

# PLANNING YOUR HOUSE

## Information Pack



**The Challenging  
Behaviour Foundation**  
making a difference to the lives of people with severe learning disabilities

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Thank you to all those who helped create this information sheet, especially the families who contributed case studies.



## INTRODUCTION

Providing suitable housing for people with learning disabilities has been recommended in national policy. In 2001 the government published a white paper **Valuing People** which was updated in 2009 as **Valuing People Now**. This raised a number of issues including placing a requirement on Local Authorities to produce a housing strategy for people with learning disabilities. **Valuing People Now**<sup>1</sup> says

“The vision for people with more complex needs is the same as for everyone: inclusion and participation in all areas of community life, including living independently and having paid work. To assume that some people cannot, and will never, achieve these is to set a ceiling on what progress can be made, both by an individual and by society.”

This has also been stated by NHS England et al in **Building the right support**<sup>2</sup> which says that

“people with a learning disability and/or autism have the right to the same opportunities as anyone else to live satisfying and valued lives and to be treated with dignity and respect. They should expect, as people without a learning disability or autism expect, to live in their own homes, to develop and maintain positive relationships and to get the support they need to be healthy, safe and an active part of society.”

People with learning disabilities who display behaviour described as challenging have the same rights as everyone else to appropriate local housing and support. Disability and Equality laws say that the additional needs of disabled people must be taken into account when decisions including housing are being made. These laws also require local authorities to pay specific regard to the needs of disabled people (both children and adults). In the UK only 15% of adults with learning disabilities have a secure long-term tenancy or their own home. This highlights a big gulf between policy aims and the reality of many people with learning disabilities compared to the rest of the population.

To improve housing choices for people with **severe learning disabilities**<sup>3</sup>, it is vital that their housing needs form an important part of their **person centred plan**<sup>4</sup>. The law requires social services (local councils) and health authorities to take housing into consideration when making assessments and providing services for a disabled person.

This information pack has been developed to assist family carers and professionals caring for people with severe learning disabilities who display challenging behaviour to work in partnership to develop personalised housing options. The language used in the pack is written with family carers in mind and uses the term ‘your relative’ to describe children, young people or adults with a learning disability.

This information pack gives ideas of what to consider when planning a house for a person with severe learning disabilities, such as:

- Living arrangements (living alone or sharing)
- Where to live and the type of house to live in
- The design and adaptations the person needs
- What help and support is needed to live there
- How to work in partnership with others to meet the needs of the person you are caring for

The pack aims to help you think about personalised design and features of a person's environment that could reduce their challenging behaviour. Much of the information is focused on adult housing needs, however Section 3 applies to children too.

The information pack is divided into four sections with a 'jargon buster' to explain the highlighted words in each section. Some real life cases studies are used as examples. A list of organisations offering support and advice is provided at the end.

A separate guide from the CBF, '8 Ways to Get a House', explains the options for getting a house in more detail.

### JARGON BUSTER

<sup>1</sup> **Valuing People Now:** was the government's three year strategy to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families. It covers all aspects of life including health, housing, getting a paid job, personalisation, transition, advocacy, hate crime and relationships. There has not been a new national policy for people with learning disabilities produced since this. [www.bit.ly/2stRagV](http://www.bit.ly/2stRagV)

<sup>2</sup> **Building the Right Support:** is a national plan to develop community services and close inpatient facilities for people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition. [www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/natplan/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/natplan/)

<sup>3</sup> **Severe learning disabilities:** Severe learning disability (sometimes referred to as severe intellectual disability) is a developmental disability and refers to individuals who have no speech or limited communication, a significantly reduced ability to learn new skills and who require support with daily living skills such as dressing and eating.

<sup>4</sup> **Person centred plan:** "Put simply, person centred planning is a way of discovering what people want, the support they need and how they can get it. It is evidence-based practice that assists people in leading an independent and inclusive life. It shifts power from professionals to people who use services" (Personalisation through Person Centred Planning, Department of Health, 2010).

## SECTION 1: Where to start?

### 1.1 First Steps

- \* *Gather as much information as possible*
- \* *Keep an open mind about what kind of home will suit your relative*
- \* *Ask advice from other families in the area*

You are likely to start thinking about future housing needs at these key times:

- When creating a **transition plan**<sup>1</sup> in later school years. Transition planning should start as early as possible or from year 9.
- A **Care and Support Assessment**<sup>2</sup> or annual review.
- A crisis in their current home, for example family carer's health or an individual's behaviour escalating making current arrangements difficult.

The structure for planning can both be formal and informal. It is helpful for family carers to have ideas and research options but at some stage begin formal processes such as the Care and Support Assessment.

If social housing is a possible option for your relative, register their need for housing to be provided for them with the local authority early as possible. There are often a large number of people on the housing waiting list. You should include any information about their learning disability and challenging behaviours on the form. They may be classified as a vulnerable adult and given priority as per the Housing Act. Local authorities in deciding who should have priority for housing must give 'reasonable preference' to persons who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (this includes people with severe learning disabilities). Contact your local housing register team for an application form.

### 1.2 Who needs to be involved?

It is important to involve your relative as much as possible. Ways to understand their preferences for where they live and what their house is like range from observing how they respond to different environments and places they stay, to using communication aids such as Talking Mats. You will need support from other family members and professionals involved in your relative's care. For example;

- The current service or support provider (e.g. the school, college, residential care home, assessment and treatment unit)
- Health professionals (e.g. psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists)

- Adult social service team (e.g. social worker or care manager)
- Advocate or circle of support.

