

HOUSING LIN POLICY BRIEFING

Valuing People Now and Housing for People with Learning Disabilities

1. INTRODUCTION

On 19 January 2009, the Department of Health launched a cross-government strategy, *Valuing People Now - a new three year strategy for people with learning disabilities*. This Briefing summarises key sections and issues arising from the Strategy and its Delivery Plan.¹ The focus is on housing with care and support, and independent living. The Briefing is written for commissioners and providers of

- housing (social and private, for rent and home ownership)
- support and care services for tenants and home owners, and
- specialised housing, including supported and extra care housing.

Overall, the Strategy;

- takes account of the responses to the consultation, which ended in March 2008 and addresses what people have said about the support people with learning disabilities and their families need
- reflects the changing priorities across Government which impact directly on people with learning disabilities
- sets out the Government's response to the ten main recommendations in *Healthcare for All*, the report of the independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with learning disabilities
- provides a further response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights report, *A Life Like Any Other?*

Drawing on the Strategy and the Delivery Plan, this Briefing;

- emphasises the priority given to housing (section 2)
- outlines the structure of the Strategy and the Delivery Plan (section 3)
- summarises the Strategy's overarching themes and key messages (section 4)
- discusses the specific housing material, with comments on areas that will need future attention (section 5), and
- draws out aspects linked to housing under other headings, including health, work, transition (section 6)

¹ A detailed Delivery Plan has been published alongside the Strategy, together with the response to the consultation, the further response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights, the impact assessment and equality impact assessment and easy read versions of all documents.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Deliveringadultsocialcare/Learningdisabilities/index.htm>

2. HOUSING AS A PRIORITY

It is very encouraging to find that throughout the Strategy, housing is identified as an important issue and one of the big priorities for 2009-2012.

This priority starts in the two ministerial Forewords, both of which refer to housing. In her Introduction, Anne Williams (the new National Director for Learning Disabilities) includes housing among her “measures of success at the end of three years”, hoping that “more people live in their own homes [and] ... in their locality”.

There are also 11 Key Policy Objectives for 2009-12 (page 20, Executive Summary) for “all people with learning disabilities and their families”, including (number 4) relating housing that they “will have an informed choice about where and with whom they live”.

In the Delivery Plan for 2009-10 (page 6 para 8) there are a further six key priorities nationally and regionally, including “to increase the range of housing options for people with learning disabilities and their families, including closure of NHS campus homes”.

The Delivery Plan sets out a new structure to make things happen and proposes the appointment of six specialist leads in April 2009, including one for Housing. It also refers to working with the National Forum of People with Learning Difficulties: of their four priorities, one is Community Lives (which includes housing).

3. VALUING PEOPLE NOW: FINDING YOUR WAY ROUND THE REPORTS

The Strategy has an accompanying *Executive Summary, Introduction and Background*. The Strategy itself consists of six chapters, namely:

- *Chapter 1: Including Everyone*
- *Chapter 2: Personalisation – starting with the individual and their family*
- *Chapter 3: Having a Life*
- *Chapter 4: People as Citizens*
- *Chapter 5: Making it happen*
- *Chapter 6: Delivery plan*

The main section on housing is a five-page section, *A home of your own* in Chapter 3, with a few mentions of housing elsewhere. There are a number of short case studies throughout the Strategy, some of which refer to housing.

The Delivery Plan has 14 chapters. Chapters 2-10 set out how the Strategy should be implemented, including:

- Key priorities for action 2009-10 (chapter 2)
- Governance and leadership (chapters 3 and 4)
- The role of the Office of the National Director, the National Forum for People with Learning Difficulties and the National Valuing Families Forum (chapters 5, 6 and 7)

- Regional action and support, including a new level of Regional Boards (chapter 8) and
- The developing role of partnership boards, who are expected to implement the Strategy at local level (chapter 9).

Chapters 10-15 echo Chapters 1-6 in the main Strategy, with further information on housing in Chapter 12 *Having a Life*.

