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The Supporting People Policy Framework Northern Ireland (NI)

March 2025

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Glossary of Abbreviations

BCS	Business Consultancy Services
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CRISPP	Committee Representing Interests of Supporting People Providers
DfC	Department for Communities
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
DSD	Department for Social Development
HA	Housing Association
HB	Housing Benefit
HE	Housing Executive
HSCT	Health and Social Care Trusts
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
PBNI	Probation Board Northern Ireland
RHAs	Registered Housing Associations
SAB	Strategic Advisory Board
SP	Supporting People
SPG	Supporting People Grant
SPPG	Strategic Planning and Performance Group
UC	Universal Credit
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of this document

- 1.1 This document replaces the Northern Ireland (NI) Supporting People Guidance 2012 by the former Department for Social Development (DSD). The existing guidance has been comprehensively reviewed and updated to reflect the responses received from the key stakeholders of the Supporting People (SP) Programme. This included an internal consultation with colleagues across the Department for Communities (DfC), Department of Health (DoH), Department of Justice (DoJ), the Housing Executive (HE), and from a public consultation. Stakeholders were asked their views on the existing guidance and how it might be improved.

Context

- 1.2 DfC has responsibility for publishing and maintaining the SP Policy Framework. A comprehensive DfC-led policy and value for money review of the SP Programme, finalised in November 2015, found that the Programme had achieved its core aims and had positively impacted on many people's lives.¹ However, in order to further improve service provision (and thus efficiency and effectiveness), thirteen recommendations were made.

Recommendation 6:

The current policy framework for Supporting People should be consolidated, sharpened and re-communicated, focusing on improving understanding of key terms such as **housing support services** and **independent living**.

- 1.3 As set out in **Recommendation 6**, this policy review did not involve a change in policy direction, nor propose any changes to the Housing Support legislation that underpins the current policy framework.
- 1.4 The SP Programme was introduced in 2003 to help the most vulnerable in our society who require additional **housing support** in order to help them live independently. The programme funds various provider types classified as Charity and Voluntary sector, Housing Associations, Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs), and Private.
- 1.5 Through the programme, high quality and strategically planned **housing support services** are delivered, which ultimately tackle social exclusion by preventing crisis and more costly service

¹ Available at: [Supporting People Review Final Report November 2015](#)

interventions. The SP Programme also ensures that services are cost-effective and provide value for money to as many people as possible across NI, within the budget remit.

1.6 The aim of the SP Programme is to:

- Achieve a better quality of life for vulnerable people to live more independently and maintain their tenancies
- Provide **housing support services** to prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, or homelessness.

- Help to smooth the transition to **independent living** for those leaving an institutionalised environment.

Equality Screening

- 1.7 As the SP Programme potentially includes all categories of Section 75 groups, the SP Policy Framework has been subject to a Section 75 Policy Equality Screening. The screening document can be accessed at the following link: **Supporting People Policy Framework - RNIA**
- 1.8 A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been considered.

2.0 Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 **Department for Communities (DfC).**

DfC has overarching policy and legislative responsibility for the SP programme. It also allocates the annual budget for the SP Programme.

2.2 **Housing Executive (HE).** As the strategic housing authority for NI, the HE has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of **housing support services** and therefore takes administrative responsibility for delivering the SP programme (See Section 3). The HE has a responsibility for determining its strategic approach and approving the commissioning of **housing support services** that meet its strategic priorities. It also has responsibility for oversight of the SP Programme. The HE and Regional Thematic Groups currently identify need, which is subsequently considered by the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB); the HE Board makes the final decision on funding approvals. The SAB, which was established by HE to identify and consider need, comprises a partnership of services across local housing, social care, health, justice, probation, the Committee Representing Interests of Supporting People Providers (CRISPP), the DfC (Observer) and Homeless Connect.

Further information can be accessed on the HE website [About the Supporting People Programme](#).

2.3 **Department of Health (DoH)**

DoH has responsibility for promoting an integrated system of health and social care in Northern Ireland, designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people in Northern Ireland; in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness; and in the social wellbeing of the people in Northern Ireland.

2.4 **Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs)**

HSCTs have statutory responsibilities under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 relating to children (aged under 18) who are classed as “in need” (this includes children aged 16 and 17 years old who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness), children who are looked after, and care leavers. The statutory functions include the planning and provision of appropriate support to young people who have left care, including, for relevant young people aged 16 and 17 who have left care, the provision of suitable accommodation. The Children Order recognises that HSCTs will need to collaborate with a range of other bodies, including HE, to develop plans for young people

preparing to leave care. In addition to the specific duties under the Children order, HSCTs are also responsible for the delivery of health and social care services assessed as being required by all those in supported living settings.

