

# HOUSING OPTIONS



SUPPORTED  
HOUSING

TRUSTS

SHARED  
OWNERSHIP

INCOME  
SUPPORT

CARE STANDARDS

BENEFITS

*A housing advice service for  
people with learning disabilities*

*"You talked about putting a  
jigsaw together: housing, care,  
finance, benefits, trusts -  
that is absolutely right. Why  
weren't we introduced to  
Housing Options years ago?  
You could have saved us so  
much worry and uncertainty."*

(A couple seeking advice on trusts for a  
property for their son)

TENANCY  
AGREEMENTS

DIRECT  
PAYMENTS

COMPETENCY

MORTGAGES

CHOICES

LEGAL  
IMPLICATIONS

## What the Government said

Most people with learning disabilities live with their families. Often they leave the family home only as the result of a crisis such as the illness or death of the carer. The Government wishes to see better forward planning by local councils so that carers do not face continuing uncertainty in old age and their sons and daughters gain greater independence in a planned way.

People with learning disabilities can live successfully in different types of housing. They can cope with the full range of tenures, including home ownership.

Expanding the range and choice of housing, care and support services is key to giving individuals more choice and control over their lives.

## Needs and services

Common experience is that people living with families are often only moved when family age or stress makes it imperative. People are then fitted into services where there are vacancies rather than having a choice of when and how they want to move. Research shows both a shortage of places provided and very limited choice of options on offer. Research estimates are that 27,000 additional places are needed.

## Advice and information

A study by C & A Walker (1998) *Uncertain futures: People with learning disabilities and their families* found

- older families wanted to plan for the future but faced practical barriers in doing so
- more provision of flexible services and information was needed
- what is required is basic practical help and information

## The beginning of the Housing Options service

In 1996 a report *Ownership Options* was commissioned by two housing associations and published by the National Housing Federation. It provided six detailed case studies, each with a different form of home ownership involving an individual with a learning disability.

The report raised much interest. It soon became clear that there was a considerable demand for more detailed information and advice and the *Housing Options* service was established.

The task was to assemble the optimum package of housing care, support, finance and legal advice.

*"I must admit that I was in two minds about coming tonight, I can say what a pleasure it has been to hear someone explain things so clearly who is master of their subject."*

(A parent attending a workshop)

## The full range of tenure including ownership

The aims of *Housing Options* were to provide an independent service covering the whole of England (although in fact queries come from all over the UK), which would:

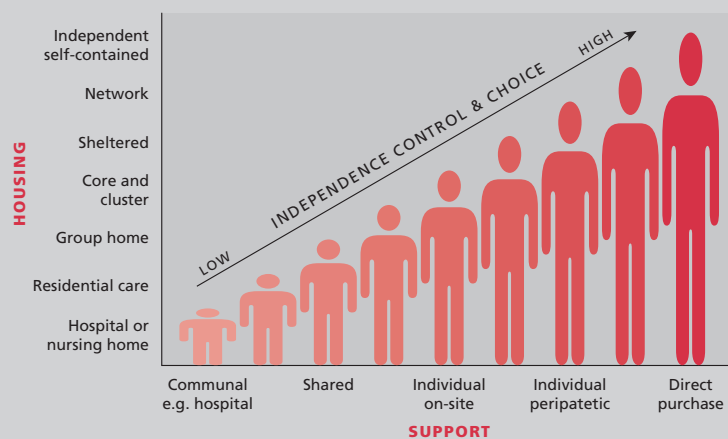
- help extend the housing choices available to buy or rent;
- open up additional *housing options* such as shared ownership
- provide information on the use of trusts, private finance, interest-only mortgages, and share-holding companies and any similar matter related to housing or support

## OPTIONS AND CHOICE FOR INDIVIDUALS

Housing Options has illustrated the possibilities using the variety of

- Different types of building
- Forms of tenure- owned or rented housing
- Sources of housing
- Funding, staffing and management arrangements

This range can also be shown based on two variables - types of housing and support



## FACTS AND FIGURES

*Housing Options has worked over 600 enquiries in the last 12 months.*

*Visits to our website have increased to more than 4,000 per month.*

*We have used Housing Options material for setting up a supported living service - it was invaluable.*

(A mother)

service solutions are not appropriate. The need for choice and offering a range of solutions is far more effective.