4. VALUING PEOPLE NOW: THEMES AND KEY MESSAGES

Before looking at the specific sections on housing, we outline the themes and key messages which permeate *Valuing People Now*, concerning:

- A human rights perspective and disability equality
- The overall policy context
- Progress to date (especially on housing) since *Valuing People 2001*
- A focus on excluded groups
- The importance of family carers
- The personalisation agenda.

This is because the housing sections have to be read within this contextual framework.

4.1 Human Rights and the Disability Equality Duty

The *Executive Summary* stresses that the Strategy “is written from a human rights based approach, on the fundamental principle that people with learning disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else and sets out further steps for this to happen. It responds to the concerns set out in the Joint Committee on Human Rights report, *A Life Like Any Other?* that adults with learning disabilities are “particularly vulnerable to breaches of their human rights”.²

There is further reference in the *Introduction and Background* to both the human rights report and the Disability Equality Duty (Disability Discrimination Act 2005) that “requires public bodies to check the impact of their policies on lives of disabled people – especially where the outcomes for people with learning disabilities are worse than the population as a whole (eg health, employment, housing).” However, current legislation does not necessarily give someone the *right* to housing and support (except in certain limited circumstances such as for some people who become homeless, or those affected by closure of NHS campuses).

Links are made to a range of other relevant strategies and targets, and especially to PSA (Public Service Agreement) 16.³ PSA 16 is mentioned a number of times

² *A Life Like Any Other? Human Rights of Adults with Learning Disabilities* (2008 HL Paper 40-1 HC 73-1 House of Lords, House of Commons, Joint Committee on Human Rights (2008)

³ Public Service Agreement (PSA) indicators form part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. All of the PSA indicators are also included in the latest local government

throughout the report, and is discussed further in Section 4 below. In the context of people with learning disabilities and housing, it concerns the numbers of “people known to social services” or “people with moderate and severe learning disability” (the definition varies in the Valuing People Now Strategy) moving into “settled accommodation” (and also paid employment).

4.2 Policy context

The *Introduction and Background* summarises the policy context (including In Control and *Putting People First 2007*)⁴ and the reasons for a new strategy in 2009. It reiterates the four guiding principles from the original *Valuing People* (2001):

- Rights
- Independent living (changed from “Independence” in the original, and including “greater access to housing”, with support as needed)
- Control (including “having the information and support to understand the different options and their consequences”) and
- Inclusion.

Background information is given on statistics from studies by Emerson and colleagues (2004 and 2008)⁵. The 2004 study showed 985,000 people with a learning disability, including 190,000 under 20, and 127,000 over 65. Of the total of 795,000 adults (over 20 but under 65), 224,000 were known to social services. The 2004 study also forecast increases of 11% (to 868,000) in 2011 and 14% (to 908,000) by 2021, with a greater increase in the numbers aged 60+. The 2008 study looks in more detail at the numbers of people known to services, and numbers using services, in 2006/7, when 137,000 were using services. It forecasts a 50% increase (to 223,000) in the numbers using services by 2018.

performance framework. All local authorities have to report on them, and some have also set themselves specific improvement targets through the Local Area Agreement process. The Socially Excluded Adults PSA 16 focuses on four client groups who are particularly at risk of exclusion. While these groups can be highly vulnerable, they are also in contact with services that could and should make a difference. They are:

- * young adults leaving care;
- * adult offenders under probation supervision;
- * adults receiving secondary mental health services; and
- * adults with learning disabilities known to councils.

⁴ InControl: <http://www.in-control.org.uk/site/INCO/Templates/Home.aspx?pageid=1&cc=GB>

Putting People First: A shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care Department of Health (2007)

Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century Cm 5086 Department of Health (2001)

⁵ See Eric Emerson and Chris Hatton (2004) *Estimating the Current Need/Demand for Supports for People with Learning Disabilities in England*, Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University

Estimating Future Need for Adult Social Care services for People with Learning Disabilities in England Eric Emerson and Chris Hatton Centre for Disability Research (2008)

4.3 Progress since Valuing People

The Strategy acknowledges that “the biggest criticism of *Valuing People* has been the failure to deliver it in many areas”.

