

AS PROVIDED FOR UNDER SECTION 100B(4)(b) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, THE CHAIRMAN IS OF THE OPINION THAT THIS REPORT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD URGENTLY REVIEW ITS DECISION IN RESPECT OF THE SINGLE HOMELESS HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDED BY METROPOLITAN HOUSING TRUST (MST) IN THE LIGHT OF THE OUTCOME OF AN APPLICATION FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THE DECISION.

PAPER NO. **13-386**

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADULT CARE AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
- 18TH JUNE 2013

EXECUTIVE – 1ST JULY 2013

Report by the Director of Adult Social Services on Supporting People – Review of the decision to cease funding single homeless places at The Gate House and The Lodges (Metropolitan Support Trust)

SUMMARY

Paper No. 12-699 reported on the outcome of a review of Supporting People services, which updated the commissioning approach to housing support services, reflecting the anticipated need within Wandsworth across the different service types in terms of both volume and price. This review was undertaken in consultation and negotiation with service providers resulting in a recommendation to reduce the number of single homeless places which will receive Supporting People funding in the future. This recommendation entailed the decommissioning of the single homeless housing support service provided by Metropolitan Support Trust (MST).

Subsequently, a service user of the MST service challenged the potential equality impact of its decision by way of a claim for Judicial Review. The Council notified both the service user in question and MST that it would be undertaking a review of its decision and agreed continuation of the funding for The Gate House and The Lodges until this review had been completed and any recommendations considered by Members. Consequently, the court refused to give permission for the claim to go forward but that would not prevent the same or a different service user from bringing a further claim depending on the outcome of the review.

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This report details the findings of the review; including the consultations undertaken with service users and other interested parties. If this service is decommissioned there will clearly be an impact upon the current residents of the scheme, however there are suitable and appropriate alternative services available within the Borough that provide the appropriate housing support and access to other appropriate services to support individuals to move on to more independent accommodation. If the service was decommissioned the Council would work with MST and the existing residents to explore the possibility of alternative sources of funding and/or accommodation as appropriate.

The Director of Finance comments that Paper No. 12-699 was followed by Paper No. 13-117 to Adult Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2013 which approved a General Fund negative budget variation of £1,787,340 in 2013/14 and £1,808,940 in 2014/15 for the decommissioning and reconfiguration of Supporting People services. The amount relating to funding for MST was £64,000. The decision to extend the scheme for further review is therefore costing the council approximately £1,230 per week currently for eleven residents. If a decision is made in line with the decision previously made by Members (Paper Nos. 12-699 and 13-117) to decommission the service by serving a six month notice, the additional cost of £32,000 will need to be met from within Adult Social Services' budgets in 2013/14.

## **GLOSSARY**

Albert Kennedy Trust	Provides support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender homeless young people in crisis.
Antidote Clinic	A lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender targeted drug and alcohol service, offering harm-reduction advice and information
Battersea Alcohol Service	Provides substance misuse, education, training and outreach services, operated by the Drug and Alcohol Service for London
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
Broken Rainbow	National Helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people experiencing domestic violence
CAMH	Child and Adolescent Mental Health

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Cardinal Hume Centre	Supports people to gain the skills they need to overcome poverty and homelessness.
CD4 count	CD4 cells or T-helper cells are a type of white blood cell that fights infection and their count indicates the stage of HIV or AIDS in a patient
Charing Cross NHS Gender Clinic	Part of the West London Mental Health Trust, the clinic is the largest service of its kind in the world and the leading provider of care for people who have issues around their gender.
City Lit College	College offering part-time adult education courses
Depaul UK	Helps young people who are homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged
Equinox	Support provider particularly for people needing help with mental health problems or substance misuse
Fistula	An abnormal connection between an organ, vessel, or intestine and another structure
Galop	Provides advice and support to people who have experienced biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexual violence or domestic abuse
GMSH	Gay Men's Supported Housing Project – the name of the service provided by Metropolitan Support Trust from The Gate House and The Lodges
Greenwich DIP	Drug Intervention Programme
Housing Support	Services designed to support people to maintain their independence and maximise their contribution to the community in which they live, in particular skills that will allow them to maintain a tenancy as a gateway to other life opportunities
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy service
Kingston Churches	Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness service provider
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
London Friend	Voluntary organisation that offers counselling and support services,

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	including telephone helplines, counselling, support groups and social groups.
London Housing Trust	A social housing provider who support homeless people.
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MST	Metropolitan Support Trust – Supporting People housing support service provider operating the GMSH Project within The Gatehouse and The Lodges
NHS	National Health Service
No Second Night Out	Helps people who find themselves rough sleeping on the streets of London.
PACE	Charity promoting the mental health and emotional well-being of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.
Passage House	Voluntary sector day centre for homeless people
Sound Minds	A user-led charity and social enterprise, which aims to transform the lives of people experiencing mental ill health through participation in music and the arts.
St Martin's House	Homeless People service provider.
St Mungo's	Service provider offering accommodation and support to homeless people.
Stonewall Housing	A specialist lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender housing advice and support provider
Terrence Higgins Trust	Provider of HIV and sexual health services in the UK
UK Lesbian and Gay Group	A charity that promotes equality and dignity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people who seek asylum in the UK, or who wish to immigrate here to be with their same-sex partner.
Victim Support (Essex)	Essex branch of the national charity for victims of crime
Viridian	A housing association providing social housing and the owner/landlord of The

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	Gatehouse and The Lodges.
Wandsworth Street Rescue	Rough Sleeper service provided by Thames Reach
Western Lodge	Hostel for homeless men operated by The Society for The Relief of the Homeless Poor

