thought was that this was probably not an issue for the Ministerial Sheltered Housing Working Group (as suggested by the SC), but rather as something to be looked at across relevant Government Departments. CB also expressed doubt about the suitability of putting sheltered housing back into a benefit system. PM thought that the SC had used the wrong language in some parts of their Report by referring to housing for older people rather than sheltered housing and this should be clarified.

6. There was a discussion about whether the Government intended to extend the Individual Budget pilots (SC recommendation 4). CB said the response was likely to say that extending the pilots would not be feasible but that CLG had convened a working group to look at the lessons learned from the pilots and look at "wrap around services" which could incorporate SP. CB also informed the group that CLG/SP is represented on the inter departmental working group taking forward the personalisation and choice agenda.

7. The SC recommended that the QAF and the Outcomes Framework should be mandatory for all local authorities unless and until they can demonstrate that they are achieving a high level of involvement, communication and consultation with service users, and a commensurately high level of client satisfaction (recommendation 2). They also recommended that the QAF should be retained to ensure quality considerations are always made when commissioning services and to protect against any potential loss of dedicated SP commissioning and procurement teams (recommendation 5).

8. AC questioned how the QAF and Outcomes Framework could be made mandatory given that SP does not have a statutory basis. CB said that this could be achieved by attaching grant conditions to the ABG but is unlikely to happen, although how these would be enforced was queried by GR. JP commented that, despite valuing the QAF, it is time-consuming and she feared that validating the QAF would become a luxury in the future.

9. IR mentioned that QAF was an integral part of the cost benefit analysis work being carried out by the local REIP and he would be happy to share this with the group. He added that his social care colleagues in the North East have been looking for a way forward and that they would want to go through the QAF for social care. He felt that SP in the North East were in a position to take the whip hand in contract negotiations and that, through sharing knowledge and experience and passporting, the administrative burden might not be too onerous. **Action: IR to share information with members of RIGs Chairs meeting.**

10. MS suggested that these SC recommendations might provide the opportunity to introduce the idea of “quality frameworks”, rather than sticking rigidly to the QAF and the Outcomes Framework. This would ensure the retention of an outcomes framework. These could be agreed as joint ventures within authorities rather than creating a division between SP staff on the one hand and health and social care staff on the other by insisting on sticking to “SP language”. SH agreed that such an approach could encourage a move away from the current silo arrangement, while recognising the burden on smaller authorities having to complete QAFs. EM mentioned that some work was already being done on joint contract in the East of England.

11. JP felt there was also an opportunity to underline that the skills learned from SP could be used more widely in other Government contexts. SH agreed that there was a responsibility on Whitehall Departments to work together more effectively in the future. She also encouraged attendees to send any further thoughts that occurred to them on the Select Committee report to CB.

Transition package

12. SH ran through some of the main points discussed at the last SP Transition Board meeting on 27 October. These included agreement on the need for good governance and smarter commissioning; local connections and LSP; the need for engagement with London Councils and the LGA; and the effectiveness of equality impact assessments for SP services. The Audit Commission had also undertaken work on the Budget Reduction Risk Tool (BRRT) and members of the SP Transition Board were keen to look at developing a tool that would help local authorities manage the risks of budget reductions.

13. The SP Transition Board had agreed to take forward a number of workstreams:

- 1) To consider as part of transition package the possibility of local and sub-regional events, particularly targeting areas which haven't engaged so far (e.g. have not yet used the financial benefits tool).
- 2) A sub group to be convened to develop the BRRT model for use at the local level.
- 3) Roundtable events – early in the new year – to focus on Select Committee recommendations in developing response.
- 4) Outcomes data to be made more accessible - CLG already working with St Andrews on this.
- 5) CLG to discuss with DH colleagues work that needs to be taken forward on the JSNA.
- 6) Cross Government work on better commissioning – need to make the connections including with IDeA and Third Sector.
- 7) To look at what broader personalisation might mean in delivering housing support and develop toolkit/good practice guide.

14. SH agreed to circulate to the RIGs Chairs the note of the first SP Transition Board meeting. **Action: CLG to circulate note of the first SP Transition Board meeting.** SH also invited comments on whether any further workstreams should be added.

15. PM commented that the seven workstreams identified do not cover the most excluded groups, although SH pointed out that SITRA and NOMS were both represented on the Transition Board. PM also suggested it would be helpful to have clarity about what we mean by representatives of the Third Sector; an exercise to identify which Third Sector organisations provide housing related support would be useful in this respect. CB said that SITRA were already doing some work with CLG on this. She added that this could be linked to the idea of having more regional and sub-regional events which would provide the opportunity to raise awareness. **Action: CLG to continue working with SITRA on what is meant by the Third Sector.**

16. MS suggested that CLG should add quality measures and monitoring to the workstreams, perhaps to the outcomes workstream. JP raised concerns about SP teams disappearing and questioned whether there was any way of monitoring this through CAA. SH commented that the disappearance of teams may not tell the whole picture if the experience from the SP teams was retained and used within the authority, albeit in a different team. JP was concerned about the impact of SP teams simply being subsumed within local authorities' wider procurement teams.

17. MS suggested that Ministers' attention could be drawn to the benefits of SP through case histories of best practice of integrated health / housing /

social care / SP team working. An example from Devon could be to show how jointly skills and expertise were pooled to save the best elements of their experience to deliver a contract monitoring framework for contracts generally, as opposed to just SP contracts. AC also suggested making links to the World Class Commissioning. PM agreed with the positive approach and said that in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region, their approach was to stop being apologetic about SP and instead stressing its benefits and seeking more money through the LSP. IR also agreed that SP should be presented in a positive way, both as a preventative measure and as a low to moderate support service.

