

Funding for Supported Housing – Consultation – Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions

Consultation: key issues (Government extract) and questions

Local authorities will administer the local top-up, and in two tier areas, there is a case for the upper-tier local authority to hold the funding as they tend to be responsible for commissioning the bulk of supported housing services.

Different types of supported housing provision and services are commissioned by different bodies locally, such as Clinical Commissioning Groups and district housing authorities. It will be important to ensure that funding streams are better aligned so they can deliver their respective commissioning objectives.

Q1. The local top-up will be devolved to local authorities. Who should hold the funding; and, in two tier areas, should the upper tier authority hold the funding?

Q2. How should the funding model be designed to maximise the opportunities for local agencies to collaborate, encourage planning and commissioning across service boundaries, and ensure that different local commissioning bodies can have fair access to funding?

We will ring-fence the top-up fund to ensure it continues to support vulnerable people. We propose that the ring-fence should be set to cover expenditure on a general definition of supported housing provision, rather than there being separate ring-fenced pots for different client groups.

However, some stakeholders have raised concerns that certain vulnerable groups could be overlooked, or particular groups could be prioritised for funding at the expense of others. We are keen to understand what, if any, statutory provision could be made to provide reassurance, including what potential role additional statutory duties for local authorities in England could play, particularly in terms of protecting provision for specific vulnerable groups within the context of the overall ring-fence.

Q3. How can we ensure that local allocation of funding by local authorities matches local need for supported housing across all client groups?

Q4. Do you think other funding protections for vulnerable groups, beyond the ring-fence, are needed to provide fair access to funding for all client groups, including those without existing statutory duties (including for example the case for any new statutory duties or any other sort of statutory provision)?

The new model will give local authorities in England an enhanced role in commissioning supported housing in their areas. In addition, local partnerships could combine this funding with existing care, support and supervision funding to commission services. This could be helpful in encouraging local authorities to consider all supported housing funding in the round. It should incentivise efficiencies and join up existing care and support funding, helping with health and social care integration across the life course.

We will consider what level of new burdens funding would be appropriate to enable local authorities to fulfil their new role.

Q5. What expectations should there be for local roles and responsibilities? What planning, commissioning and partnership and monitoring arrangements might be necessary, both nationally and locally?

Q6. For local authority respondents, what administrative impact and specific tasks might this new role involve for your local authority?

Supported housing is of vital importance to vulnerable people and we want to continue to work with providers to ensure that services are as good as they can be. We want to build on the work of excellent providers to drive all quality and value for money up to the level of the best. These reforms, giving local areas greater control and strategic oversight, represent the first step towards that goal, whilst giving the sector the necessary certainty over the total amount of funding available nationally. We also want quality and a focus on individual outcomes to play a greater role in how we fund the sector.

Q7. We welcome your views on what features the new model should include to provide greater oversight and assurance to tax payers that supported housing services are providing value for money, are of good quality and are delivering outcomes for individual tenants?

Providers have told us that within a localised funding model they would prefer a degree of standardisation with regards to the administration of a local top-up as well as the underpinning framework for reaching a funding decision – for example, via a national statement of expectations or a national commissioning framework. This is particularly important for larger providers who operate across many different local areas and would welcome a degree of standardisation and consistency. However, it is important to balance this against the need to preserve flexibility for local areas to design the delivery of the top-up in their area in a way which best meets the needs and circumstances of supporting vulnerable people in their areas.

Q8. We are interested in your views on how to strike a balance between local flexibility and provider/developer certainty and simplicity. What features should the funding model have to provide greater certainty to providers and in particular, developers of new supply?

Q9. Should there be a national statement of expectations or national commissioning framework within which local areas tailor their funding? How should this work with existing commissioning arrangements, for example across health and social care, and how would we ensure it was followed?

Q10. The Government wants a smooth transition to the new funding arrangement on 1 April 2019. What transitional arrangements might be helpful in supporting the transition to the new regime?

Q11. Do you have any other views about how the local top-up model can be designed to ensure it works for tenants, commissioners, providers and developers?

While we are confident that the local top up model will meet the needs of the majority of the sector, we recognise some particular challenges, such as the monthly payment of Universal Credit, may remain for very short term accommodation, including hostels and

refuges. We will work with the sector to develop further options to ensure that providers of shorter term accommodation continue to receive appropriate funding for their important work. Whilst the mechanism or mechanisms (if more than one model is necessary) may be different, funding for this type of accommodation will benefit from the same protection as supported housing in general.

Q12. We welcome your views on how emergency and short term accommodation should be defined and how funding should be provided outside Universal Credit. How should funding be provided for tenants in these situations?