### **Recommendations**

1. The Adult Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraphs 3.
2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or recommendations on the report, these will be submitted to the Executive for their consideration.
3. The Executive is recommended:-

to decommission the Supporting People services currently provided by Metropolitan Support Trust (MST) at The Gate House and The Lodges, in line with the decision previously made by Members (Papers 12-699 and 13-117).
4. **Introduction.** Paper No. 12-699 reported on the outcome of a review of Supporting People services, which updated the commissioning approach to housing support services, reflecting the anticipated need within Wandsworth across the different service types in terms of both volume and price. This review was undertaken in consultation and negotiation with service providers resulting in a recommendation to reduce the number of single homeless places which will receive Supporting People funding in the future. This recommendation entailed the decommissioning of the single homeless housing support service provided by Metropolitan Support Trust (MST).
5. MST is currently a provider of single homeless housing support services. Their current contract is explicitly for 12 single homeless places which are provided in The Gate House and The Lodges. However, whilst the housing support service contracted by the Council is for a generic single homelessness housing support service, The Gate House and The Lodges provide a specific single homeless housing support service for gay male victims of domestic violence. As the Council never formally contracted with MST to provide this specific service and no equality considerations were raised by MST, the Council did not highlight the specific nature of these places and the potential equality considerations to Members within

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Paper 12-699 as being pertinent to their decision to approve the outcome of the review of Supporting People services.

6. Subsequently, a service user of the MST service challenged the potential equality impact of its decision by way of a claim for Judicial Review. The Council notified both the service user in question and MST that it would be undertaking a review of its decision and agreed continuation of the funding for The Gate House and The Lodges until this review had been completed and any recommendations considered by Members. Consequently, the court refused to give permission for the claim to go forward but that would not prevent the same or a different service user from bringing a further claim depending on the outcome of the review.
7. **The Equality Act.** The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with “protected characteristics”, these are as follows;
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
  - religion or belief (including a lack of belief), and
  - gender and sexual orientation.
8. Where a local authority provides a service to the public or a section of the public (for payment or not), the authority must not terminate the provision of that service to a person because of his protected characteristic, or do so by imposing a condition with which such a person would find it harder to comply than a person who did not share that characteristic.
9. The Act also imposes a public sector equality duty which requires the Council to give “due regard” to the need to;
  - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
10. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
  - b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
  - c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
11. Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
- a) tackle prejudice, and
  - b) promote understanding.
12. Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.
13. Guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission states that;
- “Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies”.*
14. Members can still decide to go ahead with a decision, even if there is a detrimental impact upon any or all groups with a protected characteristic, so long as they have been able to take those impacts into consideration when making their decision.
15. To ensure that Members have sufficient information available to them in order to have “due regard” to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, a high level of detail regarding the MST service and alternative schemes available is set out below to inform Members of the potential impact of decisions.
16. **An overview of the service provided by MST at The Gate House and The Lodges.** The Gay Men’s Supported Housing Project (GMSH) is an accommodation based housing support service based in two hostels and two flats situated in Wandsworth (The Gate House and The Lodges). The Scheme is believed to be the only project of its kind in Europe, as a consequence of its specific focus upon Gay Men, and has been running

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for fifteen years. It has received funding from Wandsworth Council for ten of these years, since the Supporting People programme started in April 2003.

17. The service is accessible to gay men aged between 18 and 65 years of age, who are currently resident in the UK, they do not have to be residents of Wandsworth. They must be escaping domestic or homophobic abuse, or have been significantly impacted by such in the recent past. The service is not advertised due to the need to protect the anonymity of residents, which also mitigates against Wandsworth residents utilising the service due to the inevitable close proximity to where the domestic or homophobic abuse occurred, and to prevent an overwhelming influx of referrals. The average duration of support for each Service User should not exceed two years. The Single Homeless average expected length of stay is usually twelve to eighteen months.
18. The Scheme provides medium term temporary housing and support for up to twelve gay men. As of April 2013 there were eleven residents, whilst returns provided by MST for the past four years show that the scheme has been running at an average occupancy of 98%. The scheme maintains a waiting list, capped at five people, as of April 2013, there were two people on the waiting list with another four individuals awaiting assessment, however it should be noted that MST state that they were in the process of winding down the list.
19. **Supporting People & Domestic Violence.** Although MST has made this service specifically available to gay men, the scheme has always been classified under the national Supporting People guidelines as a “single homeless” housing support service. The national Supporting People programme did not have a separate classification for “gay male victims of domestic violence” or indeed ‘heterosexual male victims of domestic violence’ although it did have a classification for women “women at risk of domestic violence”. As such the MST service has always received funding on the basis of it providing a housing support service to single homeless people rather than any other specific characteristic of the service.
20. Best practice relating to the housing support of victims of domestic violence is to support victims to move away from their current borough or to put in place arrangements that allow a survivor of domestic violence to remain safely in their home or one in a neighbourhood area in which they wish to stay. Where a female victim of domestic violence wishes to leave a particular area it is likely that they will move borough boundaries and be accommodated by one of the many refuges and supported housing schemes available in the country. Effectively informal reciprocal arrangements are in place between boroughs, acknowledging that



households may need to move some distance to get away from the area where the domestic violence took place.