HSCTs are responsible for:

- Older People
- Mental Health
- Physical & Sensory Disability
- Learning Disability

2.5 Department of Justice (DoJ) including Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI)). The DoJ published ‘Supporting Change – a Strategic Approach to Desistance’² in September 2015 which recognised the importance of desistance as a core principle in assisting people to change their offending behaviour. Supporting Change recognises that the main issues faced by individuals relate to social exclusion and notes common barriers to desistance. One of the social factors that contribute to offending and re-offending is accommodation. The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) assists in preventing homelessness by ensuring all individuals in its care are assessed (upon committal, rather than immediately prior to release) and those with accommodation needs are provided with appropriate interventions.

Each prison establishment has a Housing Rights advice worker who works alongside prison staff to carry out early assessments and provide the necessary advice and links for those who need it. NIPS, Housing Executive, PBNI, NIACRO and Housing Rights are all signatories of a protocol that is in place for the management of the accommodation and related support needs of people in custody in Northern Ireland.

The DoJ jointly with the DoH, has responsibility for the cross Departmental seven year Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy and the associated action plans. A range of work is undertaken through this to address domestic and sexual violence and abuse, with the aim of having a society in which domestic and sexual violence is not tolerated in any form, effective tailored preventative and responsive services are provided, all victims are supported and perpetrators are held to account. Cross Departmental action plans are taken forward by the DfC, Education, Health and Justice, in conjunction with statutory and voluntary sector partners. This includes aspects relating to housing and accommodation as well as support services more generally. A seven year Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy was published in September 2024.³

² <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/supporting-change-strategic-approach-desistance>

³ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/domestic-and-sexual-abuse-strategy-and-performance-framework-2024-2031>

In March 2022, DoJ launched a new justice wide strategy **‘Supporting change: A strategy for women and girls in or at risk of contact with the Justice system.’**⁴ The strategy, which seeks to support women and girls within and beyond the justice system with the assistance of partnership working, recognises the importance of accommodation particularly with regard to reducing offending. It outlines a commitment to **‘Collaborative working across government and statutory agencies to scope the provision of accommodation in Northern Ireland to support women and girls in or at risk of contact with the justice system, will help in identifying safe and gender responsive options for women and girls in the community, based on a ‘step up, step down’ model.’** Noting that **‘This may initially involve identifying and exploring short term, and longer term options.’**

PBNI

There is a direct link between homelessness and offending behaviour. PBNI does not own or manage accommodation for offenders but it works in close partnership with a range of voluntary, community and faith based organisations alongside the Housing Executive to offer accommodation to offenders in Approved Premises (APs).

These establishments work within PBNI Approved Practice standards for offender management. Criminal Justice Inspection NI (CJINI) conducts planned and unannounced reviews of APs. The CJINI Inspection of the Public Protection Arrangements NI entitled “Lawful Duty” published in October 2019 commended the work of APs stating they “provided a valuable public protection service in support of statutory criminal justice agencies”. Their role cannot be underestimated both in terms of their contribution to the public protection arrangements and in supporting the rehabilitation of residents.

PBNI and DoJ are represented on the Supporting People Strategic Advisory Board and PBNI are represented on the Regional Thematic Groups for young people and homelessness.

Following the disbandment of the SP Programme Board and the proposed transfer of governance and oversight role to the Housing Executive, a Joint Policy Forum was set up in June 2022 to facilitate and support new and existing co-operation and engagement between Department for Communities, Department of Health, Department of Justice and Housing Executive regarding the Supporting People Programme.

4 Available from <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/supporting-change-strategy-women-and-girls-or-risk-contact-justice-system>

3.0 Legislative Context

3.1 The SP programme was introduced under the Housing Support Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 and the Housing Support Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

3.2 The HE is empowered by Articles 3 and 4 of the Housing Support Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 to secure the provision of **housing support services** to individuals with particular needs and to pay SPG to eligible persons for expenditure incurred by them in providing certain **housing support services**.

Housing Support Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2002

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2002/3154/contents>

3.3 The Housing Support Services Regulations (NI) 2003 outlines the nature of services eligible for payment from the SPG.

Housing Support Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2003/172/made>

4.0 Definitions

Context

- 4.1 Recommendation 6 of the 2015 Review (see Para 1.2) stated that this policy framework should focus on improving understanding of key terms such as **housing support services** and **independent living**. In addition to the two named, other key terms have been identified and clarity provided below.

Housing support services

- 4.2 The purpose of the SP Programme remains to provide housing support services to vulnerable people to live as independently as possible in the community. Housing support services as defined in the NI legislation includes any service which provides support, assistance, advice or counselling to an individual with particular needs with a view to enabling them to occupy, or to continue to occupy, as their only or main residence, housing accommodation in NI other than **excepted accommodation**⁵. Support with housing related tasks helps individuals to develop and maintain the skills and confidence necessary to live independently or

facilitates those in the process of moving onto **independent living**. A full range of housing support services is set out in legislation and summarised at Section 6. A desk aid guide, SP Eligible Housing Support Services, is included at **Appendix 1**.

