



PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER 16

Supported Housing

Housing options

Some adults with disabilities are unable to live independently without substantial support. If this is likely to apply to your son or daughter, the basic housing options are:

- › Continuing to live at home with parents or other relatives
- › Some form of supported housing

Living at home

This option can have both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include:

- › It may be cheaper
- › Your son or daughter will have daily contact with family members and friends and so is unlikely to become isolated
- › You, and other friends and relatives, are able to provide any support your son or daughter needs, and you can be confident that he or she is safe and well

The disadvantages include:

- › It can be difficult to move on from a 'parent-child' relationship, especially if your son or daughter remains very vulnerable and immature.
- › You might find that you are unable to lead the relatively commitment-free middle age you had envisaged, especially if your son or daughter is very dependent.
- › If you suddenly became unable to support your son or daughter (due to illness, say) he or she might have to be relocated in a hurry, and possibly given a placement that is less than ideal. Helping your son or daughter to find and settle into a suitable home while you are young and fit enough to do so can reap dividends later.

Identifying the need for supported housing

If your son or daughter is still quite young and only just approaching their Transition Review, you might find it hard to tell whether they are likely to need supported housing when they grow up. The chances are obviously higher if they are functioning at a level considerably below other young people of a similar age, especially as regards practical life skills such as understanding and managing money, organising their books and equipment ready for school, and making their way around the local area. Do remember, though, that it is not always possible to predict the future with any certainty, and if young people receive sufficient input and practice during their teenage years, some will be able to learn the skills they need to live independently later on.

If you are at all concerned, make sure the Transition planning process explores in detail your son or daughter's current level of functioning and the support they will require to prepare them for adult life. This discussion should be based on a full, holistic assessment of your son or daughter's needs, which your Connexions PA or social worker, if you have one, can arrange for you. They might do this automatically, but it is probably best to request an assessment, just to make sure. See the leaflets on *Connexions and Social Services* for more information about assessments of functional living skills.

Types of supported housing

There are many different models, offering varying levels of support. The possible options include:

- › A residential care home: Full-time staff provide support for several disabled people living in, usually, a large house or sometimes a group of houses in a community.
- › A group home: A small number of disabled people live together in a single house. Residents may receive full or part-time support.
- › Adult placement: A disabled person, or sometimes more than one disabled person, lives with an individual or family as a lodger.
- › Cluster housing: Disabled people have an individual flat, often within a single block or in a number of different blocks within a local area. Usually all the residents within a cluster are able to get in touch with each other and social events are arranged for them regularly. Residents in a cluster usually receive part-time support

Paying for supported housing

Most supported housing is rented from local councils, housing associations or charities. The rental charges are likely to vary depending on the type of housing, level of support, how much income or capital the disabled person has, and local policy. Remember that if your son or daughter has a low income, they may be entitled to help with their housing costs in addition to any disability or other benefits they receive. It is a good idea to seek advice about this, as the benefits system is quite complicated and it can be hard to work out what your son or daughter may be able to claim. To find a benefits advisor, try your local Citizen's Advice Bureau, Carers' Centre or Disability Advice Centre (details should be on the website of your local council). Some of the organisations listed in the links below or on the *Housing* factsheet may also be able to help.

An increasing number of disabled people own their own home, either outright or through a shared ownership scheme – for more information about these, see the links below and the factsheet on *Housing*. Some families leave money in trust for disabled people who are unable to manage their own affairs and this may be used to purchase or part purchase a home for them – see the links below for sources of further information about this. Other disabled people inherit homes outright, or obtain a mortgage to buy one. Most disabled people who own their own home use the direct payments they receive from social services to purchase any support they need. In some cases, though, local charities may provide some support free of charge. They might arrange for a volunteer to visit regularly and help the disabled person to write a letter or make any necessary phone calls, for example.

Applying for supported housing

In most cases it is necessary to have social services support to access supported housing. So if it becomes apparent, at any stage of the Transition planning process, that your son or daughter will require some form of supported housing, they will need a social worker if they do not have one already. Remember that you can make a referral at any time. Your Connexions adviser can refer your son or daughter to social services, or you can request an assessment yourself. For more information about accessing support from social services, see the relevant factsheets.

Your social worker should help you identify the most appropriate form of placement for your son or daughter, and apply in good time. There is, however, no harm in doing your own research beforehand to find out what might be available.

It is also sometimes possible to apply directly to charities and housing associations and this can be particularly useful if social services do not consider your son or daughter eligible for their support. A number of parents have successfully done this and been able to secure or organise a number of different arrangements to support their children's needs. These include using a single organisation to provide both accommodation and on-site support, or finding a 'mix and match' solution by obtaining a flat through a housing association and arranging some part-time support from a charity.

Sources of Further Information

Mencap, the learning disability charity, has some information about housing on its website:

<http://tinyurl.com/a5p4mf2> and features a video and other information in their *My Life* section for people with learning disabilities:

<http://tinyurl.com/bb385pk>. They also have a helpline: **Mencap Direct**, which is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday: **0808 808 1111**

Mencap's partner charity, **Golden Lane Housing**, provides housing for people with a learning disability and has lots of information about supported housing on its website: <http://tinyurl.com/adatjt5>.

The charity also offers advice through their own housing surgery. To speak to an advisor, call **0845 604 0046** or email enquiries@glh.org.uk.

The Den, a website for young people with autistic spectrum disorders, has a video on *Living Independently* and further information on the support you may be able to access:

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/the-den.aspx

Moving on up is a website run by the **Association for Real Change (ARC)** for young people from ethnic minorities with learning difficulties. It has an entire section on *Housing*: www.movingonup.info and there is also a helpline open on Mondays and Wednesdays between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon: **01246 541675**.

The **Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities** publishes a helpful booklet about supported housing for parents of young people with disabilities. It is called *Leaving Home, Moving On*, and it can be downloaded here: <http://tinyurl.com/a369hkz>

The **Housing Options** website has lots of information about housing for people with learning disabilities: www.housingoptions.org.uk

Step by Step - Living Network, a charity that brokers support for people with disabilities, have a very accessible online guide to housing and ways of paying for it: www.livingnetwork.org.uk.

My Safe Home is an organisation that helps severely disabled people who are unable to work obtain a mortgage to buy their own home: www.mysafehome.info

Advance is a charitable organisation that provides housing and support to disabled people (and also runs some employment projects). They have a lot of information about shared ownership schemes and can, in some cases, help to arrange mortgages: www.advanceuk.org.

Other charities that run care homes or provide other support to adults with learning disabilities include **The Home Farm Trust**: www.hft.org.uk and **MacIntyre**: www.macintyrecharity.org.

You may also find the links on the *Housing* factsheet helpful.

Afasic Publications and Other Services

Young Person's Identity Card - £0.50

Afasic Helpline - Open 10.30 - 2.30, Monday - Friday, tel: **0300 666 9410** or **0207 490 9420**

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