A project has been completed with help from the Shirley Foundation.

- to review need, demand and the range of existing services
- look at what services local authorities, providers and families want
- provide information and guidance to help with service development
- develop information and advice for people with autism and their families
- and promote the development of service provision

### Organisation and membership

As the scope and capacity of the advice service has increased it was decided that the *Housing Options* advisory service should be launched as a charitable company. The service has always been supported financially by a number of members /trustees. These currently include

**Advance Housing & Support**  
**Ealing Mencap**  
**Golden Lane Housing**

**Hightown Praetorian Housing Association**  
**Home Farm Trust**  
**Keyring**  
**Ling Trust Ltd**  
**MCCH Society Ltd**  
**Mencap**  
**New Dimensions Group Ltd**  
**Notting Hill Home Ownership Ltd**  
**Southdown Housing Association Ltd**  
**Southern Focus Trust**  
**The Avenues Trust**  
**United Response**  
**West Sussex County Council**

The service has also received support from

Mencap City Foundation  
The Bailey Thomas Trust  
The Department of Health  
The Shirley Foundation

These donations assist the service in carrying out its promotional work and allow it to offer free advice.

Where people want a personal meeting or service this is possible through our network of local advisors, but a fee is charged for this to cover costs.

The service also has a number of *factsheets* and *quick briefs* available by post and which are also available on our website

[www.housingoptions.org.uk](http://www.housingoptions.org.uk). A list is included at the end of this brochure.

### Membership and subscribers

The Steering Group is prepared to increase the number of members at present to broaden experience and to

maintain national coverage. The annual grant most members offer is £2,500 - it is less for smaller organisations with a turnover of less than £1 million.

- Members are part of a national forum of leading housing and care providers who are specialists in their field.
- Members have the opportunity to get information, test ideas with key practitioners in the field.
- Members have direct access to Housing Options Advisors.
- Members have access to briefings on national policy and opportunities to inform national policy.
- Members have free copies of Housing Options publications and the manual used by our advisors.

### Subscribers

Housing Options recently decided to extend its services to a new group of subscribers from voluntary organisations, local authorities or others wanting to keep in touch with the service fairly closely but without being involved in the management and direction of the organisation. Subscribers for an annual fee of £450. Annual updates are £150.

- Receive free copies of *Housing Options* publications
- The manual for *Housing Options* and updates
- Updated listings Fact Sheets and Quick Briefs
- Contacts directory
- Have access to the national network of advisors through dedicated phone line
- Discounted rates for contributions to local conferences and workshop



## Local authority interest

From the beginning *Housing Options* has been of interest to local authorities wishing to

- develop their own ideas for new opportunities for people with learning disabilities
- improve their relationships with housing departments and housing associations
- make better use of a wide range of sources of housing
- provide information for professionals and family carers
- learn more about capital and revenue funding, legal and tenancy matters
- rethink their strategic approach to housing and support services
- organise conference or workshop events for families and people with learning disabilities

The usual *Housing Options* information factsheet and briefings are provided free but other work for local authorities is carried out on a fee paying basis.

## Getting results

During its initial phase the service was subject to an independent evaluation carried out by the Norah Fry Research Centre at the University of Bristol and reported that 95% of those found the service either helpful or very helpful and the expertise of the service was singled out as a factor in this.

*"People using the service overwhelmingly valued it, particularly the access it offered to the technical information needed to put more flexible options in place.*

*The availability of the advice and support provided by the Housing Options service undoubtedly has made a significant contribution to the development of more flexible housing and support options for people with learning difficulties."*

## CASE STUDY

*One of the primary concerns of parents with a learning disabled son or daughter is what will happen to them when we are gone. Uppermost of those concerns is where they will live.*

*After a placement in a Social Services group home failed we decided that a home of Stephen's own was a realistic way to provide for his future. The result was the purchase of a one bedroom house on a 1980's housing estate using a Do It Yourself Shared Ownership (DIYSO) scheme in partnership with a Notting Hill Home Ownership housing association. This is a new idea with only a few others making similar purchases around the country so far.*

*Housing Options advised us on the benefits, finance and mortgage. There were difficulties and delays but in the end we were very pleased.*  
(- Full Story Fact Sheet 20 -)