Independent living

- 4.3 Many different groups of people can benefit from **housing support services** through the SP programme (see a full list at **Para 5.1**). These include people with a disability, people who are experiencing homelessness, people with a mental health condition, older people and young people. A key aim of **housing support services** provided through the SP programme is to empower people to live independently in the community and to enjoy the same freedoms as someone who does not need support. While 'independent living' as a way of life is a key aim, it is not defined in either the **Housing Support Services** Order or the Regulations.

For the purposes of this policy framework, independent living can

⁵ Excepted Accommodation is accommodation which is registered under **The Registered Homes (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 (a)** where no funding (under Special Needs Management Allowance) was paid by the Department in relation to that accommodation during the financial year ending on 31st March 2003 is excepted accommodation for the purposes of Article 3 of the Order.

mean living in an independent form of housing tenure for example as a tenant, a home owner occupier, hostel, refuge, **Independent Living in Later Life** or supported accommodation.

Independent Living – Older People

Independent living means providing support through the SP programme to older people, who may have physical disabilities, may suffer with mental health issues or they may be homeless. With independent living as a key aim of the SP programme, provisions are made to support older people to remain in their **own home** or to transition to a form of supported housing accommodation which endeavours to maintain independent living as its key aim.

Independent Living – Young People

For young, vulnerable adults, independent living can mean providing support through the SP programme to those transitioning from living in social care accommodation into their **own home**. It can mean providing support to young people experiencing harm due to substance use, helping them to obtain and maintain a tenancy, or be supported in appropriate, supported accommodation until they are able to move into their **own home**.

Independent Living – People Experiencing Homelessness

For people experiencing homelessness, who can be young or old, or may be suffering with physical and/or mental disabilities, independent living as a key aim of the SP programme means providing support to obtain a tenancy, enabling appropriate support services to help maintain a tenancy and engaging with relevant agencies to help prevent homelessness.

Independent Living – Disabled People

For disabled people, independent living as a key aim of the SP programme is achieved through the daily demonstration of human-rights based disability policies. Independent living is possible through the combination of various environmental and individual factors that allow disabled people to have control over their own lives. Organisations that support independent living state that many people living with a disability describe it as:

‘having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work and in the community. It does not necessarily mean living by yourself, or fending for yourself. It means the right to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life’.⁶

⁶ What is Independent Living? Independent living in Scotland. Available at: **Independent living - The keys to life - Improving Quality of Life for People with Learning Disabilities - gov.scot** (www.gov.scot)

This includes the opportunity to make real choices and decisions regarding where to live, with whom to live and how to live. Services must be available, accessible to all and provided on the basis of equal opportunity, free and informed consent and allowing disabled people flexibility in their daily life. Independent living requires that the built environment, transport and information are accessible, that there is availability of technical aids, access to personal assistance and/ or community-based services. Independent living is for all disabled persons, regardless of the gender, age and the level of their support needs.

Disabled people in NI have all the human rights in the international treaties and conventions that the UK government has signed. With the adoption of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)** Article 19, while not defining ‘independent living’, promotes people with disabilities living independently and being included in the community.⁷

Further information regarding definitions for Primary Client Groups that relate to Independent Living is supplied in **Appendix 2**.

A Persons Own Home

4.4 A unifying principle of housing support is that it is provided in relation to a housing support need. It therefore must be provided in a housing context. To receive a SP grant funded service, the user must have a housing support need that would be likely to lead to the user becoming or remaining homeless if the support is not provided. Consequently, eligible service users must have, or secure as part of the service, an identified property which is considered the user’s principle or only home. Chronic street homelessness is a growing issue, and a service user may not want or be able to benefit from support at a particular address.

Accommodation based services

- 4.5 Short-term accommodation-based services provide support for people in housing need (e.g. homeless hostels, refuges for women at risk of domestic abuse). These are not means tested.
- 4.6 Long-term support to enable someone to sustain a home (e.g. in accommodation-based services where housing-related support is provided to assist the person to maintain their tenancy). These services are means tested (see Para 5.3 for more detail).

⁷ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html>

- 4.7 Long term accommodation based services with funding from the SP programme should adhere to the general principles of a person's own home⁸. The list below is not exhaustive. The person, or an advocate on the person's behalf, with support if necessary should have the right to:

Choices over:

- Where to live
- Who to live with
- How long to live there
- How they are supported
- Who provides services if needed
- Friends and relationships
- How to be healthy and safe
- How to take part in the community

Input to:

- Accessing their own personal possessions
- Resolving problems/ difficulties affecting their living environment
- Their own physical safety requirements
- Accessing rights and responsibilities as other citizens

Peripatetic/Dispersed support

- 4.8 This service enables users to maintain or regain independence in their **own homes**. Peripatetic/ dispersed support is not tied to the accommodation but is delivered to individual users. It is long term and in some cases lifelong support, and is means tested.