On housing, more people are “living in homes of their own, either in tenancies or through home ownership”. However the contrast with the general population remains stark, as shown in the box (para 3.18, page 78 in the Housing section of the Strategy, Chapter 3):

People with learning disabilities	General population
❖ 50-55% live in the family home	❖ 70% own their own home
❖ 30% live in residential care	❖ 29% rent their own home
❖ 15% rent their own home	

Of those in residential care homes, a significant proportion of people live “miles away from their place of origin and their families”.

Many people with learning disabilities remain “living with older family carers who have their own needs”: an estimated 29,000 people with learning disabilities live with a parent aged 70+ (Mencap estimate), and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) found many local authorities were failing to plan for this group.⁶

However, the closure of all but one of the old long-stay learning disability hospitals has been achieved, and “most of the people who moved in the last wave of transfers are in supported living rather than residential care”.

4.4 Focusing on excluded groups

Chapter One *Including Everyone* stresses the importance of addressing the needs of “Those groups who are least often heard and most often excluded ... including:

- People with more complex needs
- People from BME groups and newly arrived communities
- People with autistic spectrum conditions
- Offenders in custody and in the community.”

There are detailed sections on the needs of each of these groups, although nothing specific on housing. In each case, there are specific housing needs and opportunities: see for example *Tomorrow's big problem: housing options for people with autism* (Maurice Harker, Nigel King and National Autistic Society 2004).

4.5 Involving family carers

Chapter One reflects the concerns raised by families during consultation on *Valuing People Now* that they “be seen as expert partners in the care of their loved ones”, as

⁶ *The Housing Time Bomb: the housing crisis facing people with a learning disability and their elderly parents* Mencap 2002 (on Mencap website)

well as their concerns about meeting the needs of those with more complex conditions. There is a strong theme throughout the Strategy that family carers should be supported and involved: “Even when people leave home, they do not leave the family. Families continue to offer a lifetime of involvement, support and advocacy.”

The chapter also refers to *Carers at the Heart of 21st – Century Families and Communities* (June 2008)⁷ and the 10-year cross-government carers’ strategy. Concern is expressed about the lack of (or refusal of) Carers’ Assessments, and the recommendations include that the local authority must carry out a Carer’s Assessment when there are planned changes to the support of a person with learning disabilities who is being supported by their family in some way. Obviously this could include changes to housing.

However, no specific reference is made in this chapter (or elsewhere) to family involvement in creating or financing housing solutions for their sons or daughters. If families have access to information and advice, this can be an effective route into housing, using family money or trust funds to provide accommodation through shared or outright ownership or buy-to-let. This is discussed in more detail below (Section 4). For further information on how families can help, see Housing Options www.housingoptions.org.uk (Factsheet 06 Family investment in housing; see Section 7 below).

4.6 Personalisation

Chapter Two *Personalisation* emphasises the current drive towards greater independence, choice and control as well as the need for central and local government and other partners to work together. There are a few mentions of housing, and of people with learning disabilities commissioning their own services to live independently. However, the main emphasis throughout is on “services”, although securing the housing is an essential prerequisite for someone to live independently. Furthermore, Assistive Technology is mentioned, which can be an important aspect housing solutions, although the housing link is not made explicit.

For further resources on Assistive Technology and housing, see Section 7.

4.7 Delivery Plan

Most of the Delivery Plan focuses on structures and mechanisms at local, regional and national level to strengthen the role of local Partnership Boards. The specific housing section of the Delivery Plan is covered in Section 4 below.

The Department of Health has established “a National Programme Board for Learning Disabilities. With cross Government representation and involvement from people with learning disabilities and family carers, it will link to the new Regional Learning Disability Boards and through them, to all local Partnership Boards. It will monitor progress, highlight best practice and work to remove barriers to successful implementation.” (Delivery Plan page 8 para 9).