21. Wandsworth Borough Council supports women's domestic violence refuge places in Wandsworth and would reasonably expect that such places would be maintained elsewhere in other boroughs (in and out of London) for Wandsworth residents to be supported. As The Gate House and The Lodges are the only specific schemes to exclusively provide support for gay male victims of domestic violence there are no reciprocal arrangements in place with other boroughs. This means that whilst gay men from other boroughs are able to access this support, a gay man from Wandsworth has not got a similar service to access in a neighbouring borough, therefore, if a Wandsworth resident wishes to access a service in a neighbouring borough they have to consider generic single homeless housing support services or alternatively could be picked up as a "rough sleeper". They would however have no access to a specific scheme solely for gay men.
22. **Case study of the support received at The Gate House and The Lodges.** MST have provided a number of cases studies relating to the support they provide. Two of these are shown in full in Appendix One. In summary, the individual supported in case study 1 had complex needs, including autism, and was a vulnerable individual. The support provided took this into account and included :
  - Life skills;
  - Referrals to specialist agencies, including Adult Social Services,
  - Counselling from London Friend for 3 months,
  - Treatment for epilepsy from St George's Hospital, and
  - Support in enrolling at City Lit College for a creative writing course.
23. Support provided by staff within the Scheme included;
  - exploring issues relating to gender identity,
  - referral to the Charing Cross NHS gender clinic,
  - managing expectations around close relationships,
  - handling medication,
  - sexual health and safer relationships
24. In case study 2 the individual was HIV positive, had drug and alcohol issues and suffered from depression. The support provided took this into account and included;
  - Receiving treatment from the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital

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- Receiving support from the Wandsworth Community Mental Health Team for one year
  - Counselling sessions at the Terrence Higgins Trust & PACE
  - Attending the Antidote clinic in Soho for support around substance misuse
25. Support provided by staff within the Scheme included;
- to explore employment & training opportunities
  - managing expectations around close relationships
  - to explore issues around family dynamics,
  - to explore issues difficulties in handling medication, and
  - to explore issues remaining abstinent from drugs and alcohol
26. The type of support documented in these case studies does not significantly vary from the support provided by other “single homeless” service providers, reflecting the prime purpose of Supporting People funding to provide housing related support to help individuals with, at times complex needs, to maintain and manage their tenancy. Service providers are expected to refer to external agencies in order that their service users can access appropriate specialist support, such as adult social care.
27. **Demographic information on residents.** A report produced by the MST scheme states that the individuals it works with are
- “often marginalized young gay men from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the highest risk categories of contracting HIV.”*
- It also states that it has and continues to,
- “help and support gay men from many ethnic minorities such as Jamaican, Ugandan, Somali, Iranian who have faced extreme forms of homophobic persecution when they have been ‘outed’ or have ‘come out’ to family and friends. Suffering from faith based intolerance and in some instances, cultural homophobia, they have been physically and verbally attacked, ostracized and victim to controlling behaviours whilst risking isolation due to losing their family, friends and community. “*
28. A snapshot survey of residents within the MST service was conducted in April 2013. This showed that:
- All residents were male;
  - Five (45%) were White, two (18%) were Asian/Asian British and four (36%) were Black/ African / Caribbean / Black British
  - Ten (91%) residents stated that they were gay men, with one preferring not to say

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- Two (18%) of the residents are registered disabled;
  - The average age of residents is thirty two;
  - Eight are victims of domestic violence;
  - Three were referred by Stonewall Housing, two by the Albert Kennedy Trust, one by the Terrence Higgins Trust, one by Greenwich DIP, one by Victim Support (Essex), one by UK L&G Immigration Group, one by Nightingale Lane, Mental Health rehabilitation and one self-referral;
  - Three are currently accessing drug or alcohol services,
  - Three are currently accessing mental health services, and
  - Two are accessing adult social care services
29. In terms of where the residents were previously resident; two were residents of Wandsworth, one Wandsworth tenant was escaping familial domestic violence and moved in recently due to a delay in Viridian preparing an alternative property, and the second tenant has lived at the scheme since 1992, i.e. before it became the Gay Men's Supported Housing Service. He has enduring mental health and learning difficulties and has an Assured Tenancy within the property. This snapshot survey along with information published in the MST scheme's report highlights that any decisions relating to The Gate House and The Lodges in addition to impacting on gay men will impact more on Black and Minority Ethnic individuals to a greater extent than those who are White.
30. **Consultation with Organisations Making Referrals to The Gate House and The Lodges.** Both Stonewall Housing and the Terrence Higgins Trust were approached for information on the volume of enquiries they receive from gay men in relation to domestic violence and where they refer gay men in need of housing support following incidents of domestic violence.
31. Terrence Higgins Trust. In the past year the Trust's teams have seen at least thirty gay men who have been the victim of domestic abuse and gay related hate crimes. The capacity of The Gate House and The Lodges is twelve places. The Trust stated that they,

*"find the Gate House and Lodge an invaluable service for our clients and if it closes then we will struggle to find accommodation for men suffering domestic abuse and gay related hate crime, particularly men who are over 25. "*

When places are not available at The Gate House or The Lodges the Trust refers to the London Housing Trust, who have one house for Transsexual and one house for HIV positive men.