Floating Support

- 4.9 Floating Support enables users that need housing related support to maintain or regain independence in their **own homes**. Floating support is not tied to the accommodation but is delivered to individual users. There will be no means test for this service.

- 4.10 Taking into account the findings of a review of the two year rule carried out by DfC in 2019/20, the policy intent around floating support is reaffirmed as follows:

- It is a short term intervention to support vulnerable service users, with a focus on moving a service user through the service/ reducing floating support provision as soon as their need has been met to maximise the reach and the impact of the service, free up capacity and maintain or increase throughput.

⁸ Department for Social Development, Housing Division, Supporting People Guidance Framework 'Principles of a Person's Own Home'.

It is not suitable for a service user with a permanent or semi-permanent need for support

- Some flexibility on the two year rule will be allowed where this is agreed between HE and the service provider on a case by case basis
- There will be no means test for this service

4.11 For vulnerable service users who require a longer term support service in their **own home**, the peripatetic/ dispersed SP model may be a more appropriate option. Any remodelling of a floating support service to a peripatetic/ dispersed model is subject to discussion with the HE SP team and the appropriate approvals.

5.0 Who is the SP Programme for?

- 5.1 Many different groups of people can benefit from housing support services through the SP programme. These vulnerable individuals and families are as follows:

Frail Elderly

People experiencing harm due to substance use

Families Experiencing Homelessness

People with Learning Disabilities

People with convictions or People at risk of Offending

People with a Mental Health Condition

People with a diagnosis of Dementia

People experiencing homelessness with support needs

Older people with support needs

Travellers

People with a Physical or Sensory Disability

Women at Risk of Domestic Abuse

People experiencing harm due to Alcohol Use

Young People

Refugees

- 5.2 More information is found at: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Supporting-people/Who-is-the-Supporting-People-programme-for>

Challenging drug and alcohol stigma: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/challenging-drug-and-alcohol-stigma/>

Language Matters: communicating about people, alcohol, and drugs: <https://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/media/917663/NHS-Borders-Language-Matters-Nov-2022.pdf>

Talking about mental health <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/talking-about-mental-health#:~:text=Instead%3A%20%27someone%20with%20>

6.0 Means Test for SPG

6.1 It is important to state that the means test for SP is a DfC Policy and is also included in Housing Support Services legislation. Service users are eligible to access support services funded by the SPG under Housing Support Services legislation.

6.2 SP services, by their nature, are provided to vulnerable people whose need for support is conditioned by the nature of that vulnerability. For example, the vulnerability may result from the individual's age, experiencing harm due to alcohol / substance use, a mental health condition, or a history of homelessness. The nature of the vulnerability clearly affects the nature of the housing support need. It is therefore appropriate that the support service is adapted according to the nature of the vulnerability.

6.3 The **Supporting People Support Services and Ability to Pay Policy (2003)** sets out Housing Benefit (HB) entitlement as an appropriate means test for service users to access **Housing Support Services**. This was deemed an appropriate vehicle

through which access could be provided

as it was administratively simple, fair and easily understandable for service users. Whilst the means test is linked

to HB entitlement, SPG is paid to the Service Provider.

6.4 In respect of those service users who are on low incomes but do not receive HB, the Ability to Pay Policy details exempt service users who can passport to free **housing support services** in the short term.

6.5 With the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) from September 2017, the UC Regulations have set out that supported accommodation is 'exempt' accommodation, eligible tenants in supported accommodation will therefore continue to receive Housing Benefit to cover eligible housing costs.⁹ Eligibility for SP for tenants in receipt of long term **accommodation based services** will therefore remain the same.

⁹ **Universal Credit Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, Schedule 1** states, "exempt accommodation" has the meaning given in paragraph 4(9) of **Schedule 3** to the **Housing Benefit (Consequential Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006**, where it states "exempt accommodation" means accommodation which is provided by a housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation where that body or a person acting on its behalf also provides the claimant with care support or supervision.

6.6 A number of long term SP services are provided to tenants in accommodation that is privately rented and does not meet the definition of exempt supported accommodation in the UC legislation (referenced at footnote 2). Those tenants have migrated to UC due to a change in their circumstances with housing costs met from UC rather than HB. These SP services are described as **'dispersed' or 'peripatetic'**, and are provided in the tenants' own privately rented homes. A 'peripatetic or dispersed' service user (as defined at Para 4.8) is one who has long term support services which are means tested.

6.7 For this **'peripatetic or dispersed'** category of service users who are eligible for their housing costs to be fully or partially met through UC, a modification to the current means test policy has been put in place with the means test amended to include the housing element of UC. A Data Sharing Agreement between HE and DfC UC is in place in order that HE is aware of which claimants receive the Housing element of UC. The means test for all other long term services users who will still be in receipt of HB remains unchanged.

