

Housing barriers faced by people with a learning disability:

working together and co-producing solutions

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About the Challenging Behaviour Foundation

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) is a small, national charity

We support the families of children, young people, and adults who have severe learning disabilities and behaviours described as challenging – such as pica (eating inedible objects, like stones or clothing), behaviours that hurt themselves or others, or breaking furniture – to make sure that their relatives can access the right support and live good lives



The Challenging Behaviour – National Strategy Group

The Challenging Behaviour – National Strategy Group (CB-NSG) is made up of different people and organisations with expertise, who work together to find solutions to the problems that people with a learning disability, whose behaviour challenges, face





What happens when you are trying to get a house?

In the person's shoes

Responsibility

- Co-ordination
- Drive

Evidence and understanding

Tickboxes and criteria

Costs

"things have to fail before you can get what you need"



Working together to identify and co-produce solutions

All parts of the system need to work together to make sure that people with a learning disability whose behaviour challenges can get the right support

Because of this, people with lived experience and people working in all parts of the system need to work together to identify what the problems are and how to fix them



What needs to happen?

Over the past two years, people with a learning disability and family carers have been working with people from different parts of the system, including housing, to identify issues and co-produce solutions

The earlier slides cover some of the problems that make it difficult for someone with a learning disability whose behaviour challenges to get the right house, in the right place, when they need it – the next slides cover how to fix them



Thinking about housing differently

- The system is not currently working – so what is stopping it from working? What do we need to do to the current system to make a system that will work?
- What are the pathways that someone with a learning disability/their family goes down? What are the points where things 'go wrong' – and what can be done to make them 'go right'?
- What are the issues that you come up against when you suggest ways of doing things differently – and where have you had success in changing things? What are the things you would need to convince decision makers – or that would convince you?



1. Increasing available capital funding

The biggest barrier to discharging people with a learning disability and autistic people from hospital is that there is not the right housing available. We also know that not being able to get a house that works is a big reason for people being admitted to inpatient units.

People we support have told us that getting capital funding for a house for their relative that meets their relative's needs while they are in the community is a postcode lottery.

When someone is in hospital, getting funding for housing is still hard because, even though there are some new ways people in hospital can get funding, there is not enough money available in the different funding 'pots'.

1. Increasing available capital funding

Increasing the availability of capital funding would make it easier for more people to be discharged from hospital. Having more funding available to people *before* they are admitted to hospital, rather than only being available if you are currently an inpatient, can stop them from being admitted – so that they don't experience the trauma or long lengths of stay that can happen in hospital.

Our ideas of what is needed:

- Improved access to funding options in the community
- An alternative to Section 117 funding that can be used for people with a learning disability and autistic people who don't have a mental health condition

2. Strategic Housing Plans

We are often told, and research supports, that one of the biggest barriers to getting housing right is that areas don't have a clear idea of what housing the people with learning disabilities living in their area need.

As people with a learning disability and their families grow older, needs can change, so housing might also need to change.

If a family carer passes away, that can also lead to changes in someone's housing situation – whether these are what the person wants or needs, or not.

2. Strategic Housing Plans

Our ideas of what is needed:

- Better involvement of housing representatives in transition planning
- Local authorities need to have better data on people with a learning disability in their area, and factors/particular situations that will trigger them to act
 - *Example: if an adult with a learning disability lives with their family, and their family members approach retirement age, this should alert the local authority to work with the person and their family to think about future housing needs/options*
- Make sure all new homes are 'M4(2)-compliant' – making them more accessible, and easier to adapt in future

3. Keeping access to housing

When someone with a learning disability is detained under the Mental Health Act, after a certain point, they stop receiving housing benefit. If the house that they were living in before was being paid for by housing benefit, and this is no longer being paid, then they can lose their house.

As of March 2024, 56% of delayed discharges were because there wasn't suitable housing – so, if the house was previously suitable, being able to keep paying for it while someone would help avoid this situation. If the house wasn't fully suitable, there might be adaptations that could be made while someone is in an inpatient unit which could make it better for them.

3. Keeping access to housing

Our ideas of what is needed:

- There should be a mechanism to make sure that benefits being withdrawn doesn't mean that a person with a learning disability loses their house – this could be by introducing ring-fenced funding to cover 'double-running costs', like in the Community Discharge Grant, to maintain a house while someone is in an inpatient unit
- Increasing funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant, and increasing awareness that it can be used for people with learning disabilities, would make it easier for someone's existing home to be adapted – potentially stopping a crisis developing, or helping them to be discharged back home quicker

4. Access to short breaks/emergency accommodation

Short breaks and emergency accommodation can make it easier for people with a learning disability and their families to get support. If there is an issue with someone's house, they also provide a place that someone can go while repairs are made or a new house is found.

When there isn't any alternative accommodation available, people with a learning disability can be admitted to inpatient units, just because it is the 'only' place where they can go – which isn't right.

Families we support tell us that if there was a suitable place in the community that they could have gone temporarily, their relatives would not have been admitted and wouldn't have got 'stuck' in hospital.

