

One Person's Housing Journey

A young person has a severe learning disability and is non-verbal. They live in a residential school. The school supports people with a learning disability who are under 18.

The local authority is supposed to start working with the person and their family when the person is a teenager, to work out what the person will need as an adult – including where they want to live and what kind of house they need.

The school doesn't support people who are over 18, so the person will need to move somewhere else once that school year is over. The local authority's adult services team don't find out about them until 2 weeks before their 18th birthday.

The local authority needs to find them somewhere else for them to live. Because they didn't know about the person, they haven't had a chance to find out what they need, so they don't have housing ready.

Because it is short notice, the local authority find a place where they can live in another county. Other people with a learning disability also live there.

There isn't time for the person to go visit this house before they move in, or to meet the other people who live there. The people working there also don't have time to get to know the person before they move in.

The house isn't right for the person and they don't get on with the other people living there. Because they are non-verbal, they try to tell people that they aren't happy by throwing furniture.

Because the people working there don't know them, and the house is too far away for the person's family to visit often, no one realises this is what they are trying to say.

Because of damage to the furniture and the walls, the house contacts the local authority to say that the person needs to move out. The local authority is given a month to find somewhere else for them to live.

In some parts of the country there are places, sometimes called 'crash pads', where someone with a learning disability can go for a few weeks if they can't live in their house. The local authority only has one and someone else is using it.

The local authority can't find a placement that meets the person's needs within the month. Because there isn't somewhere else the person can go, they have to go into hospital.

The person goes into the hospital because they had been damaging furniture. The Mental Health Act says that if you have a learning disability and behaviours that challenge, you can be detained in hospital.

While in hospital, the person is upset that they are far away from their family and they don't like the new environment. They try to tell people by throwing things or hitting others.

The people in hospital restrain the person when they throw things or hit others. The person is also put into long-term segregation so that there aren't people around them to hit or things to throw.

After several years, the hospital decide that the person is ready to be discharged. They also decide that the person needs 5 people to support them in the community. They only start to look for a house when it is decided that the person is ready to leave – not when they first went in.

It is difficult to get money for a house, and takes over a year. Once a house has been found, changes need to be made so that it meets the person's needs, which takes more time. The house also needs to have room for 5 support workers and their cars.

At each of these stages, things could have been done better. By the time the person got a house that works for them, they had spent several years in hospital when it wasn't necessary.



What would have made that housing journey better?

The local authority starts thinking about what the person will need when they are a teenager. The local authority's housing team are part of these conversations and start thinking about how they will provide the house that the person needs.

When the local authority is thinking about what house the person will need, they involve the person and their family. The person and their family are listened to and this shapes plans for the person's future house.

There is a clear way to get money to pay for a house. This doesn't change depending on where you live.

When the person needs to move from their school to their new home, they can visit over several months so they can get to know this house and the people there.

The house where they live has the things that the person needs, and the people working there know them and how they communicate. This means that, if there are any issues - like throwing furniture - the support workers can work out what the problem is and fix it.

The local authority thinks about what will happen if the person has to move out of their house at short notice. There is somewhere for them to go in their local area if they need it.

If the person has to go into hospital because of an issue with their house planning for where they will live when they leave hospital begins as soon as they go in. This includes what kind of house they need and whether it will need changes so that it meets their needs.