There is no specific housing input except for a recommendation that the regional board representative from the Government Office should be the Deputy Regional Director with a lead for housing.

⁷ *Carers at the Heart of 21st Century Families and Communities* (2008 Department of Health)

5. HOUSING

This section of the Briefing starts with two extracts from housing sections in the Delivery Plan (on national actions) and the Strategy (on local and regional actions). We continue with a discussion of the housing issues that will need further attention.

Box One. Relevant information from the Valuing People Now Delivery Plan (pages 38-39 para 36)

Housing

9. ... Effective local Partnership Boards, using information from Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, will develop plans to ensure that a range of housing choices are available for individuals. Additionally:
- The Office of the National Director, through the Valuing People Housing Lead, will work with the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Work and Pensions and other relevant organisations to take forward the following:
 - a joint programme of work with Communities and Local Government, to consider how mainstream housing policies can be made more inclusive of people with learning disabilities **(2009-12)**
 - continued work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and CLG on Housing Benefit and support issues, including interim guidance to clarify the Turnbull judgement **(2009-2010)**
 - The DH Care Services Efficiency Delivery Programme and the Housing Learning and Improvement Network Independent Living Choices programme are undertaking work to support commissioners and providers to achieve a market shift from residential care to supported living across different tenures (home ownership and social and private rented accommodation). As part of the early scoping work, the Programme will review current data and benchmark best practice to help inform commissioners, funders and providers **(during 2009)**
 - DH will continue to work closely with the Homes and Communities Agency to identify future capital investment opportunities to develop a range of social home ownership options for people with learning disabilities
 - The DH, with other Government departments, will build the evidence base on what influences progress towards 'settled accommodation' (this does not include residential care) for people with learning disabilities (as part of the delivery of the PSA 16 Housing objective) **(2009)**
 - The DH has launched **(Nov 08)** and will complete **(April 09)** the NHS Capital Programme allocation (stage 3) as part of the NHS Campus Closure work strand.
 - The DH, through the Office of the National Director, will evaluate and review the use of the Housing Pathway tool (developed and piloted by the Valuing People Team) and identify the best way to disseminate this nationally **(2009)**

Key points from the Delivery Plan

The cross-government work involving key departments (DH, CLG, DWP), Valuing People and other partners on specific issues (such as mainstreaming, and Turnbull) continues recent work in these areas. The Housing LIN Programme to support a “market shift” is very encouraging, especially with its reference to a wide range of housing options across different tenures, including home ownership and both social and private renting, and the collection of data and promotion of best practice.

Further work on home ownership initiatives for people with learning disabilities will have to address the tensions with another key aim in the Strategy, to get more people into paid work, as discussed further below.

On PSA 16, it is made clear here and elsewhere that residential care and NHS campuses are not classed as “settled accommodation”. We presume that an adult with a learning disability living with family carers is not classed as living in “settled accommodation” either: this may become clearer with the production of the promised delivery plan on achieving PSA 16 on settled accommodation by summer 2009.

Key points from the Strategy

Box Two. Relevant information from the Valuing People Now Strategy (pages 81-82, para 3.28)

Making it Happen Locally and Regionally – Key Recommended Actions

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to identify the housing needs of people with learning disabilities to inform strategic planning including the number of people with learning disabilities living with family carers over 70 and those with complex needs.
- Local authorities to facilitate people's access to housing of their choice including:
 - More people receiving personal budgets and direct payments to increase their choice and control over where they live and with whom
 - local authority care managers to have an increased focus on home ownership and assured tenancies as a model for housing and support
 - through person-centred planning, work with people still living with families to establish if that is the person's preferred option and instigate plans accordingly
 - All local authorities are already required to produce a housing strategy reflecting local population housing needs including those of people with learning disabilities. Government Offices to ensure that all local authorities have an appropriate housing strategy
- Wherever possible, transition plans and year 9 reviews to address future accommodation choices.