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32. If a Wandsworth man contacted them, the Terrence Higgins Trust stated that they would refer them to the London Housing Trust if they were HIV positive, Stonewall if they were under twenty five or the Wandsworth Homeless Persons Unit. They also refer to St Mungo's, Albert Kennedy and occasionally Cardinal Hume Centre, if they have beds available, and to "no second night out", although they noted that they have not referred a client to them in Wandsworth. This highlights that gay men in Wandsworth do not have access to "specialist" provision in other boroughs.
33. Stonewall Housing. In 2011/12, 1,200 people presented to their service in housing need, of which 37% of clients presented with domestic abuse as either a support need or problem (this equates to four hundred and forty four clients). 42% of all clients presented with homophobic harassment problems (this equates to five hundred and four clients) and twenty six clients came from Wandsworth (representing 2.2% of clients). The Gate House and The Lodges provide twelve places.
34. Stonewall Housing stated that they would,
- "struggle to find any alternative accommodation if GMSH were not available. There is no emergency accommodation available to gay men experiencing domestic violence. Although not direct access, GMSH provides vital accommodation. GMSH also contributes to the LGBT domestic abuse forum as a participant, and although the project is based in Wandsworth, the service adds value to all local boroughs in London as specialist service that many look to as a model of best practice in providing support to gay survivors of domestic abuse and hate crime. "*
35. Stonewall Housing identified the following options for survivors of domestic abuse;
- If the client was in priority need and met the five housing tests, we would approach a housing department and support the client to make a part 7 housing application.
  - Private rented accommodation is an option for working gay men with salaries over £25,000 per year and for these clients, we would refer to an LGBT flat finding service, Outlet. Unfortunately only 7.2% are in full time employment so this option is not possible for the majority of our clients.
  - For those under 18, we refer to social services or other partners such as Depaul UK or the Albert Kennedy Trust for accommodation in supported lodgings (i.e. foster care).
  - For those aged between eighteen and twenty five, we refer to our supported accommodation although we have a huge waiting list as demand outstrips supply. Our accommodation is only for those aged between sixteen and twenty five, with

- support needs, and prioritises those from the London boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Newham.
- For those aged between twenty five and thirty five, who are claiming benefits, the option would be to move into private shared accommodation. This can be high risk as many tenants are homophobic and abusive. It can also be virtually impossible to find a private landlord who will accept tenants on benefit without a guarantor or rent deposit. Most London councils are no longer able to provide rent deposit schemes. Shared accommodation for those with a compromised immune system is also not appropriate.

36. Stonewall Housing state that,

*“Generic hostel accommodation is also not appropriate as there are high levels of reported homophobia from gay men who use our service. Many clients do not remain in generic hostel accommodation due to abuse. Nationally, there are 5 hostels able to support men experiencing domestic abuse, although the focus of these services are geared to support heterosexual men. There are over 600 refuges able to support women, of which gay men are excluded from due to gender. We have not been able to refer any of our clients to men’s hostels outside of London as none of these services have had vacancies. We could refer the client to No Second Night Out, but this is not a suitable or safe option. This is because there is a requirement that clients need to be bedding down on the street in their borough of origin to qualify for assistance. This requirement increases the risk of being found by their abusive partners, so would not be a safe referral route.”*

Stonewall Housing stated that if a Wandsworth resident came to their service suffering from domestic abuse or gay related hate crimes their first point of contact would be GMSH who would be able to give a detailed risk assessment tailored to the needs of gay men. They would also refer to Galop, to provide access to advocacy, and Pace and Broken Rainbow for emotional support. Again this highlights that there is no specialist provision available for Wandsworth residents.

37. **Consultation with residents of The Gate House and The Lodges.** In order to identify the impact of any changes on residents of The Gate House and The Lodges all service users were sent a confidential questionnaire and an offer of a group or one to one consultation. Ten surveys were returned. The questionnaires showed that the services received include;

- Job advice
- Advice about accommodation

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- One to One sessions and help with needs
  - Counselling
  - Education
  - Employment
  - Drugs
  - Budgeting
  - Looking after their health
38. No residents specifically referred to support in relation to domestic violence or support that could not be accessed in another “single homeless” provision.
39. Residents were asked if they would use an alternative scheme and if not why not. Comments included;
- “I have suffered a lot since I moved to this country, being abused as a gay person. I just want to have my own safe and secure place”*
- “Only if was gay and open minded otherwise would not be comfortable”*
- “I would prefer to be housed in a gay men’s scheme as they would understand me more and my needs and will feel safer”*
- “I am scared of homophobic attack, which happen to me many times”*  
*“there is no other service I can use”*
40. Residents were asked if the MST service no longer operated, what would be your concerns. Comments included;
- “That my safety would be at risk and be hurt or abused again and would end up homeless”*
- “I would be homeless again. Go back to drink, drugs to support myself”*
- “I would be homeless and on the streets because I cannot go back home because of homosexuality and fear of domestic abuse”*
41. Feedback from residents highlights that they do not feel that they could not be supported in another scheme and that they therefore would become homeless. Analysis of other provision in the borough (paragraphs 48 to 53) shows that support is currently in place and could be accessed, however not in a scheme that is exclusively for gay men.

42. **Feedback from the Group Consultation.** Residents requested a group meeting, with one resident requesting a one to one meeting. These consultations took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 at The Lodges scheme and were attended by Wandsworth Borough Council officers and a member of MST staff along with eight service users. The views canvassed by service-users on this occasion were taken to be fairly representative of the views of all current service users as the number of service users attending represented 72.7% of current residents.
43. The meeting lasted for approximately 90 minutes and there was intense discussion often looking at wider national and governmental issues linked to the current national economic situation. Many of the same issues that were raised in the feedback of the questionnaires were also raised in this group consultation, including concerns about safety, fear of homelessness and feelings of being understood in a gay only scheme. Additionally the residents felt that the service's uniqueness in the country should be seen as a source of pride by the Council and that Wandsworth should seek to retain it but to also encourage other local authorities to set up similar provision elsewhere so that Wandsworth residents could access a service outside of their borough.
44. They questioned why the Supporting People programme did not have a specific client group for gay male domestic violence, in the same way that there was for women and whether the decision making process had a 'homophobic' aspect to it as to 'why close the only Gay service in the borough'? However, it was explained that all Supporting People funded services worked with Gay and Lesbian people and were obliged to do so under their contractual terms and conditions, which had been actively monitored throughout the duration of the contracts, including the alternative services available to support single homeless people. It was also explained that the possibility of decommissioning this particular service had been identified following a complete review of existing services, reflecting the commissioning priorities appropriate to the needs of Wandsworth residents, ensuring value for money at a time of reduced resources.
45. Residents questioned why services were set up for 'local' people and it was explained to them that Local Authorities were given their own budgets to meet local needs; however, in the event of this service's funding being withdrawn there would still be similar services available. The residents took this on board but felt that they would only feel truly 'understood in a gay only service'. They challenged how Wandsworth Borough Council prioritises services and questioned why funding is provided for amenities such as parks and leisure centres when services like this were potentially going to have funding reduced and felt that they were an 'easy target'.