It is important that they are all fully involved because each has an area of expertise to contribute to the future plans. If everyone involved can agree on a course of action it makes the support and funding for any plans easier and more likely to succeed.

### 1.3 Getting a Care and Support Assessment

Under the Care Act 2014, a local authority has a legal duty to carry out an assessment for care and support needs where it appears to them that an adult may have needs for care and support or where a person is referred or has requested an assessment. An assessment does not depend on your relative's financial situation although the local authority will carry out a financial assessment to check whether they can contribute towards their care and support costs. For children with learning disabilities, an assessment of their social care needs is part of their **Education Health and Care Plan**<sup>3</sup>. Local authorities have duties to include practical support in the home and any adaptations needed to meet the needs of your relative as part of their service.

You can ask the local authority for a care and support assessment under the Care Act 2014.

The assessment will involve the person who needs care and support, family members, carers and other professionals involved in delivering care to the individual.

- \* *Families should be involved in the process as they know the needs of their relative best.*

For a list of things to tell the assessor during the assessment please see Mencap's guide: *How to pay for the support you need*, under subheading 'Things you need to tell your assessor'.

- \* *As a family member or carer you can also request for your own carers assessment from your local authority (called a Support Assessment under the Care Act) or you can be assessed jointly with your relative.*

After the assessment, the local authority will decide what services they can provide or help arrange for your relative.

## 1.4 Paying for the house

Getting the money for accommodation, daily living costs, care and support is not straightforward.

The following financial options can be used to pay for housing:

- a) **Housing Benefit** - this is used to pay rent and other housing charges. You can apply for housing benefits on behalf of your relative if they are on other benefits and have less than £16,000 savings. Your relative claiming housing benefit will need to be over the age of 16 to qualify. Housing benefits cannot be used to cover the cost of a mortgage but can be used to pay charges relating to a rented property (such as cleaning, maintenance etc). You cannot use housing benefit to pay for food, transport, nursing or personal care, household bills (such as water, electricity etc) and other bills unrelated to the rented property.

If you are renting privately for your relative they will be given Local Housing Allowance benefit to pay for their rent. Please note that if there is a spare room in the house, the local authority may reduce the housing benefit unless there is a need for a spare room (such as, for a live in carer).

The government has introduced a benefit scheme called **Universal Credit**<sup>5</sup> which is being rolled out gradually. This scheme will bring together most other existing benefits into one single claim. Check the government's website to see if the scheme is operating in your relative's area: [www.gov.uk/guidance/jobcentres-where-you-can-claim-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/jobcentres-where-you-can-claim-universal-credit). If your relative is already in receipt of housing benefits, their local Job Centre will notify you when you need to switch to the new benefit scheme.

- b) **Disabled facilities grants** - You can apply for this grant if you want to make adaptations to your relative's home or extend your house to accommodate your relative (such as widening the doorways, bathrooms, adapting heating or lighting facilities, building an extension etc.).
- c) **Personal Budget** - If your relative has been assessed as having housing needs, you may be able to use money allocated to them in their personal budget to meet the cost of home adaptations or pay the extra rent if their housing benefit does not cover the full amount.
- d) **Family Investment** - Family members may be able to provide the investment to purchase the property for their relative or buy a share of a property with the person with a learning disability.
- e) **Support Mortgage Interest (SMI)** - If you wish to purchase a home for your relative you might get help by claiming mortgage interests' payments. This will

help pay the interest on up to £200,000 of the mortgage if your relative qualifies. The money is paid directly to their mortgage lender.

- f) **Charity grants:** A number of charities provide grants for different causes including home adaptations. For a grant search service visit Turn 2 Us website: [www.turn2us.org.uk/Find-Benefits-Grants](http://www.turn2us.org.uk/Find-Benefits-Grants)

There are a number of other benefits you can apply for, some which can be used towards paying rent or purchasing a property for your relative or the person in your care. For home adaptations, the NHS has power to make funding available if you do not have access to a disabled facilities grant. There are also government schemes that you can use towards purchasing a property for your relative. Ask your relative's social worker or care manager for more information.





## 1.5 Housing options to choose from

**(a) Living in the family home:**

You may choose to adapt your family home to meet the needs of your relative. You can apply for a disabled facility grant to help with the cost of adapting your house or the local authority may agree to cover the costs, to meet the needs of your relative after an assessment.

**(b) Renting (Social Housing):**

Social housing includes homes rented from the local council or a registered housing association. The advantage of renting a social house is that you get security of occupancy and rent is reasonably low as the increases are set by law. To qualify for social housing you need to ensure that your relative is on the council's housing allocation register. If the family home is rented, your relative may be able to take over the tenancy and continue living in the family home.

**(c) Renting (Private Landlord):**

The lack of social housing means a number of people have to rely on private rented houses. This option does not come with a similar security of occupancy as that of social housing and the house may require adaptations to meet the needs of someone with severe learning disabilities who displays challenging behaviour. You can pay rent using housing benefits and you can apply for grants to help pay for any adaptations. Under the Equality Act 2010, landlords are required to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to use their property.