7.0 Eligible Housing Support Services

- 7.1 **Housing support services** are funded by way of Supporting People Grant (SPG). SPG provides revenue funding for the HE, Housing Associations, HSCT and Voluntary & Community and Private organisations to provide services to vulnerable people in temporary and permanent accommodation.
- 7.2 In order to be eligible to receive SPG funding, a provider must have a funding agreement in place which has been approved by the HE and must provide the **housing support services** as outlined in the Regulations. SPG must be used to secure the provision of a housing support service in accordance with the funding agreement.
- 7.3 A range of services are funded by SPG. This guidance provides a prescriptive list of these eligible services (see Para 6.7) and sets out the boundaries of the grant. The services, which go together to create 'housing-related support', are broad and wide ranging however the underlying principal is to provide services that enable a service user to live as independently as possible.

Principles for housing support services

- 7.4 **Housing support services** are part of a continuum of services delivered to

individuals with particular needs for support and care. In all cases, but particularly where both support and care is being delivered the following principles for **housing support services** should be applied:

1. Must be part of a planned programme of support agreed between the service provider and the service user
2. Must be focused on the activities and skills, which enable the service user to maintain their tenancy or occupancy of their home in another tenure, such as owner occupation
3. Are provided to the individual and in certain limited circumstances to other members of the household
4. Must be strategically relevant, provide value for money and are good quality

- 7.5 The **housing support services** can be provided in a person's own home in any form of tenure, owner occupied, social housing and private rented housing (see Para 4.4). The provider must agree a full support plan at the earliest opportunity with the service user. However in cases of emergency accommodation, a full support plan is unlikely to be in place before

acceptance onto a service, although the provision of a support plan should be a priority activity. Housing support plans must be in accordance with the service specifications agreed between the HE's SP team and the provider.

7.6 It is appreciated that other issues may interact with housing support in enabling a service user to live independently and fulfil their potential in the community. However services, which do not relate to housing such as personal care¹⁰ or employment training, are not eligible for funding through SPG.

7.7 **The following services are eligible housing support services** for the purpose of Article 4 of the Housing Support Order 2002; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2002/3154/contents>. These services range from aiding the individuals social, financial and security needs. It should be emphasised that the grant is to be used to provide the support service to help vulnerable people, not, for example, to pay rent arrears or purchase security equipment. The list is not exhaustive however it is indicative of the nature of issues for which SPG is applied.

a) Provision of general counselling and support which includes befriending, advice, guidance and supervision on food preparation, reminding and non-specialist counselling where this does not overlap with similar services provided as personal care.

General counselling or non-specialist counselling in this context relates to general advice which will assist a service user to live independently.

b) Assistance with the security of the dwelling required because of the needs of the service user.

Guidance in establishing personal safety and security of the service user. Where the security of the building requires more than normal concierge type duties e.g. where extra security is required to monitor and restrict access to certain individuals or groups of individuals; where health and safety requires more than one member of staff to be available due to the needs of the users and the possibility of serious disputes which may place a member of staff at risk; and where the service user needs to be reminded about security.

¹⁰ The meaning of 'personal care' is given by Article 10 (3) of 'The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003'. Services covered by this order are not SP eligible services. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2003/431/contents/made>.

Examples likely to require this

include: Accommodation for women who have experienced domestic abuse. Accommodation provided for vulnerable homeless people that requires 24-hour access to the accommodation; and people who need encouragement or reminding over security e.g. people with dementia

c) Assistance with the maintenance of the safety of the dwelling.

Guidance on maintaining the security of the service user's dwelling. This relates to the provision of advice and supervision on a range of safety matters, for example ensuring that the user is able to safely use appliances, such as cooker and washing machine; ensuring that service users do not leave lighted cigarettes or candles unattended, or leave taps running

d) Assistance and supervision on the use of domestic equipment and appliances. Guidance and supervision for service users on the use of domestic equipment. This activity includes advice and supervision in areas which could be considered life skills, such as using a washing machine or setting heating controls appropriately, as well as supervision to avoid health and safety risks

e) Assistance with arranging minor repairs to, and servicing of, domestic equipment and appliances. Guidance and support to aid service users to arrange services to their own domestic equipment and appliances e.g. boilers. Where the service user is unable to deal with their own minor repairs, or where they are being taught the skills necessary to manage minor repairs. The level of intervention and frequency of guidance may vary according to the individual's needs. Costs eligible for SPG under this heading do not include the cost of actually doing the repairs or the cost of materials

f) Provision of life skills training in maintaining the dwelling and curtilage in appropriate condition. This includes advice and supervision on any issues of cleanliness, maintenance and safety, particularly in terms of advising or reminding the service user to maintain the condition of the dwelling and its curtilage. Provide guidance with essential decoration and maintenance of the dwelling. It may also include issues such as advice and supervision of food preparation, menu planning, food storage and waste disposal to preserve the condition

of the kitchen units and other appliances, and also guidance and assistance to arrange for domestic help, where appropriate. Advice and supervision on cleaning of items such as curtains and soft furnishings is also eligible

g) Assistance in how to engage with individuals, professionals and other bodies with an interest in the welfare of the service user.

