

# Housing



Getting housing right for children, young people and adults with a learning disability

# 1

## Increase availability of capital funding for housing for people with a learning disability

The right housing is crucial to enabling people with a learning disability to be able to live good lives. Not being able to access the right housing, and the impact of this on (for example) behaviours that challenge, can lead to people with a learning disability being detained in inpatient units under the Mental Health Act because it is not possible to find anywhere else for them to live.

Alongside this, according to [NHS Digital data](#), “lack of suitable housing provision” is the main barrier to discharging people with a learning disability and autistic people from these inpatient units – with over half of delayed discharges due wholly or partly to lack of suitable housing. As well as being the main barrier to discharge, the percentage of people for whom this is a barrier has risen significantly since statistics began in 2015.

There are sources of funding available to develop and adapt housing for people with a learning disability – but these are complicated and difficult to navigate. It is also inconsistent, with local authorities and integrated care boards having different eligibility criteria – meaning that a person with a learning disability in one part of the country might be able to access funding to get a house that someone in another area can't.

There are also sources of funding that you can only receive if you have been admitted and discharged from an inpatient unit – meaning that before you can get a house that will enable you to live a good life (and avoid being detained), you have to have

been sectioned, often spending multiple years in hospital where you are more likely to be distressed, experience trauma, and be separated from family, friends, and the places you know.

Current funding options and programmes haven't resulted in enough housing – of the right kinds – being developed for people with learning disabilities.

For example, the Affordable Homes Programme (which is currently running from 2021–2026) says that 10% of all housing built under the programme should be supported housing. This 10% is equivalent to 15,700–16,500 units of supported housing – but in 2023 the [National Audit Office](#) found that this target was on track to be missed, with figures from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) forecasting that only [half](#) of this supported housing would be built.

The target of 10% also doesn't distinguish between supported housing for people with a learning disability and supported housing for other groups – such as older people, people experiencing homelessness, and others. The majority of supported housing built is for older people. This is both explained and exacerbated by the fact that it is currently more cost-effective for providers to develop and deliver (larger scale) supported housing for older people than it is to deliver (small-scale, often bespoke) supported housing for people with learning disabilities.

There are both issues with the levels of capital funding available, and with the routes for accessing this. The 2024 [Supported Housing Review](#) identified issues accessing Homes England/ Affordable Homes Programme funding due to needing to meet the rent standard – which doesn't cover the cost of developing bespoke supported housing.

[Recent research by the Learning Disability and Autism Housing Network and HousingLIN](#) found that £340m of capital investment from public and private finance is needed per year to meet the need for supported housing for people with a learning disability and autistic people. Around 87% of the capital funding used by housing providers to develop supported housing for people with a learning disability and autistic people since 2017 came from private and non-public finance – compared to ~8.5% from NHS England, ~3.5% from Homes England, and 1.5% from local authorities.

### **The Government needs to:**

**Increase the availability of capital funding available to develop housing for people with a learning disability and autistic people**

**Ensure ringfenced a) targets and b) funding through the Affordable Homes Programme to ensure the specific development and delivery of supported housing for people with a learning disability**

**Work with local authorities and housing providers to strategically plan for how to increase the supply of supported housing for people with a learning disability**

**Ensure that capital funding is available to stop people from being admitted to inpatient units - not just to get them out**

# Ensure that all areas have developed strategic plans for housing for people with a learning disability

## 2

In order to properly plan for how they can meet the housing needs of people with a learning disability within their area, local authorities need to develop a clear understanding of their a) current and b) future housing needs. This should include analysis of the number of children and young people within their area that will require housing in future, as well as the number of people with a learning disability currently living with family or friends who may require alternative housing in future.

Developing this understanding of housing need needs to be done in conjunction with assessments of health and support needs – these parts of the system need to be joined-up in order to successfully meet needs in a person-centred way.

One way to ensure that there is joined-up and strategic planning that includes housing is to ensure that housing representatives are involved in transition planning for young people with learning disabilities, alongside representatives from health, education and social care.