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46. The residents asked what would happen to them in the event of the funding ending and the scheme closing as a result. It was explained that they would be treated in the same way as their predecessors, in what is a temporary service prior to supporting people to move on to independent accommodation and that every possible assistance would be given by their service provider, MST, and Wandsworth Borough Council, where appropriate, to ensure their resettlement.
47. The residents thanked Wandsworth Borough Council for giving them the opportunity to air their views and to be listened to.
48. **Feedback from the One to One Consultation.** One resident requested a one to one meeting in order to provide their feedback and views. The individual was asked whether they would like their views to be included within the body of this report or to be handled confidentially. The individual indicated that they would prefer their views to be reported confidentially. The feedback and views provided by the individual have consequently been included in an “exempt” report (Paper No. 386A) with a restricted circulation under the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as they relate to information about an individual.
49. **Existing Single Homeless Services in Wandsworth.** In addition to the “single homeless” places at The Gate House and The Lodges, ten places are currently provided by Western Lodge, with funding for a further five places identified, and sixteen places by St Martin’s House.
50. Western Lodge. Western Lodge has provided this service for ten years via funding from the Supporting People programme. Like all Supporting People service providers they have an equality policy and are regularly inspected by Council officers to ensure that they provide a service which is open, accessible and supportive to all. They have stated that;
- “Western Lodge has no problems accommodating anyone who fits the criteria to live in a male hostel”.
51. A snapshot survey of residents within Western Lodge was conducted in April 2013. This showed that;
- All residents were male
  - Five (50%) were White, two (20%) were Asian/Asian British and three (30%) were Black African / Caribbean / Black British. This breakdown is similar to that seen at The Gate House and The Lodges
  - Ten residents stated that they were heterosexual
  - Two (20%) of the residents are registered as disabled. This is the same level as seen at The Gate House and The Lodges



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- The average age of residents is forty two, which is slightly older than at The Gate House and The Lodges
- None were victims of domestic violence

The referring agencies were;

- Wandsworth housing advice (one resident)
- Wandsworth Independent Domestic Abuse Service (two residents)
- Wandsworth CAT (two residents)
- Wandsworth self referrals (two residents)
- Lambeth self referral (one resident)
- Equinox Wandsworth (one resident)
- Kingston Churches (one resident)

Seven residents are currently accessing drug or alcohol services, three residents are accessing mental health trust services and one resident is in the process of applying for support via Adult Social Services. This is similar to the support accessed by residents of The Gate House and The Lodges; whilst nine are residents of Wandsworth, which is a higher level than seen at The Gate House and The Lodges.

52. Western Lodge has also provided a case study, which is shown in full in Appendix One. The case study details how they supported a gay male within their scheme. The support provided included; partnership working with the Battersea Alcohol Service, which resulted in the individual successfully completing a programme of treatment. This highlights that a provider of a “single homeless” scheme has successfully supported a gay man fleeing domestic violence through referrals to specialist agencies.

53. St Martin’s House. St Martin’s House has provided a “single homeless” service for ten years funded by the Supporting People programme. Like all Supporting People providers they have an equality policy and are regularly inspected to ensure they provide a service which is open, accessible and supportive to all. They have stated that

*“St Martin’s House welcomes referrals from people with all sexual and gender identities and is able to provide specific support to individuals around sexuality and gender identity if this is needed”*

54. A snapshot survey of residents was conducted in April 2013. This showed that;

- Fifteen out of sixteen residents were male

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- Nine (56%) were White, three (19%) were Asian/Asian British, three (19%) were from a mixed ethnic group and one (6%) was Black/ African / Caribbean / Black British
- Twelve residents stated that they were heterosexual, two that they were gay men, one that he was bisexual and one that she was a gay woman/lesbian
- Eight of the residents are registered disabled
- One resident was a victim of domestic violence
- The average age of residents was forty six, which is older than at Gate House and The Lodge
- Referrals came from the Wandsworth Homeless Persons Unit, Wandsworth Equinox, Wandsworth Street Rescue, the Western Lodge Outreach Team, and Passage House
- Eight are currently accessing drug or alcohol services, and
- Five are accessing mental health services.

This is similar to the support accessed by residents of The Gate House and The Lodges; whilst five were residents of Wandsworth. This is a higher level than seen at The Gate House and The Lodges.

The service also provided a case study, which is detailed in full in Appendix One.