Widening housing choices

The Strategy states (paras 3.18 and 3.20, pages 78-79) that “more emphasis needs to be placed on alternative ways of providing the housing that people want, and the support they need to live in it”. However, residential care should “continue to be available for those who actively choose it.”

It also stresses that “Living in your own home does not mean living without support, or being over-dependent on help from family members. This is not always understood and the misunderstanding can cause unnecessary concern and anxiety to people themselves as well as to their families.”

It is clear that the reference to living with families or in residential care as an option that “suits some people” reflects the results of the consultation on Valuing People Now. The response from some family carers was not positive about housing choices (although in contrast, it is important to note that most responses from people with learning disabilities were very positive about having greater housing choice).

Many older social care services funded by health to move people from hospital now need change and opportunities for residents to move on. The move out of institutional care, from the 70’s and continuing still today, has also been a major change for many of those housed and supported. For some, the first stage of resettlement from institutions has been to residential care, and at some time, for a number of possible reasons, a further move is desirable. Although it is helpful to refer to money for the campus closure programme, this only covers a small number of former hospital residents.

Ordinary Residence⁸ and Care Home Registration practice needs clarification or change, both to give choice in the first place and to allow people to move home, and secondly to have a home of your own.⁹

Commissioning and funding housing

The Strategy asks those who plan and commission services regionally and locally to “consider how they could develop creative solutions to meeting those aspirations. Possibilities include people with learning disabilities being supported to live in their own home as owners or tenants; being supported to share with a group of friends; or living in residential care” (para 3.19, page 78). It is unclear why a “creative solution” in the section on housing would include residential care. Whilst residential care may suit some people, it is not housing.

⁸ We are familiar with the idea that, in the NHS, funding should follow the patient but this principle does not work properly in social care. Anyone funded by a local authority who wants to move gets into difficulty as guidance says they will be “ordinarily resident” in their new area without any guarantee that the “new” local authority will fund their care. It is difficult to see how personalised budgets can follow the resident. This differs from the arrangement for registered care where anyone moving remains the responsibility of their original authority.

⁹ Despite policy aims since 1990 for care in your own home accommodation needs are still more often met through Registered Care Homes. The recent CSCI figures from *The State of Social Care in England* (2008) show increasing spend on residential care since Valuing People 2001 - about 50% of adult social care expenditure. CSCI Practice Guidance on the registration of care homes says tenancies may be registerable as care homes, at odds with the aim for vulnerable people to have settled accommodation (PSA 16).

It is also unclear exactly how local commissioners of services for people with learning disabilities, based in Adult Social Care, are going to access housing capital or revenue funding. Personal budgets and direct payments do not help people access housing, or to meet housing costs, even though they may help pay for support once someone has found the housing. Local authority care managers have limited housing knowledge or experience. Although practice varies, care managers do not always have very close working relationships with housing colleagues (especially in two-tier authorities). Shire county Adult Social Care departments have no responsibility for housing. Many unitary authorities now have joint social care and housing departments.

Whilst there is no reference to the existing duty for joint social service and housing assessments for housing/support packages (HSACC Act 1990 S47) and other joint strategic responsibilities, it is worth noting that these are very comprehensively set out in Joint DH and DoE guidance in 1997 *Housing for Community Care: Establishing a Strategic Framework*¹⁰ and summarised in Housing Options Quick Brief 22 (see Section 7 below).

The Strategy refers to capital funding for new housing, through the Housing Corporation, and its successor the Homes and Communities Agency (para 3.27, page 81), and to the 2008-2011 National Affordable Housing Programme allocation of over £340m allocated for the development of new supported housing (although this is across all user groups, not just people with learning disabilities).

It will be useful to have the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, but that in itself will not achieve funding for social rented housing or home ownership, unless this is prioritised above other needs groups. Hopefully these issues will be addressed by the CSED/Housing LIN programme of work to support commissioners and providers to achieve a “market shift” from residential care to supported living across different tenures (see Box One above).

