



Frontline agencies in partnership

EMBARGOED UNTIL: 11 DECEMBER 2006

Leading charities call for increased Treasury commitment to support and house the vulnerable

- Research reveals major gaps in services for most deeply excluded people -

Three leading national charities representing the third sector involved in housing, support and homelessness issued a joint call to government today. They are calling on the Treasury to demonstrate the Government's commitment to tackling deep social exclusion and homelessness by building on the foundation of the Supporting People programme and introducing a new PSA target in the 2007 Comprehensive Funding Review. (1)

The joint submission by Homeless Link, the National Housing Federation and SITRA includes survey findings (2) that reveal substantial inadequacies in the services needed by homeless and deeply excluded individuals. For example, 70% of homelessness charities surveyed identified lack of adequate support for addiction and mental health problems. More than 50% identified problems with the adequacy of resettlement and employment options. [See chart for full details]

In light of this information, the groups are calling for a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target across government and local government to ensure that deeply excluded people with multiple needs receive the services they need to address their problems and move forward with their lives.

Jenny Edwards, chief executive of Homeless Link, said: 'Homelessness is about more than being without a roof. Many homeless people have multiple needs and can feel that they have a mountain to climb to get their lives back on track. Supported housing is the foundation for putting things right but much more needs to be done to make sure public services are available to this often challenging group. There is also currently an important gap in funds for activities which help people regain their self esteem and motivation, although these are essential for people to feel able to take practical steps forward.'

The three groups are calling for increased funding of the Supporting People programme (3) to meet unmet needs. Described by the groups as one of the Government's 'great successes', the programme has, since its launch in 2003, helped over one million socially excluded people by providing housing and support.

Emphasising the need for ongoing Supporting People funding, Emma Daniel, chief executive of SITRA said: 'It is imperative that the CSR on Supporting People recognises not only the evidenced cost benefits to other departments but also that this funding reaches the most vulnerable and marginalised in society via the Third Sector in a way that isn't possible through usual statutory service delivery. It saves lives.'

Their final recommendation, not surprisingly, is for more capital investment in accommodation for the most excluded groups. The organisations are calling for provisions in the National Affordable Housing Development Programme for "move on" (4) accommodation for those currently stuck unnecessarily in hostels, funding for specialist supported housing for those with greater needs, and continued investment in the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP)(5) to cover a wider range of services.

David Orr, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said: 'There is a housing time bomb ready to go off in this country and a chronic lack of supported accommodation. We need to see 210,000 new affordable homes built during the spending review period - with 5,600 per year dedicated to supported housing.'

- ENDS -

For more information or a copy of the joint Comprehensive Spending Review submission, contact::

- Anne Holmes or Joanne Roberts, Homeless Link, on 020 7960 3075 or 020 7960 3027.
- John Goulding, National Housing Federation, on 020 7067 1029 or 07771 663 093.
- Carol-Anne Hamilton, SITRA, on 020 7793 4713.

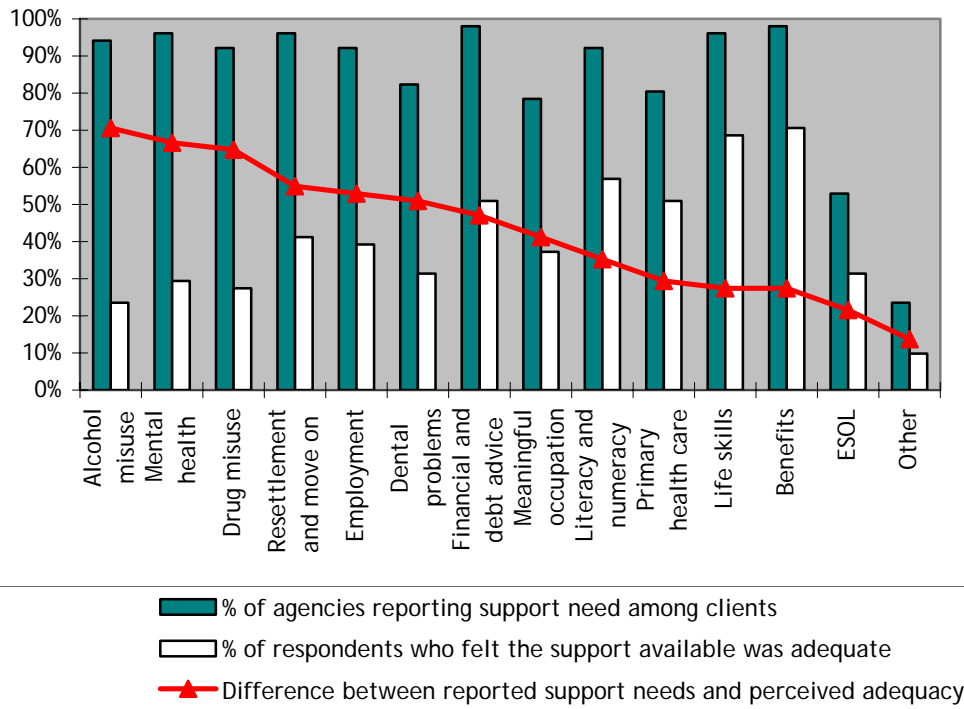
NOTES TO EDITORS:

(1) The groups are calling for the following commitments in the Comprehensive Spending Review, covering the period 2008 to 2011:

- (a) Funding levels for the Supporting People programme maintained at current levels with an added adjustment for inflation. Cost: just under £2 billion per year.
- (b) A PSA committing government departments and local authorities to plans to end social exclusion and provide a nationally available programme of meaningful activity and learning and skills for people with multiple needs. Cost: This will not necessarily incur additional costs, but encourage all levels of government to work together to use existing money more effectively.
- (c) Provisions in the National Affordable Housing Development Programme for affordable housing to get people out of hostels and for the building of at least 5,600 new supported homes per year, and continued investment in the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme. Cost: an estimated £700 million

(2) In September 2006 Homeless Link conducted a survey of member organisations looking at a range of issues, including the prevalence of multiple needs, specific support needs and the adequacy of services available to address these support needs. To determine areas of unmet need the survey asked respondents to identify support needs prevalent among their clients, what services were available to address those support needs and whether the support available was adequate to meet existing needs. Respondents were not asked to specify the number of service users with a specific support need but merely to indicate whether they had clients with a particular support need.

Comparison between reported support needs among clients & perceived adequacy of the support available



(3) The Supporting People programme, run by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), brings together money from various departments, including the DCLG, health, housing and the Home Office, to fund housing related support for vulnerable people. It has so far helped 1.2 million people, almost all from

socially excluded groups. There are 6000 third sector providers contracted to deliver services - the largest revenue funding programme for the voluntary sector. The Audit Commission has credited the programme with markedly improving the delivery of services.

(4) Moving on is one of the greatest challenges facing formerly homeless people who can find themselves stuck in hostels and supported accommodation they no longer need for months (or in some cases years). Research conducted for Homeless Link in 2004 suggested that 45% of available places in hostels are occupied by people who are in a position to move on, but have nowhere to go. Meanwhile, people who need places in hostels and supported accommodation cannot access them. As long as the lack of affordable homes in this country continues, this problem cannot be solved.

(5) The HCIP was launched in 2005 in recognition of the proven success of hostels that act as "places of change" in helping the long term homeless and other socially excluded individuals turn their lives around. These facilities offer meaningful activities and learning opportunities, in addition to a roof. The programme covers the capital costs for existing and planned hostels to improve the services available to residents.