This can include housing staff, social workers, medical staff, mental health staff, addictions specialist services and others. It includes arranging for them to call at the service user's home, dealing with telephone calls or correspondence, and arranging and accompanying the service user to meetings or appointments

h) Assistance on access to the provision of equipment and adaptations to cope with disability. This can include liaising with Occupational Therapists and Care Management/ social worker to arrange adaptations or signposting the service user to local tradespersons who can assist in the installation of adaptations, for example replacing steps to a house with a ramp, adaptations to equipment

e.g. bath. This does not cover the installation of adaptations or the cost of equipment

i) Advice or assistance in personal budgeting, debt counselling.

This can include guidance, advocacy and liaison in managing finances. Such assistance and advice over and above that provided in the course of normal housing management would be eligible for SPG, if they are part of a planned programme of support where tenants are unable to deal with their finances in an organised fashion, have continual budgeting problems, and require regular intervention to assist them in maintaining their tenure. Housing support staff or experienced money advisors may carry out these duties.

j) Advice or assistance in dealing with relationships/ disputes with neighbours. In general, occasional management of neighbour disputes can be considered as a housing management charge and therefore not eligible for SPG. However where more regular or intensive intervention is required, for example regular intervention by housing support staff to prevent serious disputes arising out of an

individual service user's personal circumstances or condition, or resolving such disputes, then these fall under general support and non-specialised counselling and can receive SP monies.

- k) Advice or assistance in dealing with claims to social security benefits and other official correspondence relevant to sustaining occupancy of the dwelling.** This can include guidance, advocacy and liaison in benefit claims. In general this is where help is provided as part of a planned package of support, and may require repeated intervention, including some degree of non-specialist advocacy.
- l) Advice or assistance with resettlement of the service user.** This activity covers help which a service user may need in moving to new accommodation. It includes assistance with choosing new accommodation, making practical arrangements for power, telephone lines etc., choosing and arranging white goods, decoration and furnishings, and assistance or advocacy in agreeing a new package of support. It does not cover the costs of any items/ materials or work involved in renovating,

decorating or furnishing the new accommodation.

- m) Advice or assistance to enable a service user to move on to accommodation where less or more intense support is required.** This is a broad provision, which deals with the rehabilitation function of support, in achieving the aim of **independent living**. For example, the service user may be living in shared accommodation where cleaning is provided, but may receive advice and instruction on cleaning with a view to moving to mainstream housing.
- n) Advice or assistance with shopping and errands where this does not conflict with similar services provided as personal care.** This provision includes accompanying the service user to help with errands such as shopping, visiting the library or post office and collecting prescriptions.
- o) Maintenance of emergency alarm and call systems.** The cost of the maintenance of alarm equipment in supported accommodation where the accommodation is occupied by elderly, sick or disabled people and such accommodation is

either specifically designed or adapted for such persons or otherwise particularly suitable for them, having regard to its size, heating system and other major features and facilities.

p) Responding to emergency alarm calls, where such calls relate to housing support services, in accommodation designed or adapted for, and occupied by, elderly, sick or disabled people.

The costs eligible for SPG are the costs of responding to the call where a housing support response is appropriate. The accommodation must be occupied by elderly, sick or disabled people and such accommodation is either specifically designed or adapted for such persons or otherwise particularly suitable for them, having regard to its size, heating system and other major features or facilities. Where the response required is not housing support (for example, a personal care need or repair to an appliance) this is not eligible. The alarm system itself does not make the accommodation specifically designed or adapted for such persons or otherwise particularly suitable for them. Systems that monitor the health of the occupant are also not eligible for SP funding.

q) Controlling access to individual resident's rooms. This includes guidance on establishing personal safety and security of the service user, and also where staff control visitor access e.g. domestic violence refuges. Examples also include where additional security is required within the accommodation due to the needs of the service user, for example, people with disability and or dementia.

r) Cleaning of resident's own rooms and windows. Guidance and support in maintaining the cleanliness of the dwelling and curtilage. Charges for the cleaning of service user's own rooms and windows, both internal and external, where neither the service user nor any member of the household is temporarily able to clean these themselves are eligible for SPG. For clarity, the cleaning of rooms and windows in communal areas will remain eligible for Housing Benefit as a rent or housing management charge

s) Providing for the costs of resettlement services.