### **The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health and Social Care need to:**

**Work with local authorities to support them to conduct research and analysis of their local population, and to use this to develop housing that will meet these needs**

**Work with local authorities to support them to join up housing, health and social care**

**Promote the involvement of housing professionals in transition planning for young people with learning disabilities**

# 3

## Ensure that if someone with a learning disability is admitted to an inpatient unit, they do not lose their existing housing

One of the issues that people with a learning disability face is that, if they are detained in an inpatient unit under the Mental Health Act, they can lose access to benefits. One of these is Housing Benefit, which stops after 52 weeks in hospital (the current average length of stay in an inpatient unit for people with a learning disability and autistic people is [over 5 years](#)).

Because of this, if you have a learning disability and are admitted to an inpatient unit, you can lose your home.

With housing [the main barrier to being discharged back into the community](#), maintaining existing suitable housing – or carrying out adaptations to existing housing that requires them – is crucial to ensuring that people with a learning disability do not get ‘stuck’ in inpatient units.

### Benefits that stop after 28 days in hospital

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Attendance Allowance
- Carer’s Allowance or the carer’s element of Universal Credit

[‘What happens to my benefits?’](#)  
**Mental Health and Money Advice**

### Benefits that stop after 52 weeks in hospital

- Housing Benefit
- Support for Mortgage Interest

[‘What happens to my benefits?’](#)  
**Mental Health and Money Advice**

### The Government needs to:

**Take steps to ensure that the withdrawal of benefits does not result in housing being lost**

**Introduce ring-fenced funding to cover ‘double-running costs’, including the cost of maintaining a house while someone is detained in an inpatient unit**

**Increase funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant to support adaptations to be made so that people with a learning disability can be discharged back into their homes without delay**

# Access to short breaks and alternative/emergency accommodation

## 4

Children, young people and adults with a learning disability need to be able to access short breaks and/or alternative accommodation when it is necessary. Not being able to access support, including through short breaks and alternative accommodation – especially in crisis situations or in cases of emergency – is a major reason for people with a learning disability being admitted to inpatient units.

People with a learning disability should be able to access these ‘crash pads’ when they are needed, including if they are needed to prevent admission to inpatient units.

Currently, provision of short breaks and alternative accommodation is limited – many areas do not have these in place and where they do, there is not enough provision to ensure that they can be used by people who need them, when they need them.

### **The Department of Health and Social Care needs to:**

**Provide ringfenced funding for the development of short breaks services and alternative/emergency accommodation**

### **Local authorities and Integrated Care Boards need to:**

**Identify what alternative accommodation is needed to support children, young people and adults with a learning disability in their area, and take steps to develop alternative accommodation and short breaks services within their area**

**Ensure that they have a sufficient supply of ‘emergency accommodation’ available to meet the needs of people with a learning disability**

# ‘Future-proof’ housing

# 6

Many people with a learning disability will, if it is possible, live in the same house for a long period of time. This means that, if they are growing older in a particular house, they might need new or additional adaptations to support them as they age.



For example, [people with a learning disability, and people with Down Syndrome in particular, are more likely to develop dementia at an earlier age](#) – meaning that they might need adaptations to enable them to continue living in their homes.

## **The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health and Social Care need to:**

**Publish guidance on the need to consider whether housing for people with a learning disability can be adapted in future if needs change , and further promote existing guidance on adapting housing for people with learning disabilities**

**Work with **local authorities** and housing providers to develop housing for people with a learning disability that is adaptable**

**Ensure that the commitment (made in 2022) to mandate the M4(2) requirement in the Building Regulations as a minimum standard for all new homes is carried out without delay**

As well as the ability to adapt housing to meet changing needs, environmental factors need to be taken into account when developing housing for people with a learning disability. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in some cases, housing for people with a learning disability is being developed in areas that may be prone to flooding if sea-levels rise in future, as the land can be purchased more cheaply.

It is crucial that the safety and long-term security of housing for people with a learning disability is not jeopardised by environmental factors.



**Local authorities and  
Integrated Care Boards need  
to:**

**Work together with housing  
providers to ensure that  
housing for people with a  
learning disability will not be  
developed in areas that are  
e.g., at risk of flooding**