4. Access to short breaks/emergency accommodation

An example of good practice that keeps people with a learning disability living in their community is the Black Country's 'Crash Pad', which is short-term accommodation for people who would otherwise have been admitted to an inpatient unit. Between January and March 2024, 24 people with learning disabilities and/or who are autistic were supported within the community via the Crash Pad.

Our idea of what is needed:

- Local areas need to have ring-fenced funding that lets them develop, and maintain, short breaks services and alternative accommodation – based on the number of people with learning disabilities in their local area, and what their needs are

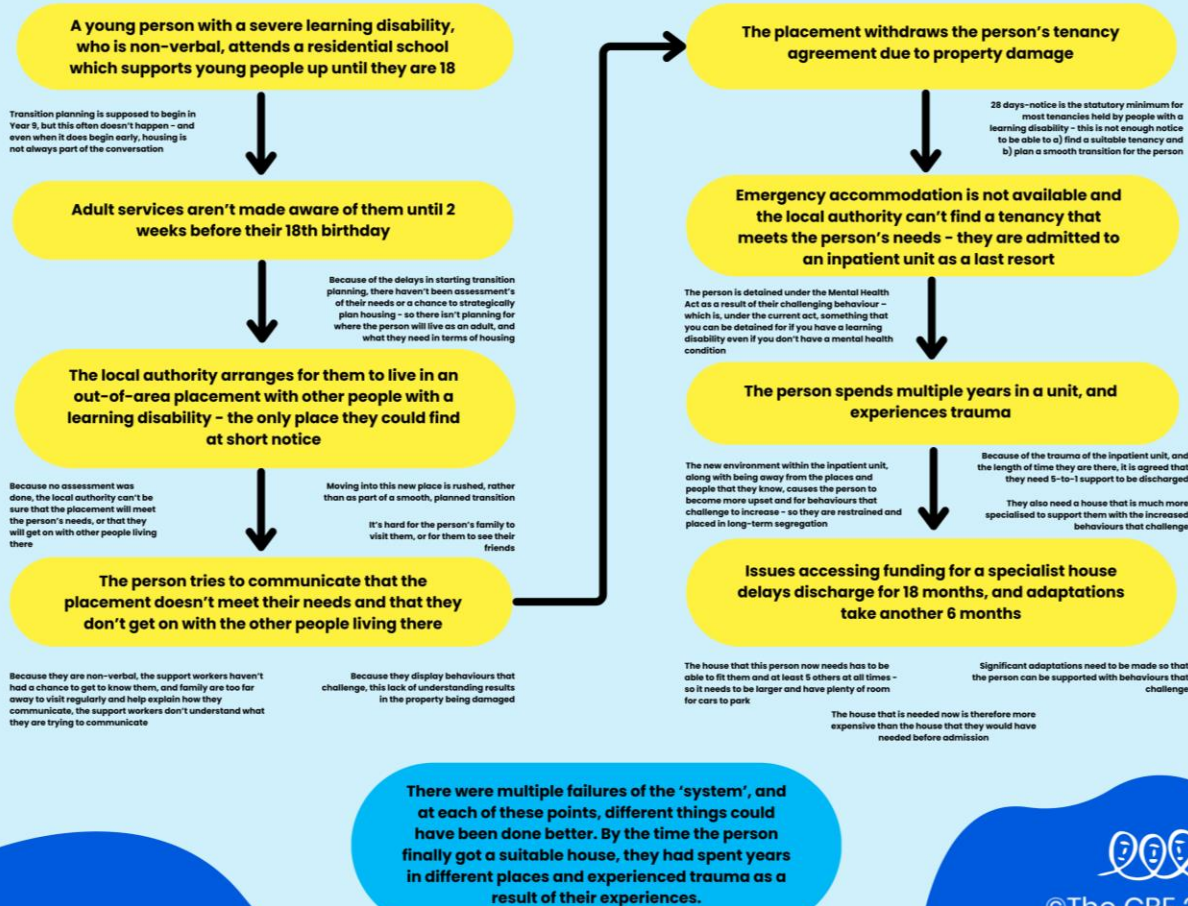
Navigating the system

As well as the practical issues involved in trying to get housing right, navigating the system to get a house can be very emotionally challenging for people with a learning disability and their families, particularly when considering that they are at the same time trying to navigate other parts of the system such as health, education, and social care. The solutions to the housing problems people face need to make it simpler to navigate, not more complicated.



One Person's Housing Journey

This is a composite example, based on real experiences of real people



What would have made that housing journey better?



What next?

What steps can be taken to address the issues we've discussed today?

Are there any that you can take, and what might you need to be able to do them?

What other barriers are there, and how can these be tackled?

Are the ideas we've suggested the right ones?

Are there any that you'd suggest in addition to these, or ones that you think need changing?



The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

making a difference to the lives of people with severe learning disabilities

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Scan this QR code to see the
'Housing - Actions for Policy-
Makers' section of the
Co-Produced, Lifelong Action
Plan

Scan this QR code to see a poster
on 'Overcoming Housing Barriers'
– how it should work, what
actually happens, how to fix it,
and resources to help do this