55. **Impact of the Withdrawal of Funding.** As Supporting People funding currently funds the majority of the MST housing support scheme, it is probable that the MST scheme would close if alternative sources of funding can not be identified. Both Stonewall Housing and the Terrence Higgins Trust state that, if The Gate House and The Lodges closed they would struggle to find accommodation for men suffering from domestic abuse. The withdrawal of funding would therefore impact on gay men. The Terrence Higgins Trust state that it would particularly impact on older gay men, however, as the average age at the Scheme is thirty two, this suggests that older gay men are not currently accessing this provision.
56. It should also be noted that the MST scheme has twelve places, yet information provided by these two referral agencies highlights that considerably more than twelve gay men present to them in need of housing each year, which indicates that significant numbers of alternative service provision must be being accessed elsewhere. In addition, Wandsworth gay men are not able to access the Scheme and therefore have no alternative but to be supported in “single homeless” schemes.
57. The case studies and monitoring data provided by the two providers of “single homeless” places in Wandsworth demonstrate that they have supported and house gay men and that the support they provide mirrors that provided at The Gate House and The Lodges, in that they refer to

specialist agencies if they do not have the skills in-house. This means that if The Gate House and The Lodges were to close, gay men could still access housing support via alternative “single homeless” schemes available within the Borough. The main differentiating factor would be that these schemes are of mixed use, both in terms of gender, age and sexual orientation. However, it should be noted that Wandsworth gay men or gay men who cannot be housed at The Gate House or The Lodges will currently be accessing this type of scheme already.

58. If the MST scheme closed residents currently living there would need to find alternative accommodation. It is important to emphasise that in each case the scheme provides the resident with a ‘home’ and everyone has the right to respect for their home and private life. There can be no interference with that right except by action which is both lawful and necessary in the interests, amongst other things, of the general economic well-being or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
59. The withdrawal of funding would therefore impact on the eleven gay men currently residing in the Scheme, a significant number of who are from a BME background. Residents have stated that they fear becoming homeless as a result of the service closing, however, in terms of the current residents the approach taken by MST has been to utilise a number of rehousing options including private sector rental, existing MST housing stock, Viridian housing stock (the Landlord of the properties used by the MST scheme), Stonewall Housing Services and Wandsworth Council Housing options. If a decision were taken to close the MST scheme it would be reasonable to expect that MST would explore these rehousing options for their service users. Any rehousing offered by the Council would be on the basis of the individual resident’s circumstances and their priority for housing. Housing priority may be conferred on persons who are vulnerable as a result of fleeing domestic violence. In this respect, all of the residents have been asked to complete housing registration forms which will clearly be assessed in relation to their current and future circumstances, if the MST scheme closes.
60. If the MST scheme were to close, although there would no longer be a scheme exclusively for gay men fleeing domestic violence, gay men coming to Wandsworth would be able to be housed via the Council’s commitment to allocate 20% of its “single homeless” provision to out of borough residents (Paper 12-699).
61. If the Council decided to withdraw funding from The Gate House and The Lodge, MST would be given 6 months notice. In order to mitigate any negative impact as a result of the withdrawal of funding the Council would provide advice, where possible, to MST on alternative sources of funding. This work is already underway. In a letter to MST on the 11th April 2013

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confirming the position on funding, an offer was made by the Housing Department to initiate and enable discussions on this matter if MST felt it was useful. Whilst MST has thus far not taken up this offer of assistance, the Housing Department are continuing to seek discussions with MST as to funding options that might be available. The six month notice period would also give MST sufficient time to allay the concerns of current residents regarding the suitability of alternative accommodation.

62. **Comments of the Director of Finance.** Paper No. 12-699 was followed by Paper No. 13-117 to Adult Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2013 which approved a General Fund negative budget variation of £1,787,340 in 2013/14 and £1,808,940 in 2014/15 for the decommissioning and reconfiguration of Supporting People services. The amount relating to funding for MST was £64,000. The decision to extend the scheme for further review is therefore costing the council approximately £1,230 per week currently for eleven residents. If a decision is made in line with the decision previously made by Members (Papers 12-699 and 13-117) to decommission the service by serving a six month notice, the additional cost of £32,000 will need to be met from within Adult Social Services' budgets in 2013/14.
63. **Comments of the Borough Solicitor.** The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the Council in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Members must keep these duties in mind when considering their decision. It is important to note, however, that the effect of the statutory equality duty is not to oblige the Council to follow one course of action rather than another, but rather to ensure that due regard is paid to equalities implications amongst other relevant considerations.

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides that everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. Members should bear in mind that a person's "home" is where he currently lives and does not necessarily imply any degree of permanence. It would right to assume, therefore, that for each gay man the accommodation he occupies is his home and he therefore has the right not to suffer any interference by the Council with it except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Members therefore have to be satisfied that any interference relates to one or more of these reasons and that it is both necessary and proportionate having regard to the Council's objectives.

64. **Conclusion.** The service provided by MST is specifically for gay men fleeing domestic violence, regardless of the fact that it being classified as a single homeless scheme within the definitions of the Supporting People programme. If this service is decommissioned there will clearly be an impact upon the current residents of the scheme, however there are suitable and appropriate alternative services available within the Borough, that provide the appropriate housing support and access to other appropriate services to support individuals to move on to more independent accommodation. If the service was decommissioned the Council would work with MST and the existing residents to explore the possibility of alternative sources of funding and/or accommodation as appropriate.
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DAWN WARWICK  
Director of Adult Social Services

12<sup>th</sup> June 2013

**Background papers**

There are no background papers to this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website ([www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov)) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the committee secretary can supply it if required.