There is a need for more good practice examples, but there are no detailed housing examples in the Valuing People Now Strategy. However, there is a reference to the evaluation of the 10 schemes funded by the DH’s learning disability extra care housing pilot programme, *A Measure of Success* (CSIP 2008)¹¹

This and other examples can be found elsewhere on the Housing LIN website (browse on Learning Disabilities for case studies and reports, including private sector leasing in Norfolk Case study 33, and extra-care examples).

There is no mention of local authority housing allocation policies, Choice-based Lettings (CBL) or social landlord policies on succession (for existing social housing tenants with adult learning-disabled offspring still living at home). At the time of writing, the Housing LIN is working with CLG on information on CBL and housing for older and vulnerable people (forthcoming).

The reference to the Housing Corporation (now the Homes and Communities Agency) programme refers only to supported housing. As elsewhere in the Strategy, there is very little reference to people with learning disabilities accessing mainstream

¹⁰http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Healthserviceguidelines/DH_4018323

¹¹<http://networks.csip.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Housing/Topics/browse/LearningDisabilities/>

“general needs” social rented housing, or housing for other specific groups (for example housing for older people, or for people with physical disabilities) which may also suit the needs of some people with learning disabilities. However, access to a wider range of housing is picked up to some extent in the Delivery Plan (see above).

Mainstream housing options

In addition to specialist supported housing, there is a much wider range of mainstream housing options than the limited references to ownership or social housing in the Strategy, and this will need addressing as identified in the national programmes of work in Box One above:

- assured tenancies with housing associations or councils (social rented housing)
- succeeding to a tenancy where an adult with a learning disability is living with their family in social rented housing
- private sector tenancies (usually assured shorthold tenancies) with private landlords (including from family members or charities, if the charity is not a registered housing association)
- leasing of private rented housing by local authorities or through housing associations
- shared ownership, usually with a housing association; could involve some family money and/or Support for Mortgage Interest through the benefits system (see Housing LIN Technical Brief on mixed tenure arrangements¹² and the Housing Options website for further information)
- outright ownership (for example property left in a Will)
- staying in the family home (as a shared owner or full owner) with support, and the family moving elsewhere (as mentioned in the Kieran case study, page 25 in the Strategy).

To share or live alone? Making an informed choice

Different housing options also affect the overall policy objective of “making an informed choice about where, and with whom” someone lives. To make an informed choice, it is important that people with learning disabilities and their families have access to accurate information and advice before committing themselves.

People with learning disabilities and their families are often concerned about loneliness if someone is going to live alone. This can be mitigated by having plenty of activities in the day and during evenings and weekends, as discussed below in section 6.1. This could be paid or voluntary work, college, social and leisure activities.

If renting mainstream social housing, or from a private landlord, someone with a learning disability can live alone, or share with others. There are fewer issues concerning entitlement to benefits or tenancy rights than with home ownership.

¹² Housing LIN Technical Brief No.3: Mixed Tenure in Extra Care Housing
http://networks.csip.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Housing_advice/Mixed_Tenure_in_Extra_Care_Housing_September_2005.pdf

With shared or full ownership, there are serious complications in sharing arrangements which need careful advice before proceeding. For this reason, most people with learning disabilities who are shared owners live on their own. The issues concern entitlement to means-tested welfare and housing benefits (for the owner and the sharer), entitlement to help with mortgage interest payments (for the owner) and the tenancy rights of lodgers or sharers.

This dilemma is brought out in the case study box on page 101 in the Advocacy section of Chapter Four on Citizenship. Terry and his mum Louise are hoping that he will get a house through shared ownership, but Terry has “asked a friend to share with him”. In the Terry case study, there is lots of detail but all the emphasis is on his advocate, his Individual Budget and support plan, and assistive technology. There is no detail on the housing options: rented or shared ownership, housing association involvement, family money or SMI (Support for Mortgage Interest).