- t) Encouraging social intercourse, and welfare checks for residents of accommodation supported by either a resident warden or a non-resident warden with a system for calling that warden where this does not overlap with similar services provided as personal care or personal support.** This refers to services undertaken by a scheme supervisor to ensure that residents do not feel isolated.
- u) Arranging social events for residents of accommodation supported by a resident warden or a non-resident warden with a system for calling that warden.** This refers to services undertaken by a scheme supervisor or support worker to arrange social events in the areas of shared accommodation. This does not cover the cost of the actual event itself.
- v) Other members of the household.** The issues which make a person vulnerable and in need of **housing**

support services are likely to impact on other members of their household. Increased vulnerability can occur for example when a person does not have mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety or has fluctuating mental capacity associated with mental illness and other conditions. SPG is designed to help the family by ensuring that in such situations the individual can maintain occupancy of the dwelling. Prescribed SP services which include the need of children in the family may therefore be eligible. However, services such as crèche facilities, educational services or individual/group support to help children recovering from trauma are not eligible for SPG.

It should be noted that providers may also be eligible to receive funding via other funding streams whilst receiving funding from the Supporting People Program i.e. Housing Benefit, Housing Management and the Department of Health.

Associated Support/ Overhead Costs

7.8 As well as services which are directly delivered to people, some indirect costs can be met from the SPG. These include administrative time spent on ensuring eligible services are provided effectively and training costs to ensure staff provide adequate housing support. A variation in the percentage of direct and indirect costs between providers is expected due to the diverse and unique delivery roles of individual schemes.

Overhead costs are those costs of a service that result not from the direct activities of the service itself but from the activity of the organisation that provides the service.

Examples include a share of the following:

- Initial start-up costs only (a one-off payment)

- Office equipment (not refurbishment of office equipment)

As each scheme has unique requirements, an interpretation of eligible start-up costs and office equipment will vary for each scheme.

It should be noted that the essence of Supporting People is to allocate the majority of grant funding to directly support vulnerable people via frontline staff. The Supporting People Financial Returns – Guidance on the Apportionment of Expenditure document can be used to assist when determining providers associated support/overhead costs.

Available at: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getattachment/bd582e95-17b1-4be3-978c-61fa99176d13/supporting-people-financial-returns-guidance.pdf>

8.0 Ineligible Housing Support Services including Ineligible Costs and Ineligible Accommodation

8.1 **Housing Support services** funded through the SP programme are often provided to service users who are in receipt of a range of other support services from other agencies. The services below will not however be funded through SP.

8.2 **Care and Support services** in the following categories:

- **Assessment of service users on behalf of Health and Social Care.** This relates to carrying out assessments on users health and social care needs that would result in the development of a Health and Social Care support package
- **Statutory after-care services.** These are services that Health and Social Care Trusts provide to people who are leaving care to make the transition to independent living. These include the assessments of the person's needs, the provision of a personal adviser and pathway planning for people up to the age of 21 (or beyond if continuing in education)
- **Domiciliary Care including Personal Care Services.** Domiciliary care is defined as the range of services put in place to support an individual in their **own home**. Services may involve routine household tasks within or outside the home, personal care of the client and other associated domestic services necessary to maintain an individual in an acceptable level of health, hygiene, dignity, safety and ease in their home
- **Specialised Counselling.** Counselling should only be provided by qualified professionals. Counselling which is unrelated to Housing Support is also excluded. Examples of this include:
 - Specialised counselling to deal with addictions
 - Behaviour modification programmes
 - Individual or group therapy

- Mental state assessments and monitoring which may be undertaken by health care professionals such as community psychiatric nurses, psychiatric nurses or psychiatric social workers
- **Childcare.** This relates to the supervision and nurturing of a child, including casual and informal services provided by a parent and more formal services organised by a child care centre.

8.3 Ineligible Costs

- **Housing Management Services.** Housing Management Services can be defined as routine landlord functions performed by, or on behalf of the landlord and are often part of routine housing management.
- It is important to acknowledge that costs related to the building are not support costs.

Costs relating to:

- The building should be paid out of rents
- The provision of communal services such as gardening, window cleaning or communal utilities should be paid out of the service charge
- Personal use of facilities should be paid by the tenant.

Ineligible accommodation

8.4 Accommodation based services

is defined at Para 4.5. Eligible accommodation for accommodation based SPG includes a hostel, **Independent Living in Later Life** or other types of supported housing accommodation. However, there are types of accommodation which will not be eligible for SP funding. These are defined in the legislation as ‘excepted’ accommodation.¹¹

Legislation states that “excepted accommodation” means accommodation, or accommodation of a type, prescribed as such.

¹¹ Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2002/3154/contents>

9.0 Accreditation

9.1 Provider organisations of **Housing Support services** within the SP programme have been subjected to a provider accreditation process by the HE. This is to ensure that all providers receiving SPG have the capability, structure and capacity to deliver quality services for the duration of their funding agreement. This is one element in a Quality and Monitoring Toolkit which is intended to improve services and achieve higher standards.