**(d) Home ownership:**

People with learning disabilities can live independently in their own home with the right support and people with learning disabilities are beginning to take this option. There are a number of government schemes which your relative may be able to take advantage of: *Equity Loan Scheme*, *Home Ownership for People with Long-Term Disabilities (HOLD)*, *Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI)* among others. If your relative or your family have some money to put into a property, a house can be purchased on a shared ownership arrangement, using a part buy/part rent arrangement with a housing association.

For information on buying a home for your relative with a disability, MySafeHome has produced a 'Guide to Buying a Home for Buyers and their Families'.

**Case Study: Shared ownership house**

Andrew's house is a 'shared ownership' i.e. he has invested a small amount of money and has a landlord who has invested the remainder of the cost. The landlord charges rent, which is paid for by Housing Benefit.



As Andrew needs someone to sleep-in at night, he needed a 2-bedroomed property. We searched in vain for a house with 2 bedrooms. There are limited 2-bedroomed properties in the area. New build was unsuitable – just too fragile! Others had no front garden, out of the front door and straight onto the road – too dangerous. It was finally agreed that we could have a 3-bedroomed house which, in fact, was no more expensive than a 2-bedroomed house. Eventually we found a nice semi with a garage, in a cul de sac, with enough car parking space to reduce impact and annoyance on neighbours.

In 2015 Andrew bought out his Landlord but that brought new responsibilities. Previously his Landlord was responsible for repairs etc, it is now my responsibility on Andrew's behalf to organize repairs, gas & electric safety checks.

**Jan Seamer – family carer**

**(e) Supported living:**

More people with learning disabilities are now living in supported living services. They are usually smaller than care homes and can accommodate a single person or several people living in one house. They will have support staff on a rota to meet all the residents' support needs. The local authority or their housing benefit will fund the accommodation and the supported living provider arranges the housing and support as a package.

(f) **Supported housing:**

A number of people with learning disabilities are taking up this option. The homes are small and not registered but there are systems in place to ensure that they are safe and of good quality. The housing benefit can cover the rent for the property and if the person has been assessed as needing supported living, the local authority will cover the cost of their support and rent.

(g) **Registered care homes:**

A large number of people with learning disabilities live in care homes. They are generally larger although it is not unusual to find smaller ones. They provide personal care and usually have 24 hour staff cover. They are inspected by the Care Quality Commission. The Local Authority or NHS services will pay all the costs as a package if the person has been assessed as having a need for a care home. The person does not receive benefits when living in a care home and they are given a small weekly allowance for personal spending.

There are other housing options which you may consider for your relative. Ensure that you involve the person in the decision making and other professionals to help you decide what is best for your relative.

### JARGON BUSTER

<sup>1</sup>**Transition plan** - an individualised plan to support a young person to move smoothly into adult services.

<sup>2</sup>**Care and Support Assessment** - also known as an “assessment of need” is carried out by social services and is the first step towards getting help and support with care. The assessment looks at an individual’s needs and determines what services and support they are entitled to.

<sup>3</sup>**Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** - a legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs and how they will be met.

<sup>4</sup>**Universal Credit** - This is a single monthly payment paid out to someone who is in or out of work. It is intended to make the benefit system simpler by putting together a number of single benefits into one universal credit benefit.

## Section 2: What is important about a home?

Everyone's housing needs are different but every family wants a safe and secure home for their relative to live happily and be fulfilled. A home should help improve the overall quality of the person's life and as a result it should be tailored to meet the person's needs, wishes and hopes for the future.

There are lots of things to consider when you are planning your relatives' future living arrangements including who to live with, where to live and the support needed to achieve their goals and wishes. Remember that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to the housing needs of individuals with severe learning disabilities who display behaviour that challenges. It is important that you spent a lot of time considering the kind of home and life that would be best for your relative, and what you think they would like in a home. Try to understand their preferences to ensure their wishes are taken into consideration.

### 2.1 Living arrangements

It is really important to consider whether the person would like to live alone or share with others. For some people they will find shared living stifling or overwhelming and others will find it enriching through sharing communal areas and activities. People with severe learning disabilities should be given choices of accommodation and supported in making the choice. Families and professionals alike should all be involved in helping the individual make the right decision bearing in mind what is important to them. You may need to use creative ways to learn the person's wishes and preferences, such as adapted communication methods.

### 2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of living alone or sharing

#### Sharing with others

##### Advantages:

- ✓ Develop friendships
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Organised/group activities
- ✓ Shared responsibilities
- ✓ Extra facilities (e.g. sensory room)

##### Disadvantages:

- ✗ Lack of privacy
- ✗ Not getting on well with others
- ✗ Fewer choice in activities due to others
- ✗ Sharing facilities and support
- ✗ Noisy or busy environment
- ✗ Non-personalised house design

## Living alone

### Advantages:

- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Privacy
- ✓ Freedom
- ✓ More choice and control
- ✓ Personalised house design

### Disadvantages:

- ✗ Loneliness
- ✗ Boredom
- ✗ Isolation
- ✗ Expensive

## 2.3 Where to live

There are a number of things to consider when deciding where your relative or should live. It is essential to think about what is important to them, such as:

- Location - city, town or countryside
- Being near to family and friends
- Transport – getting out and about – is there a bus route or train station nearby or is there enough parking?
- Distance to shops, place of worship, sports, park, pub, hospital etc.
- How safe and area is
- Having privacy - is there enough space, can neighbours see or hear people in the house?
- Having the right support at the right time – is it an area where support staff can travel to?
- How noisy or busy the area is
- Anything nearby likely to cause the person anxiety – i.e. schools or dog kennels
- Any risks nearby – i.e. busy road or river

These decisions about a property can all be put into a housing specification, which also includes size and design of the home – see section 4.