Terry would be better advised to rent if he wants to share with his friend so that they can both have tenancies. If he wants to get paid work in the future and earn more than around £20 a week, he would also find it easier if he is renting. If Terry still wants to be a shared owner, he would be better advised to live on his own. Terry may also have to accept that as a shared owner, paid work for more than a few hours a week could be problematic.

Information and advice

The Terry case study shows how important it is that advocates and other professionals (eg social workers) understand the housing implications of the choices made by the people they support. The Strategy makes no mention of information and advice on housing, although there is a general reference to information and advice in the Advocacy section of Chapter Four (discussed below para 5.3).

The Delivery Plan does refer to forthcoming work by DH (specifically on “Housing Pathways”, p39) which will need to address the issue of information and advice. This is part of a continuing programme of work on housing by the DH Valuing People Support Team, including the publication of a CD and publication “*Finding a Place to Live*” in 2008 for people with learning disabilities, their families and staff who work with them.¹³

People with learning disabilities and their families need

- information and advice on possible housing solutions as well as on support (and sometimes care)
- practical help in finding both the accommodation and the support they will need (sometimes including care)
- help to access social rented housing (especially with Choice-Based Lettings in most areas), or
- help to find out more about ownership options (including opportunities to use family money)

¹³ *Finding A Place To Live: Help With Your Plans* (2008) written by Jenny Pannell and Maurice Harker for the Valuing People Support Team

PDF copies available from

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

www.housingoptions.org.uk

Free CD or hard copies available from mita.shah@dh.gsi.gov.uk

- support to maintain their tenancy or home ownership, and
- help to change things if (as is likely) their needs change over time (for example moving from sharing to living alone, or from private renting to social renting or ownership).

Supporting People

The Strategy refers to housing related support, through the Supporting People programme, which “already helps many people with learning disabilities live in their own home through the provision of housing related support services. People with learning disabilities will continue to benefit from locally planned and delivered housing related support to help individuals live as independently as possible” (para 3.26, page 80).

Whilst Supporting People (SP) funding has been important to some people with learning disabilities, it is not necessarily the whole answer. Consideration should also be given to other sources of funding for support and care (including Independent Living Fund, Individual Budgets or Direct Payments, social care, health). In many cases, people are entitled to additional social care or other funding to pay for the support and care that is not eligible for SP funding.

There may also be some situations where people with learning disabilities may have to be entirely funded by Social Care funding and/or other benefits as there is no money left in the SP budget, even for support that is “housing-related”.

There is also a need to balance expectations amongst SP officers in some areas that SP support should be limited, short-term and diminishing. This is at odds with the acknowledgement in the Strategy (para 9, page 28) that “many people with a learning disability need support for the whole of their lives”. To find out how your SP team is faring, visit <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/>

From April 2009. Supporting People Grant can be used to fund any service though local authorities may retain or set their own eligibility criteria. There will be no national grant conditions, although local authorities will still be informed of the amount of their SP allocation.

Housing Benefit

In the housing section of the Strategy (Box Two above), para 3.28 raises issues concerning revenue funding for housing, and Housing Benefit issues: “The Government recognises that for some people, housing design and management linked to their disability might increase costs above the local norm. What is required is a funding arrangement that does not put people’s housing security at risk, is based on an assessment of individual need and reasonableness and achieves best value in terms of available housing for public expenditure. DWP is committed to reviewing the Housing Benefit Regulations in the longer term, and in the short term is producing guidance to Housing Benefit officers.”

Further detail in the Delivery Plan refers to future work on a number of issues with Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowances (LHA). The LHA and the Turnbull judgements about 'exempt' accommodation limit Housing Benefit paid in private rented housing. People with disabilities often have special needs and the flat rate

allowance may not meet the rent required for example for extra space, adaptations or to cover the extra rent for a second bedroom for a sleep-in or live-in carer.