**MST Case Study 1.**

E was referred to our supported housing scheme for gay men escaping domestic and homophobic abuse on 16th April 2012. E is a very vulnerable young man with high support needs who was diagnosed as a young child as having autistic spectrum disorder, dyspraxia and dyslexia. He is suffering from depression, has epilepsy and is on medication for this. His parents divorced when he was young and he felt abandoned by his Father. His Mother bought him up on her own which was a struggle especially as she has poor health which she has attributed to difficulties during E's birth. He was referred to and supported by a CAMH service when he was fifteen years old. He was bullied at school and also as a child attended a new model of special school and was "Statemented". He achieved two GCSE's at foundation level and attended Whittle College where he passed courses in animal care which continues to be a passion and goal of his. E has progressed in recent years in developing his practical skills and independence. He can use public transport but struggles to find a specific location if he hasn't been taken there by a worker first. His Mother does feel frustrated at his lack of self care skills and support workers have also noted that he needs a lot of encouragement to keep on top of tidying, cleaning etc. Although very articulate E may misinterpret information, and gets confused by detail. He needs things to be exact and clear.

Three years ago E was offered a one bed flat in supported housing accommodation in his home borough of Essex. Here he met S an older man and they embarked on a relationship together. This soon turned abusive and S engaged in controlling and manipulative behaviours in order to isolate E from his concerned friends and family and to financially exploit him. After this relationship ended E was physically attacked and raped by his ex-partner. He claimed that support workers at the service did nothing to help him and did not want to discuss matters relating to his sexuality leaving him feeling trapped, suicidal and fearing his ex-partner would return at any time. He has a very low capacity as regards refusal skills and is easily led into situations making him extremely vulnerable to exploitation. His ex-partners family were also approaching him making threats and intimidating him. E eventually reported these incidents to the police and his ex-partner was charged and sentenced for assault. E was supported by Sharon Conahy an I.D.V.A with Witham Victim Support who referred him to GMSH and he was placed on a MARAC prior to moving in to the GMSH project where the MARAC was then transferred to Wandsworth. Being autistic affects his day to day functioning and his life in terms of lack of engagement and concentration on education and employment etc. E needs support on life skills, cooking and getting ready for independent living. Also the risk of exploitation has increased after another incident that E has recently disclosed where he felt a partner had extorted money from him. With support from workers he ended the relationship

and there has been no further contact from or with the perpetrator. E's condition makes him feel too emotional and misinterpret information easily and he finds it difficult to engage or concentrate on activities. Recently we referred E to The Adults With Learning Difficulties Team at Wandsworth Social Services where he has been accepted and a Social Worker appointed to his case. We referred E due to our concerns over his vulnerability to exploitation and the possible withdrawal of our support service that has been essential in protecting and assisting E in maintaining his current safety and standard of living. Some of the areas where support has been given are:

- Receiving support from Wandsworth Adults With learning disabilities team Springfield Joan Bicknell Centre.
- Receiving counselling from London Friend for 3 months.
- Treatment for epilepsy from St George's Hospital.
- Support in enrolment at City Lit College for a creative writing course.
- Registering for the National Autistic Society Prospects Autism specific back to work courses.
- Support exploring issues relating to gender identity and referral to Charing Cross NHS gender clinic.
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Within GMSH, we have concentrated on the following areas of support;

- Encouraging self esteem and confidence
- Exploring training/ voluntary work opportunities
- Managing expectations around close relationships
- Exploring feelings in relation to issues around family dynamics
- Handling medication
- Sexual Health
- Safer Relationships – recognizing danger signs and refusal skills
- Coping with the frustrations re autism and trying to understand others/ own needs and how to express and understand these.

## **MST Case Study 2.**

At referral LW was fleeing severe domestic abuse experienced from his partner. He was homeless as a result of this physical and mental abuse and in desperate need of support. He had been staying on and off with his Mother but she was very difficult and made it clear that she did not want someone who was HIV+ living in her house. She was also making derogatory homophobic remarks leaving him feeling isolated, unwelcome and discriminated against by his own parent.

LW reported a difficult childhood related to his Fathers abusive behaviour and alcoholism. There was domestic violence between the parents and also LW related being the victim of cruelty from both of his parents. His parents split up when he in his teens and he also found this problematic. LW went to University

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however he struggled here and felt held back by a developing depressive illness. He saw a psychotherapist during this time. At times LW reported feeling suicidal. LW's up-bringing and the rejection he suffered from his family based on his sexuality led to low self-esteem, anxiety and a lack of confidence.

He drifted into alcohol and substance misuse as a means of escapism and left University as he had become involved with a man who took him to Paris. This was a particularly abusive relationship in which he felt trapped and powerless. There was considerable use of drugs popular on the gay party scene including Crystal Meth and Cocaine to which LW developed an addiction. After a period of time the abuse worsened into physical attacks and coercive controlling behaviour. He felt so at risk that eventually he decided to escape when his partner was out. He fled from the flat in Paris leaving everything he owned behind and returned to the UK.

It was shortly after returning that he met 'X' and they embarked on a longer relationship which also became violent and controlling following a pattern of abuse often suffered by victims of domestic violence as modelled by their core parenting. This relationship also involved drug use. They were together for two and a half years and in that time LW felt he was more and more dependent on X. He recognizes that X was very controlling & coercive and isolated LW using threats, verbal, financial and psychological abuse. He also used drugs as a means of control and abuse. LW had no source of independent income, no job and was newly diagnosed HIV+.

LW's CD4 count for a long time was dangerously low and he suffered from complications related to HIV illness. He was and continues to be a patient at the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital 56 Dean Street Clinic. He is on antiretroviral combination therapy; Truvada, Atazanavir, Ritonavir. His physical health can fluctuate and he suffers from severe night sweats, nausea, tremors, recurrent pain and severe discomfort related to an Annual Fistula infection.