Although this guide is about housing, it is only one part of the individual's life and lifestyle. The need for activity and leisure, for friendships and social networks, learning new skills and independence all need to be considered. All of these aspects should be considered in the individual's comprehensive and detailed **person centred plan** For more information on person centred planning see the CBF's *Planning for the Future* information pack.

## Section 3: Design, Adaptations & Assistive Technology

Whether you are building a new home or adapting an existing house, the varied and changing needs of someone with severe learning disabilities mean that careful thought and consideration need to be put into the design of the house. To use the right design, **adaptation**<sup>1</sup> and **assistive technology**<sup>2</sup>, we need to understand how it can assist the individual with the following:

- Living independently
- Promoting privacy and dignity
- Ensuring safety and security

### 3.1 Size of the accommodation

- Consider how many rooms are required. Your relative will need a spare room if support staff will be doing sleep-in night time support. If an extra room is not needed this may affect how much housing benefit your relative is entitled to and may also breach the **Bedroom tax rule**<sup>3</sup>.
- Think about the layout, organisation of space between rooms and the amount of space. Does your relative like to move about a lot? Do they have a hobby that needs a lot of space?
- The size of the garden is important to people with learning disabilities if they enjoy spending time outdoors. Your relative might want a trampoline, paddling pool or space to play ball games, or to grow flowers and vegetables.
- If people are sharing they need to have enough space for privacy and separate activities. A self-contained 1 bed flat will usually be at least 40 square metres and 50-55 square metres if built to wheelchair standards. A similar benchmark needs to apply per person in shared housing.
- Consider the external environment: access to the building, how practical the garden and driveway are, how close the neighbours are, the security, noise and privacy.
- Parking requirements are likely to be larger than usual; consideration should be given to neighbours and the availability of on street parking.

#### Key Question: How much space is needed?

Ensuring there is enough space in the property is very important. If an individual is living with others who all require a high ratio of support staff, the sheer density of people can create its own problems and risks. When a person has their own flat a benchmark figure of 50 – 55m<sup>2</sup> would be expected to make it easily 'accessible' allowing for disabled access. More space costs more money so it is important that designers and developers try and achieve this in their plans and secure funding to match. Adequate space is important to allow individuals to have private spaces and also space for manoeuvring mobility aids in the house if they are needed (such as wheelchairs or hoist).

### 3.2 The design and adaptations

- Acoustics and noise are important considerations. Layout, sound insulation, choice of materials and furnishings can all reduce the levels of noise and sound transmission between parts of a building. Carpet reduces noise more than tiles and vinyl but this has to be balanced with other requirements for example cleaning, durability and practicality if the person uses a wheelchair for example.
- Lighting needs to be suitable for your relative's preferences about brightness as well as practical and safe. Lamps may not be suitable and particular types of bulbs might be needed.
- When planning the design think about all of your relative's sensory needs, such as bright lights, wall colours, flooring patterns or textures and noise transmission. Getting this right creates a calm environment and reduces the triggers of challenging behaviour.
- The kitchen may need to be designed to allow for 1:1 support when preparing food or washing up.
- Bathrooms need enough space for support with personal care and easy access to toilet, sink and bath. Waterproof or watertight décor helps reduce long term water damage. Full wet rooms are needed for some people.
- Extra lockable cupboard space may be needed for cleaning products or medication.

#### Case study: Craig's walk in wet room

Craig is 20 and has severe learning disabilities and autism. In the past Craig displayed destructive behaviour; breaking furniture, pulling down curtains/shower rails and smashing mirrors. When Craig moved house it was important that his new home was designed to be as robust as possible to ensure Craig's safety and to keep the cost of repairs to a minimum. The following are details of the adaptations made to Craig's bathroom to meet his needs:

- Motion sensitive lighting
- Toilet with push button flush
- Unbreakable steel mirror
- Fully enclosed pipe work
- Steel toilet roll holder
- Magnetically held towel rail
- Magnetically held shower curtain
- Good quality wall mounted shower, fully fitted and enclosed
- Basin with tiled splash backs
- Lever control taps for easy operation



### 3.3 Decor and furnishings

All decor and furnishings need quite detailed attention if individuals are likely to damage them or harm themselves.

- Hardwearing materials are available for use in the home. Many forms and types of materials can be used to meet specific individual need for both the structure of the building (e.g. doors, windows and flooring) and equipment and furnishings (e.g. chairs, television cabinets).
- Easy clean and hardwearing flooring is easily available.
- Painted walls may be more suitable than wallpaper.
- More specialist durable surfaces can be installed.
- Toughened glass in windows and reinforced doors may be needed for someone who may throw things or bang on hard surfaces.
- Televisions, cupboards and tall furniture can be fixed to the wall for safety.
- Smaller furnishings like curtains, curtain rails and towel rails can either be fixed securely or using Velcro or magnets so that they come off safely if pulled.
- Power sockets can be fitted with covers or specialist casings.
- Safety of windows and doors should be considered and appropriate locking systems chosen.

See the CBF information sheet *Specialist Equipment and Safety Adaptations* for more ideas and suppliers.