9.2 The provider accreditation process is underpinned and directed by the need to ensure the provision of consistent, high quality and value for money housing-related support services. The accreditation process is a key risk management tool for SP. For further information regarding the accreditation process please see:

- <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Supporting-people/Accreditation—Information-for-delivery-partners>

- <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/9aab89a-65ac-4d3c-bda2-bf4149c784e6/accreditation-guidance-and-application-document.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdfv>

‘Passporting’ to the SP programme

9.3 DfC is the Regulatory Authority for Registered Housing Associations (RHAs) in NI and this regulatory role is set out at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/housing-regulation.12>

9.4 RHAs were ‘passported’ to the SP Programme. This means that DfC is satisfied that the organisations have the capability, structure and capacity to deliver quality SP services in the same way SPPG/ HSCTs and HE have existing regulatory frameworks and inspection regimes that ensure these statutory bodies remain appropriately managed, accountable and are able to consistently deliver SP services.

12 RHAs are referred to as Registered Housing Associations in The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

10.0 Unspent SPG

10.1 SPG is a restricted fund which is defined as funding where a funder has specified what the money must be spent on; the organisation does not have the power to spend the money on anything else. If the funding is not spent for the **approved purposes** during the financial year to which it relates, the unspent amount will be recovered by the HE.

10.2 The HE will contact the organisation to make arrangements for the grant

to be refunded in line with the Funding Agreement and will engage with the organisation to determine the amount of SPG to be awarded for future financial years.

10.3 The HE's SP Funding Agreement currently provides the terms and conditions upon which the HE will provide funding for individual **Housing Support services**.

Appendix 1

Desk Aid:

Descriptor Of Eligible Service
Assessment of eligibility for housing support
Advice and guidance to resolve or prevent housing debt or other debt that affects ability to pay for housing
Assistance to claim appropriate benefits and maximise income
Advice and guidance to manage personal budget
Advice and guidance on self-catering
Advice and guidance in relation to fulfilling licence/ tenancy/ mortgage conditions
Advice and prompting to maintain the safety and security of the accommodation
Advice and assistance in relation to organising repairs or improvements
Advice on connection to utilities
Assisting to help overcome social exclusion e.g. shopping
Supporting educational/ employment pursuits
Provision of information on community facilities and services available
Regularly advising/ assisting with relationships/ disputes with neighbours
Advice and assistance in acquiring essential household items
Advice on how to use domestic equipment/ appliances in the home
Provision of community alarm service
Maintenance of community alarm
Advice and assistance to enable move on to more appropriate accommodation
Assistance to help arrange for domestic help
Assistance to become familiarised with Health and Safety procedures and personal safety
Risk assessment with regard to the service users ability to live independently
Advice on how to report repairs and organise repairs or improvements
Arranging adaptations to enable service user to cope with disability
Assistance in management of health and well-being
Occasional prompting with self-medication
Support around substance use
Provision of advice and information on individuals' support package
Signposting and assistance to access specialist advice

Appendix 2

SP Thematic Groups and PCG Definitions:

Thematic Group	PCG	Definition (from SP Programme)
Older People	1. Older people with a mental health condition / People with a diagnosis of dementia	Older people with a mental health condition including dementia.
	2. Older people with support needs	Older people with low to medium support needs.
	3. Frail elderly	Older people who are physically disabled or frail.
Young People	4. Young people	Young people at risk or vulnerable includes young people leaving care environments.
Disability and Mental Health	5. People with a physical or sensory disability	People with mobility difficulties, sensory impairments, and debilitating or long-term illness.
	6. People with a mental health condition	People with enduring, but relatively low level mental illness or disability, as well as those who have been diagnosed as mentally ill and who have had, or are having, specialist treatment.
	7. People with learning disabilities	People with mild to moderate learning disabilities, as well as those with more severe learning disabilities and/or challenging behaviour.

Thematic Group	PCG	Definition (from SP Programme)
Homeless	8. People experiencing harm due to alcohol use	People experiencing harm due to alcohol use who are homeless, or who are having difficulties in relation to sustaining their accommodation or managing to live independently.
	9. People experiencing harm due to substance use	People experiencing harm due to substance use, who are homeless or who are having difficulties in relation to sustaining their accommodation or managing to live independently.
	10. People experiencing homelessness, and homeless families with support needs	Families who have been accepted as statutorily homeless and are placed in temporary accommodation. This group includes homeless women with children.
	11. People with convictions or people at risk of offending	Offenders, or people at risk of offending, who are homeless or who are having difficulties in relation to sustaining their accommodation or managing to live independently.

Thematic Group	PCG	Definition (from SP Programme)
	12. Rough sleepers	People accessing a single Homeless Crisis Accommodation Service. NIHE define rough sleeping as “People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places, not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or ‘bashes’)”.
	13. Single people experiencing homelessness with support	People who have been accepted as homeless and in priority need, and also those single homeless people who have been turned down for re-housing or have not approached the local authority.
	14. Women at risk of domestic abuse	Women at risk of domestic abuse who have left their home, or who are having difficulties in keeping their home and establishing their personal safety and security.

Source: SP Programme

Available in alternative formats.

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