SP Distribution Formula

18. IR raised concerns about the allocation for Stockton and asked whether the existing arrangements would change for future years' allocations. JP asked whether, if the total grant were to be reduced, there would be proportionate reductions in each local authority area. GR commented that the unequal distribution of grant through the Distribution Formula was something that the Audit Commission should have addressed. This view was shared by IR who questioned why poor local authority inspections had not resulted in some authorities having grant taken away. PM raised the issue of the relative lobbying powers of large urban areas compared with smaller authorities, and also those of the RSLs compared with the charitable sector. In response to this last point, AC commented that there are losers in the South East under the Formula and this demonstrated that the issue was not a clear case of larger areas benefiting at the expense of smaller areas.

19. CB said that CLG would consider the SC's recommendation on the Distribution Formula and that any decisions about changing the existing arrangements would form part of the discussions on the next spending review. SH added that CLG would be looking at the recommendation of the Civis report and agreed that there was more work to be done on the Distribution Formula to take forward some of the recommendations of the Civis report, including deciding whether further work should be commissioned. **Action: CLG to consider what further action should be taken on the issue of the Distribution Formula.**

TSA / SP

20. The meeting raised the issue of the relationship between SP and the TSA. MS said there was an area of uncertainty between the Housing Inspectorate responsibilities and Social Care responsibilities and he was concerned that residents of sheltered housing could be used as pawns. This highlighted the need for clarity about who was responsible for what JP suggested that the sharing of information and possibly passporting might help.

21. EM explained that she and Gemma had met Heather Lockwood to discuss potential areas of overlap between QAF and new TSA regulatory standards. Discussed Safeguarding vulnerable tenants, complaints and potential overlaps/conflicts in grey areas between TSA regulation and housing

support. Difficulties centre around the future role of the QAF but agreed that on the value of information sharing about the QAF and inspections in social housing at local level. Need to bear in mind that not all SP services are in the social housing sector. EM said that CLG will continue to discuss and share information with the TSA.

22. GP said that the Chartered Institute of Housing was developing a complaints route map for residents of sheltered housing setting out the respective remits of the different ombudsmen. This would also clarify the boundaries with the TSA. The project is part of the wider work of the ministerial working group on sheltered housing and should be published at the end of January 2010. SH suggested that one way of clarifying respective roles would be to ensure that TSA and the HCA are represented on the SP Transition Board. **Action: CLG to ensure TSA and HCA are invited to send representatives to the next Transition Board meeting.**

23. MS commented that the CAA provided the mechanism for potential solutions to clarify respective roles of TSA and inspection, although this relied on sensible arrangements being in place on the ground. CB said that CLG would look at this issue as part of the SC recommendation about the Audit Commission. JP commented that the current emphasis was too much on specific tools and that a more appropriate approach would be to move to a more outcomes focussed position.

National indicators

24. AC raised the issue of the reliability of the data being returned from local authorities and what CLG are doing with it. GM agreed that there is an issue of interpretation about what constitutes a “successful outcome”. MS felt the problem stemmed from the lack of a credible performance management framework. He suggested that the development of such a framework would be a useful addition the seven other workstreams identified by the Transition Board and that he would be able to find volunteers willing to feed into such an exercise. One way of doing this would be to look at the programme dashboards of other local authority services – DAAT was mentioned as one possible area – and see how success is measured. MS said he would share some of these other dashboards with RIG members. **Action: MS to circulate details of other LA “dashboards” to RIG members.**

25. JP thought that DAAT was too onerous and therefore not a suitable model to follow for SP. GM commented that whatever is agreed had to be robust. The key issue is that data from all local authorities must be validated on the same basis. SH agreed this was an important issue and was something that needed to be taken forward at a national level. **Action: CLG to consider further the effectiveness and reliability of the data collected under the National Indicators.**

Personalisation

26. CB explained that the Working Group led by Lorraine Regan has been looking at the issue of Individual Budgets for those receiving SP funding. The WG is now focussing on personalisation more generally and how this fits in with other funding streams. While CLG agrees with the thrust of personalisation, there is not the support in place to help individuals manage and access individual budgets and IB is not necessarily the only or the most appropriate solution. CB explained that Lorraine will shortly be issuing a report on the work the group is proposing to take forward and details will be placed on the spkweb) Also, the interdepartmental group is looking at the issue of personalisation to ensure that there is common language used and to learn from previous pilots and other work on personalisation. MS suggested that IB and personalisation could result in different, improved outcomes for authorities. **Action: CLG to issue guidance to local authorities on personalisation.**

Summary

27. SH summarised the main points of the meeting. She said CLG would feed back early in the New Year developments on the SP Distribution Formula and ensure that there are TSA and HCA representatives on the Transition Board. Work would continue on the Government's response to the SC Report and between CLG and DH on personalisation.

28. Members agreed that there was value in continuing to meet and that the next meeting should be towards the end of April / early May. **Action: CLG to arrange next meeting.** In the meantime, members should continue to liaise through email contact. CB confirmed that CLG would circulate to members a note of the meeting. **Action: CLG to circulate note of meeting.**

Rob John
Communities and Local Government
Housing Care and Support Division
0303 444 1754
8 December 2009

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Action: IR to share information with members of RIGs Chairs meeting.

Action: CLG to circulate note of the first SP Transition Board meeting.

Action: CLG to continue working with SITRA on what is meant by the Third Sector.

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