### 3.4 Technology

- Use of Assistive Technology (AT) includes alarms and detectors for monitoring and security. For example, a sensor on the person's bed can activate an alarm when they get out of bed (helpful for people who will need assistance when they get up or people who have epilepsy).
- Motion sensitive automatic lighting may be helpful.
- Technology assistive aids for those with hearing or visual impairments should be factored in the design or adaptation.
- Use of **telehealth**<sup>4</sup> and **telecare**<sup>5</sup> can help monitor disabled people's health in creative and personalised ways.
- More information can be found on: [www.housingandsupport.org.uk/assistive-technology](http://www.housingandsupport.org.uk/assistive-technology). You can also visit Hft's website for innovative ideas of incorporating AT/ personalised technology into your home. They have developed a virtual smart house that displays some ideas: [www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk](http://www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk)

### 3.5 Energy consumption

When residents and support staff spend a lot of time in the house, the energy use from lighting, heating and electricity can be very high. Chose energy saving options where possible, such as washing machine settings, thermostat and light bulbs. Ensure staff understand the impact on your relative's finances if they run up large bills through leaving lights on or electrical appliances on standby. Many energy providers have social tariffs that give disabled people discounted rates.



### 3.6 How to get funding for aids and adaptations

An advantage of new build is that with proper advance assessment and Occupational Therapy input, funding for aids and adaptations can be planned and built into the budget.

To improve an existing property you can apply for funding through a range of local authority schemes:

- **Home Repair Assistance Grant** – Local Authorities awards these grants and should contact them for more information. Please note that not all local authorities provide this grant.
- **Disabled Facilities Grant** - This is for extra costs in the home from a person's disability and is dependent on your household income (between £25k – 36k depending on where you live) and savings (up to £6000). This process takes time so should be planned in advance and you must apply **before** doing the work or purchasing equipment, not afterwards. Note that this grant is not available in Scotland.
- **Loans for Repairs and Improvements** - Contact Home Improvement Agencies (Local Authorities, Housing Association & charities) to see what help they can offer.
- **Welfare Assistance Scheme** - Not all Local Authorities provide this scheme, so you will need to ask your local authority if they offer it. In Scotland the Scottish Welfare Fund is offered. (This replaces the Community Care Grants)
- **Aids and Adaptations from Social Services** - These are provided through Occupational Therapy departments. If a local authority assessment has concluded that you need this equipment, it should be provided free of charge. If they are minor adjustments costing less than £1000, these are also provided for free.
- **Charity grants** - Turn 2 Us helps people in financial need gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and other financial help. They have an easy to use benefits calculator and grants search tools: [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk). For a list of grant giving charities see the CBF's *Specialist Equipment and Safety Adaptations* information sheet.
- **VAT exemption** – VAT is not charged on equipment and products bought for disabled children and adults.

The Housing and Support Alliance (now LDE) website has more information about funding, see their resources *Adapting a Property* and *Life begins at home*.

### **Case Study: funding adaptations**

Our son (severe autism, profound learning disability, ADHD, non verbal, lots of challenging behaviours) is 12. He is very tall and energetic. When we moved to our new house, we had to make it "David proof", or as safe as is possible, as he is prone to run away.

A couple of months before, I contacted Kent Community Foundation seeking a grant. Community foundations look after the charitable trusts of several wealthy individuals and vet applications against their charitable criteria. We were awarded a grant of £690 for fencing and barrel door locks, plus labour costs. The difficulty was that normally they pay after the job is done, which was a problem for us on low income and for the builder who wanted money up front to buy the materials and to do the job. We also needed the work done before we moved in. I managed to negotiate an initial £400 grant and paid the balance myself. I then photographed the completed work and wrote a short report to Kent Community Foundation and the family who had donated the money. Our social worker wrote an endorsement letter with the application and confirmed that the work had been done. The balance cheque for £290 followed some time later.

Eighteen months on, we need more work done. David has grown dramatically and has developed a new behaviour of throwing anything and everything over next door's fence, so we need to make the fence taller by adding a lattice top. On the other side of the garden, ivy has rotted the fence underneath. To pay for this work, we have had an Occupational Therapy Assessment which will lead to a Disabled Facilities Grant from the District Council. This will also pay for replacing an old carpet in David's room with lino.

**Keith, David's father**

### 3.7 Security and risk management

Assessing security and managing risk should be a priority during the design and planning of the building. The type of equipment, fittings and furnishing materials should all be considered at this stage bearing in mind the needs of the homeowner. You may need to consider the use of:

- Low surface temperature radiators or no exposed pipe work or under floor heating to reduce risk of burning and self-injury on the exposed radiators
- Assistive technology to increase security and reduce risk (see Hft's smarthouse below for ideas)
- Thermostatic controlled hot water supply to reduce the risk of burning
- Fire precautions (make sure your fire extinguishers are colour coded and serviced regularly by the Fire Service)
- Ensuite facilities where possible/ wet room design
- Increased door and corridor widths for easy access
- 2 way door operation (to prevent barricading)
- Non slip vinyl/laminate flooring
- Lockable cupboards to store away hazardous substances
- Toughened safety glass
- Window restrictors
- Heightened fences

For clever ideas of adapting a home to suit your relatives' needs see Hft's virtual smart house: [www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk](http://www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk). This has ideas of how you can adapt a home incorporating assistive technologies. Housing and Support Alliance's *Life begins at home* guide has a section on housing design and checklist for children with autism or learning disability who display challenging behaviour (section 4.3.1).