He has an on-going diagnosis of severe depression, anxiety and panic attacks. This is managed by his GP and he is prescribed anti-depressant medication. During his stay at the GMSH project, he has consistently worked with various support services, both in terms of counselling/ psychology input around specific issues such as HIV, substance misuse and mental health.

Some of the areas where support has been given are:

- Receiving treatment from Chelsea & Westminster Hospital
- Received support from Wandsworth CMHT for one year
- Counselling sessions at Terrence Higgins Trust & PACE
- Attended Antidote clinic in Soho for support around substance misuse.



Within GMSH, we have concentrated on the following areas;

- Encouraging self esteem and confidence
- Exploring employment & training opportunities
- Managing expectations around close relationships
- Exploring feelings in relation to issues around family dynamics and difficulties in Handling medication
- Remaining abstinent from drugs and alcohol.

LW has also utilized his time to contribute to a number of community based projects;

- Working with Sound Minds a music and film in-borough service for people with mental health issues.
- Voluntary work for Metropolitan Housing in an administrative capacity.
- DJ'ing at LGBT student functions.
- Volunteer at Battersea Cats & Dogs Home

During his stay at the scheme LW managed to maintain abstinence from drugs and alcohol. He also dealt with previous relationship issues and is living a safer more settled life. He started a voluntary role within Metropolitan and through this secured a part time paid admin post for nine months that ended early last year. He has also dedicated time on a weekly basis as a volunteer for Battersea Cats and Dogs Home which has given him rewarding worthwhile work which will increase potential future employment opportunities.

**Western Lodge Case Study.**

Ben was born in Roehampton hospital and brought up in Tooting by his mother and his grandmother they were both kind and loving but Ben did find life hard, he attended St Boniface Church School which he enjoyed. Between the ages of 12-16 he attended a private school in Ipswich, his teenage years were a little mixed up and he had a few relationships with both boys and girls. He then moved back to London and lived with his grandmother in Battersea, he attended Lewisham College and after 5 years obtained a degree in Catering, and then for the next few years he worked as a chef in and around London.

Then he was approached by a friend and offered a job as a chef working for a company that ran the orient express travelling all over Europe which entailed being away from home and working 7 days a week for long stretches, he found this very hard work but enjoyed it at first, he preferred the work when he was travelling in this country. On many occasions over the 7 years that he was employed, work took him to Royal Ascot and cooked lunch frequently for over 200 people, it was during this period that his drinking increased dramatically as he tried to cope with all the stress of running such an operation and supervising

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staff and he ended up drinking as much as 3 bottles of champagne on a daily basis just to keep going.

Then in 2003 while drunk he fell off the train while it was in a siding and injured himself, and has been unemployed ever since due to being injured and unable to hold a job down due to his Alcoholism. Then in 2004 life began to change for the better when he began a relationship with Ron and they moved to Brighton to live during the first 2 years of the relationship all was well his drinking was greatly reduced and life was good for them both, living in Brighton involved a few house moves which they enjoyed doing. Then life changed for Ben as Ron became Aggressive, Verbally Abusive and Physically Abusive towards him and this situation continued for some time, after putting up with this situation Ben obtained an injunction against him which was broken, as he broke into Bens flat and assaulted him which resulted in him being hospitalized and the flat being trashed.

It was on his discharge from hospital that he decided to return and live in London for his own safety and he lived with good friends in Battersea, while staying with them he had a complete nervous breakdown and attempted suicide on 4 occasions, after which he got arrested for minor drug offences, and went through a period of being very promiscuous. He was referred to Wandsworth CAT who then referred him on to Springfield Hospital for a detox after which he was referred him to Western Lodge on a temporary basis until such time that they were able to offer a residential rehab. During this period Ben has continued drinking heavily and on some occasions we had to exclude him from the project, he then entered Detox, following this he was then due to go into Rehab in Ealing but after some thought he decided that he would rather be on a day programme, so after consulting with the project manager Jackie Dymond she with the help of Battersea Alcohol Services were able to get him a referral meeting which has resulted in him being offered a place on their programme. Ben successfully completed the program and moved into private rented accommodation 3 months later

### **St Martin's House case study.**

Brian (not his real name) grew up in Angola and then in Portugal and was raised by his father and step-mother. Brian was treated differently to the other children in the family and he was verbally and physically abused. This abuse escalated to the point where Brian had to leave home at age 18 for his own safety. He went to France initially before settling in London in 1990. Brian met a partner and they had a child together. It was at this stage that Brian started to use drugs as a way of coping with his past trauma and enforced separation from his family. Initially he started smoking cannabis, but this quickly led onto crack cocaine. This relationship broke down, mainly due to Brian's drug use.

Brian was diagnosed with clinical depression at this time and was admitted to St Mary's hospital for 3 months. From there, Brian was referred to Western Lodge.

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After two years at Western Lodge Brian was ready for more independence, but was still not ready to live completely independently and so he was referred to St Martin's House.

Since moving into St Martin's House, Brian has managed to completely address his drug use and no longer uses any illegal substances. He is now stable on medication, having engaged with the CMHT and is now stable enough not to need CMHT input anymore. His medication is now managed by a local GP practice. Brian has re-gained contact with his son who has become a regular part of his life and he sees him each weekend. Brian was assessed by our staff as ready to move on and was subsequently referred to the Clearing House. Brian has recently received a nomination through the Clearing House and is now waiting to move on. We will continue to work with Brian as he moves on and will continue to provide some level of support to him as he settles into his new home and while he begins the process of getting to know his new floating support worker.