

# Step 6: Drawing on best practice

## Housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability



### Introduction

This step is about ensuring that your housing strategy and plan demonstrates a commitment to drawing on best practice such as:

- Published guidance, standards, benchmarks and examples relating to best practice in the development of housing options for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability, particularly that which is relevant to your local area.
- Housing strategies developed by other local areas through discussions with developers, health and adult social care commissioners and/or Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), growth or investment teams (e.g., Homes England, the Greater London Authority, the NHS and/or other funders), local community groups and planners elsewhere.

This step will improve the quality of your housing strategy by widening the lens beyond your own local authority to identify and learn from what is already working well in other areas and detect any gaps in your own strategy or process that need to be addressed. It will also help develop more detailed and technical specifications, based on best practice, for the capital and/or revenue investment opportunities identified in your housing strategy. This in turn will ensure developers, providers and investors have more clarity about expectations in terms of housing supply, high-quality design and service delivery that meets the need of autistic adults and adults with a learning disability.



### KEY QUESTIONS

You will need to consult published research, guides and data and talk to other commissioners to understand:

#### Development standards and guides

- What does the evidence base say about best practice, innovation and the experiences of autistic adults and adults with a learning disability in the development, repurposing or adaptation of different types of housing options?

#### Inclusive design

- What does the evidence base say about best practice, relevant development standards, construction materials and technology, innovation and the experiences of autistic adults and adults with a learning disability in the design quality of new or adapted housing, with a particular focus on equality, diversity and inclusion?

#### Peer review

- How have other local areas with similar local profiles developed and delivered their housing strategy? (This could also be a Local Plan or other housing-related report such as a Strategic Housing Market Assessment).
- Learning from how local areas whose housing strategies are recognised as representing good practice, and have been deployed?

## How to?



### Accommodation choices

- Consult published research and guidance on best practice in the development or adaptation of the different types of housing options for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability. There are a number of guidelines and standards you should consult, depending on the type of housing, the types of needs of autistic adults and adults with a learning disability, and the level of investment you would like included in your housing strategy. Ensuring that new developments meet the required design standards can help minimise the risk of empty or unusable units. It also ensures that they can be retrofitted to meet more people's needs, thereby 'future proofing' such developments and building homes for life.
- In developing specifications for investment opportunities, it is also important to consider developments that have successfully used such guidance. Sources include: Housing LIN resources for improving housing choice and supply and design and technology enabled housing practice examples and case studies.

### Inclusive design

- Consult published guidance on best practice and innovation in the development of housing options for specific groups, considering equality, diversity and inclusion:
  - Older people and people living with dementia
  - LGBTQ+ groups
  - People from ethnic minority backgrounds
  - People with physical, visual or hearing impairments.
- Again, in developing your specifications for investment opportunities, it is also important you consider developments that have successfully used such guidance. Sources include: The Housing LIN curates a selection of dedicated pages with relevant tools, resources and case studies.

### Peer review

- Speak with commissioners from other local authorities with similar local profiles, for example, similar socioeconomic and demographic profiles, similar spread across groups with different types of needs, or similar housing challenges, to understand:
  - The housing and supply solutions they have explored
  - The challenges they have encountered and how these have been addressed
  - How they have made decisions about the capital and/or revenue investment opportunities included in their housing strategy



- Any innovative examples of new purpose-built housing developments, advances in construction materials and technology or adapting or repurposing existing housing
- The relationships they have built with the sector, including funders and developers and how they engaged with communities to co-design/co-produce solutions
- Speak with commissioners whose housing strategies have been recognised as representing good practice to understand:
  - How they developed and delivered their plan?
  - What did the process involve? Including any challenges encountered, and how these were addressed.
  - How have they assessed demand and supply? How have they made projections? How have they conducted cost benefit analyses/measured social impact?
  - How did they consider the information needs of different audiences?
  - How have they tendered/procured care and support?



## SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Gov UK, (2020) [Supported housing: national statement of expectations.](#)
- Gov UK, (2023) [Guide to the supported accommodation regulations including quality standards.](#)
- Local Government Association, (2020) [Specialised supported housing: guidance for local government and NHS commissioners.](#)
- Gov UK, (2024) [Social housing providers: Regulation and standards.](#)
- Transforming Care Programme, (2016) [Building the right home: Guidance for commissioners of health and care services for children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges.](#)
- [A practical guide to the Reach standards](#) – Reach standards are a set of voluntary standards that introduce the fundamental principles of support for living.
- Habinteg, (2024) [The inclusive housing design guide.](#)
- Local Government Association, [Considering and meeting the sensory needs of autistic people in housing: Supporting autistic people to flourish at home and beyond.](#)
- Housing LIN, (2022) [Design for the mind: Neurodiversity and the built environment – guide.](#)
- Housing LIN, (2020) [Design Guidelines for inclusive, enabling environments for adults with complex needs.](#)
- Care Quality Commission, (2022) [Right support, right care, right culture.](#)
- [HAPPI design principles](#) – from the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation.



## PARTNERS TO INVOLVE

- Local authority staff focussed on social care, housing, autistic adults and adults with a learning disability, planning, public health, occupational therapy, Disabled Facilities Grants teams, regeneration, estates and finance.
- Autistic adults and adults with a learning disability, carers, representative groups, charities and community groups.
- Commissioners from other local authorities who have developed local housing business plans for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability.
- NHS, ICBs, Health and Wellbeing Boards and commissioners of health and social care.



## CO-PRODUCTION

The 'I' and 'We' statements below are illustrative examples of co-production outcomes associated with this step. We encourage housing partnerships to adapt them as they see fit to best reflect their local context.

### For individuals:

- I have the opportunity to learn about good examples of different types of housing options, housing design and support offered.
- I say what is important about the quality and characteristics of housing options that best suit my needs.
- I help decide which examples of housing developments should be considered best practice, based on my needs.

### For the partnership:

- We facilitate individuals' understanding of standards, guidelines and best practice with respect to different types of housing options, broadly and with respect to specific groups, ensuring that information is provided in a range of accessible formats.
- We take on board individuals' decisions and use the chosen best practice examples to shape the business case.

Further information about the benefits of and principles of co-production, as well as examples of co-production in the housing sector can be found [here](#).



## EXAMPLE: RICHMOND AND WANDSWORTH – SUPPORTED HOUSING ACCOMMODATION SPECIFICATIONS

Richmond and Wandsworth council have set out detailed expectations and requirements for all types of supported housing developments. The specification is written to recognise that disabled and older people who move into supported housing may have a range of different support needs including but not limited to, physical, sensory, and cognitive impairment and may be more likely to experience sensory overwhelm. Good design, therefore, can make people's day-to-day lives easier, reduce the need for care and support, and improve health, wellbeing and quality of life. The specification was produced in conjunction with a Specialist Housing Occupational Therapist based in the Enablement and Development Team in the Housing and Regeneration Department, along with the Adult Social Care (ASC) Commissioning. The document outlines:

- General design principles – site location, wheelchair accessible flats included, adjustments for ageing, minimum size, fire safety.
- Specific design principles for access, outdoor and communal areas – pedestrian access, accessible communal spaces, quiet and active garden areas, welcoming front entrance, ground surface textures easy to negotiate, indoor planting, notifications, timetables, way finding and signage, additional seating, clearly visible lifts.
- Specific design principles for individual flats, kitchens and bathrooms – front door locking mechanism, en-suite bathrooms from bedroom and hallway, reinforced ceilings, vinyl/laminate flooring, wet rooms, power-assisted windows, waist height oven, ceramic or inductions hobs, sliding door bathrooms, level access showers.
- Sensory design principles: lighting, soundproofing, touch and control of odours.

Access [Richmond and Wandsworth's full design specification](#) for more information.

First published in Great Britain in March 2025 by the Social Care Institute for Excellence

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Updated in March 2025

Toolkit available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/housing/toolkit-for-place-based-strategies-for-housing-for-autistic-adults-and-adults-with-a-learning-disability/>