#### **Key Question: What laws and policies do the adaptations need to comply with?**

Depending on the size of the adaptation you may need to seek planning permission from your local planning department. There are also a number of laws and policies that you should comply with (depending on scale of adaptations), which include:

- Building Regulations
- Health and Safety laws
- Fire Safety
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards if any adaptation will restrict the individual's freedom of movement

### 3.8 Disability related requirements

When considering the best accommodation solutions for people with physical disabilities and impairments it is essential to identify all their needs and the potential impacts on accommodation requirements. Seek specialist advice from an Occupational Therapist and charities supporting people with the specific disability.

#### Case study: Visual Impairment

Ann has a visual impairment and severe learning disabilities. Ann had a flat designed and built to take into account all her needs including her visual impairment. The following design considerations were put in place in the kitchen:

- Colour contrast between floor and cupboards to help Ann's orientation in the room
- Colour contrast between the worktop and the wall behind it to help Ann place objects on the worktop
- Contrast between the wall and electrical switches and sockets to make it easier for Ann to use electrical appliances e.g. kettle
- Contrasting handles on cupboards and drawers to help Ann locate and open them

For further information on adaptations for people with a visual impairment, see: Lighting Solutions guide: Improve the lighting in your home; RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust (2013).

#### JARGON BUSTER

<sup>1</sup> **Adaptation:** refers to changes made to the home to meet the person's needs, such as enlarging doorways, lowering kitchen surfaces or installing a wet room.

<sup>2</sup> **Assistive Technology:** "is any product designed to enable independence for disabled and older people" (King's Fund Consultation, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> **'Bedroom tax' rule:** is a government rule which means you will receive less in housing benefit if you live in a property that has an unused spare bedroom.

<sup>4</sup> **Telehealth:** "covers the electronic exchange of personal health data from a patient at home to medical staff at a hospital or similar site to assist in diagnosis and monitoring." (Living Made Easy, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> **Telecare:** equipment and services that support people to live safely and independently, by detecting risks such as smoke, floods or a person falling and linking to a help centre.

## Section 4: Housing specification

Having thought about all the options for the type of house and its design, the next thing to do is to build up a specification of what is needed: a list of what is essential and what is desirable. This can form an agreed housing specification that everyone involved can follow to find the property that is the best fit possible and adapt it as required. The following information needs to be included in a housing specification:

<b>The property</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House, flat, detached, bungalow etc.</li> <li>• Purpose built, an existing property or an adapted property</li> </ul>
<b>The location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town/countryside</li> <li>• Close to family or friends</li> <li>• Access to amenities and transport links</li> <li>• Busy/quiet street or area</li> </ul>
<b>The people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living alone or sharing</li> <li>• What type of support they will have</li> </ul>
<b>The design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size and layout of property</li> <li>• What features and furnishings are needed</li> <li>• Safety requirements and technology</li> </ul>

### Case Study: Housing specification for Aaron

Aaron’s family wanted their son to live closer to them and chose a bungalow a few minutes away from their house that needed adaptations to make it suitable for Aaron. Their son was also familiar with the area as he had attended school within that area. The family decided that due to his level of need it would be best for him to live alone with his own support team.

A bungalow was a more suitable type of building because it would be on one level making it easier to keep an eye on him from a different room. The open plan design also increased Aaron’s independence and privacy as staff could observe him from most areas of the property without him feeling crowded, making it a safer environment for him and his staff.

The bungalow was adapted to meet Aaron’s specific needs, such as purpose built lockable cupboards fitted for extra storage security. Aaron has a private low maintenance garden with step free access and secure gates for his safety from the main road. The bungalow also has room for two care staff to sleep each night and enough car parking spaces.

The adaptations made to the bungalow have made it an easy transition for Aaron to settle into his new home. He has been in his new home nearly 8 months and he is enjoying his life.