6. LINKS TO HOUSING IN OTHER SECTIONS OF THE STRATEGY

6.1 Chapter Three: Having a Life

Chapter Three *Having a Life* includes

- Better Health
- A Place to Call Home (the main section on housing, discussed above)
- Getting a Life (Transition, Post-16 education and Work)
- Relationships and Having a Family.

There are very few specific references to housing outside the housing section, although housing affects better health, transition and relationships.

The Better Health section refers to the need for people with learning disabilities to lead “healthy active lifestyles”. The recommendations include annual GP health checks for people with moderate or severe learning disabilities; and better access to mental health services. There is a call for effective partnership working with other health professionals. Improving access to healthcare is relevant to housing and support because if people need but do not receive these services, they are less likely to succeed in independent living.

The Getting a Life section is relevant to housing and support because if people are going to live independently they need a range of activities. One of the key messages from people with learning disabilities (Strategy page 28 para 8) was that “being lonely is one of the things they fear the most”. This section stresses the need to think beyond 9-5 and include evenings and weekends for social activities; it also points out that people of retirement age need activities but not paid work. There is no reference to how these activities and support are to be paid for.

The section on employment refers to new government policy on people with learning disabilities and employment (due in February 2009). However there are also tensions between paid work and means-tested welfare benefits, especially for shared ownership, as discussed in Section 5 above). There is no mention here (or elsewhere) of these issues.

The section on relationships and having a family has obvious implications for housing, because many people with learning disabilities cannot live as a couple, have children, or have their children living with them because of not having suitable accommodation. This applies especially to those who live in care homes, or shared rather than self-contained housing. Although support (especially for learning-disabled parents) is also important, the whole emphasis of this section is on support with no mention of housing.

6.2 Chapter Four: Citizenship

Chapter Four *Citizenship* includes sections on:

- advocacy
- leisure services
- transport
- access to justice and redress, and
- Being safe in the community and at home.

There is a strong emphasis on Hate Crime and safeguarding (including the recent Department of Health *No Secrets* consultation ending in January 2009).

As in Chapter Three, there are links to be made to housing. Access to leisure services and transport can depend on where someone is living: for example people living in rural areas (often with older family carers) are especially likely to be isolated. Although hate crime and other assaults and dangers can happen anywhere, some locations present more risks than others. Sometimes people with learning disabilities have to move to another location, or another form of housing, to escape the risk of abuse or following an assault.

The example of “Terry” in the box in the Advocacy section is a housing example, as discussed above. There is a section (para 4.11) on the need to enable access to further education later in life or for recreational reasons, although the wording is so careful that it is unclear what will happen as a result.

6.3 Conclusion

This briefing provides a comprehensive explanation of the recently published Strategy and Delivery Plan for commissioners and providers. Importantly it recognises housing as one of its key priorities. There is now a need to grab the opportunity to place housing as one of the key means by which the strategy can deliver sustainable outcomes and transform the lives of people with a disability.

7. OTHER USEFUL PUBLICATIONS FROM THE HOUSING LIN

There is a range of related publications on the Housing LIN website:

<http://networks.csip.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Housing/Topics/tags/?tag=learning%20disabilities>

Some of these include;

Housing Now – DVD & CD-Rom

Housing LIN Factsheet No.3: *New provisions for older people with learning disabilities*

Housing LIN Report: *A Measure of Success - evaluation of extra care housing for people with learning disabilities*

Housing LIN Case Study No.29: *Pennine Court - remodelling sheltered housing to include extra care for people with learning disabilities*

8. OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES RESOURCES

Websites for housing-related material

www.housingoptions.org.uk

www.mencap.org.uk

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

Another useful Publication

Gadgets, Gizmos and Gaining Independence – Assistive Technology and People with Learning Disabilities, Nigel King and Alicia Wood, Advance 2006
(from www.advanceuk.org or PDF on LIN website)

This Briefing was written for the Housing LIN by Jenny Pannell and Maurice Harker, Housing Options.