## Section 5: Next Steps

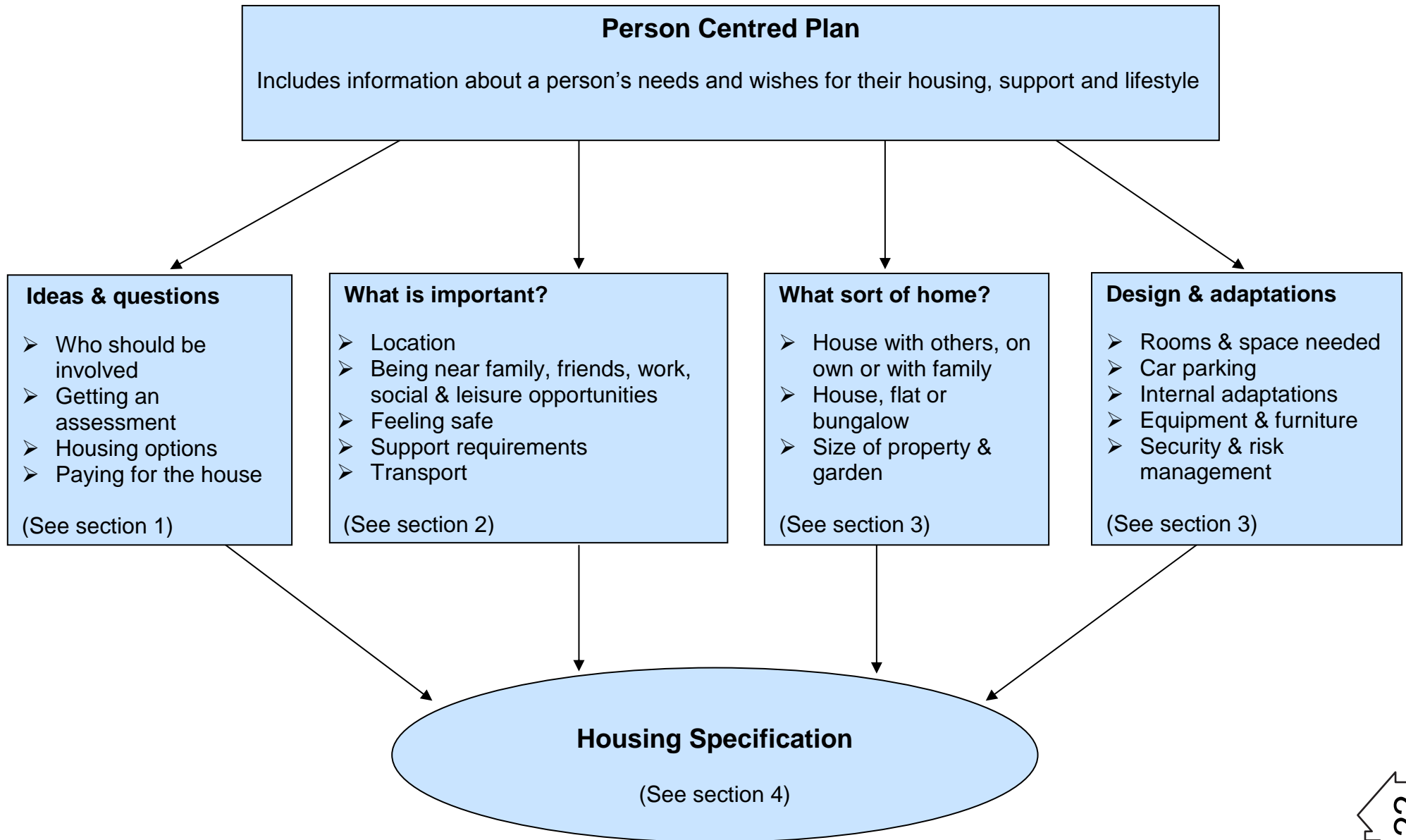
Planning your relative's housing can be a complicated process and there are some key steps to take to ensure that all the options are considered. Going through this process step by step for your relative is more likely to achieve the best housing solution to meet their individual needs.

### 5.1 Key Points

- \* Register your relative's need for housing on the local authority housing register and include their diagnosis and needs relating to their challenging behaviour.
- \* Early planning – for people with severe learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges, getting the right home requires careful planning and consideration.
- \* Involve all key people such as family, friends and professionals in decision making throughout the planning process. These people should also be involved in developing a person centred plan to provide clear and accurate information about the person's needs including their specific housing needs.
- \* A decision is needed about the main options:
  - Living alone or sharing with others – and who with
  - Type of property
  - The preferred location
  - Design and features needed in the property
  - Space and layout needed to enable safe support as well as privacy and independence.
- \* Understand the funding options available and work with the local authority to get the best possible option for your relative.
- \* Having considered all the requirements a decision can be made as to whether the house should be:
  - Newly built to meet specified requirements
  - An existing house or flat as it is currently
  - An existing building improved and adapted to meet individual needs
- \* Draw up a housing specification to help with planning all aspects carefully.

The appendix of this document contains useful resources about housing and contact details of organisations that provide various information and services.

## 5.2 SUMMARY DIAGRAM



## **APPENDIX: Useful resources and organisations**

### Information resources

#### **Adapting a Property and**

#### **Life begins at home: A guide to housing for families and children with autism/ learning disabilities who display challenging behaviour**

Housing and Support Alliance (now Learning Disability England)

Accessed from: [www.housingandsupport.org.uk/life-begins-at-home](http://www.housingandsupport.org.uk/life-begins-at-home) & [www.bit.ly/2IzTIAh](http://www.bit.ly/2IzTIAh)

#### **Thinking ahead: a planning guide for families**

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities (Part of Mental Health Foundation)

Accessed from: [www.bit.ly/2na0nba](http://www.bit.ly/2na0nba)

[www.fpld.org.uk](http://www.fpld.org.uk) ([www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk))

#### **Valuing People Now**

Department of Health, UK Government

Accessed from: [www.bit.ly/1n0gj9Q](http://www.bit.ly/1n0gj9Q)

#### **Living in the community: Housing design for adults with autism**

Andrew Brand (Kingwood Trust and Royal College of Art)

Accessed from: [https://www.rca.ac.uk/documents/390/Living\\_in\\_the\\_Community.pdf](https://www.rca.ac.uk/documents/390/Living_in_the_Community.pdf)

#### **Specialist Equipment and safety adaptations Information Sheet,**

#### **8 Ways to Get a House Information Pack and**

#### **Planning for the Future Information Pack**

Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Accessed from: [www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information)

Email: [info@thecbf.org.uk](mailto:info@thecbf.org.uk)

Telephone: 01634 838739

#### **HfT Smart House**

Home Farm Trust

Accessed from: [www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk](http://www.hftsmarthouse.org.uk)

#### **Guide to Buying a Home for Buyers and their Families**

MySafeHome

Accessed from: <http://www.mysafehome.info/home-ownership/who-benifits>

#### **How to pay for the support you need**

Mencap

Accessed from: [www.bit.ly/2ICKFI0](http://www.bit.ly/2ICKFI0)

### Housing organisations

#### **Foundations:**

Foundations is appointed by the Department of Communities and Local Government to oversee a national network of nearly 200 home improvement agencies (HIAs) and



handyperson providers across England. You can use their website to find your local Home Improvement Agency.

[wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.COM](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.COM)

0300 124 0315

**Learning Disability England (LDE)** previously Housing and Support Alliance: LDE is a member organisation providing independent advice, information and resources on housing, supported living and rights. Individuals and organisations can sign up for membership.

[WWW.HOUSINGANDSUPPORT.ORG.UK](http://WWW.HOUSINGANDSUPPORT.ORG.UK)

0300 2010 455

### **Housing LIN:**

The Housing LIN is the national network for promoting new ideas and supporting change in the delivery of housing, care and support services for older and vulnerable people.

[WWW.HOUSINGLIN.ORG.UK](http://WWW.HOUSINGLIN.ORG.UK)

020 7820 8077

### **National Housing Federation:**

The National Housing Federation is the body that represents the independent social housing sector with 1400 non-profit housing members managing around 1.8 million homes. They produce useful guides and factsheets on social housing and supported housing. Among their publications is Shared Ownership: Joint Guidance for England, here: [WWW.BIT.LY/2IXx6Ax](http://WWW.BIT.LY/2IXx6Ax)

[WWW.NHFDIRECTORY.CO.UK](http://WWW.NHFDIRECTORY.CO.UK) (directory of Housing associations)

[WWW.HOUSING.ORG.UK](http://WWW.HOUSING.ORG.UK)

0207 067 1010

### **Shelter:**

Shelter is a national organisation working to improve the lives of homeless and badly housed people. It provides free, professional and independent advice on homelessness, finding a place to live, renting and leaseholds, legal rights and benefits. The aims are to prevent and alleviate homelessness by providing information, advice and advocacy for people with housing problems and campaign for changes to housing policy.

[WWW.SHELTER.ORG.UK](http://WWW.SHELTER.ORG.UK)

0808 800 4444

### **My Safe Home:**

My Safe Home provides help and support to people with a disability who want to buy their own home.

[WWW.MYSAFEHOME.INFO](http://WWW.MYSAFEHOME.INFO)

02476 402211

## National Organisations

### **British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD):**

Independent charitable organisation committed to improving the quality of life of all people with a learning disability. Publications promote good practice in health and social care services.

[WWW.BILD.ORG.UK](http://WWW.BILD.ORG.UK)

0121 415 6960

**Care Quality Commission:**

The Care Quality Commission is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. They inspect and publish reports on the quality of care in hospitals, care homes and the overall care provided by supported living/domiciliary care providers.

[www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

03000 616161

**Care Choices:**

Care Choices is a specialist information provider for care in all types of settings, from care in your own home to care homes or independent living alternatives.

[www.carechoices.co.uk](http://www.carechoices.co.uk)

0800 389 2077

**Equality and Human Rights Commission:**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a national equality body with powers to challenge discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. They provide information on a number of issues including reasonable adjustments.

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

0808 800 0082

**Mencap:**

Mencap campaigns and provides advice and support directly through the national charity and its local network of more than 1,000 affiliated groups. The Learning Disability Helpline provides information on money, housing, law and benefits. For Mencap's Wills and Trusts Team call 020 7696 6925.

[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

0808 808 1111

**National Autistic Society (NAS):**

Provides services, information and advice for children and adults with autistic disorders throughout the UK, including post-school education and residential provision. The NAS have information on local service providers.

[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

0808 800 4104

**Paradigm:**

Paradigm is a consultancy agency on health, housing and social care services for people with learning disabilities. They have a website with useful contacts, research and government policy sources.

[www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org)

0208 870 8643

**Transition Information Network:**

This website is for young people who are looking for information about opportunities and services ready for when they leave school. Parents/carers and professional workers will find the information useful too. It includes information on housing.

[www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk](http://www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk)

020 7843 6006

**Benefits and advice organisations****Citizens Advice Bureau:**

The Citizens Advice Bureau Service offers free, impartial information and advice on debt and consumer issues, benefits, housing, legal matters, employment, and immigration. Advisers can help fill out forms, write letters, and represent clients at

court or tribunal. The national website provides a directory of local CAB offices and a guide on money, legal, housing and rights.

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

03444 111 444

**Department for Work and Pensions:**

The Department provides information on managing benefits including those for disabled people. The Disability website provides information on disability rights and policy.

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

**Disability Service Centre:**

A government website where you can get advice or information about a claim you've already made for Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payment. It has a list of contact details relating to each of the benefits.

[www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline](http://www.gov.uk/disability-benefits-helpline)

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople)

**Disability Law Service:**

The Disability Law Service provides free advice and representation to disabled people and families on community care, disability discrimination and further and higher education.

[www.dls.org.uk](http://www.dls.org.uk)

0207 7791 9800

**Disability Rights UK:**

Disability Rights UK publish the Disability Rights Handbook. They provide various services to disabled people, their families, carers and professionals, including advice, training, and research work. They also run a number of helplines for disabled people.

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

0808 800 0082

**Turn 2 Us**

Turn 2 Us provide a website with a benefits calculator, a directory of grant giving organisations and other related information.

[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

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