The independent evaluation showed

- a very substantial demand for the services offered
- a strong case for extending the service through direct local contact

In response the *Housing Options* advisory services has now

- established a network of advisors in each of the regions of England to offer direct advice and guidance for individuals and their families
- created the *Housing Option Plan* for individual decision making
- a regional system of local technical support

## Housing Options plans

This is a method for interviews with individuals, their families and care managers to establish the need for accommodation and support for the future, to present and discuss the options available and produce a personal plan. It provides a framework for discussing and recording details which will shape decisions:

- Personal details
- Support needs, level of support
- Key events and family circumstances

- Current housing/living circumstances
- Individual and family views, plans for future
- Reasons for a move
- Capital, ownership and tenure
- Type of accommodation wanted
- Sources of accommodation/housing
- Support options
- Key issues identified
- Sources of further help

A Housing Advisor will visit, and complete a specially designed process with the person and their family/carers/friends/key people. Following this work a report is completed and a Housing Options Plan prepared. Either a local authority, family or care provider can commission a Housing Option Plan. A fee is charged which covers up to 3 days work with the key people involved and preparation of the report.

## Improving services for people with autism

Housing Options wishes to promote the development of opportunities for those with autism, to help those growing up and wanting their own home. The autistic spectrum covers a wide range of abilities and single



## Factsheets produced by Housing Options

1. What the Service is...
2. Shared Ownership and Homebuy
3. Shared Ownership – help with housing costs
4. Choices
5. Supported living
6. Renting Accommodation to Relatives: Can they claim Housing Benefit?
7. Housing – The Rights and Capacity of a Person with a Learning Disability
8. Income Support to meet Mortgage Repayments, the Cost of Large Repairs or Adaptations
9. Mortgages
10. Adapting a Property
11. Support Tenant
12. Shared Ownership Simply Explained
13. Tenancy Agreements
14. Registration of Care Homes
15. Pathway to Shared Ownership, Homebuy and Purchase and Repair – a flow chart
16. Direct Payments
17. Adult Family Placement, Supported Lodgings and Short Breaks
18. "Homebuy" through a Housing Association
19. Discretionary Trusts for the Benefit of Relatives with a Learning Disability
20. Case Study: Purchasing a Home for Stephen using Shared Ownership
21. Valuing People – Housing is a Central Concern
22. Renting and Tenancy Matters
23. Receivership and Enduring Power of Attorney
24. A Practical Guide for Organisations Setting Up a Supported Living Service

## List of Quick Briefs

1. Shared Ownership
2. How Can a Family Use Their Property to Provide Accommodation
3. Discretionary Trusts
4. Handing on a Tenancy
5. Receivership
6. Enduring Power of Attorney
7. Direct Payments
8. Housing Benefit
9. Income Support
10. Independent Living Fund
11. Earnings from "Permitted" Work
12. Mobility for Social Housing Tenants
13. Care Standards Act (CSA)
14. Supported Living
15. Council Tax Exemption
16. Incapacity Benefit & Severe Disability Allowance
17. Tenancy and Benefits in Supported Living
18. Tenancy and Capacity
19. Social Services Duties to Provide Housing
20. Non Rental Charges to Tenants
21. Advice and Information from Local Authorities
22. Housing and Social Services - Joint Assessments
23. Disability Discrimination Act 1995
24. When Does a Care Home have to be Registered?
25. Deregistration of Care Homes (Tribunal Decision)
26. Access to Local Authority Housing
27. Housing Benefit Restrictions
28. Housing Association Management of Private Sector Properties
29. Housing Benefit and Shared Ownership
30. Local Authority Housing Duty to People with Learning Disabilities
31. Finding Good Legal Services and Advice
32. Housing Benefits and Higher Rent Levels
33. Transition
34. Extra Housing for People with Learning Disabilities
35. Ordinary Residence
36. Supporting People Grant

## Contact us

- for lists of fact sheets, quick briefs and other publications
- to find out more about membership of Housing Options and the Housing Options Manual
- to become a regular subscriber to Housing Options
- for individual advice or a Housing Options Plan

# HOUSING OPTIONS

A housing advice service for people with learning disabilities

78a High Street, Witney, Oxon OX28 6HL Tel: 0845 4561497  
e-mail: [enquiries@housingoptions.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@housingoptions.org.uk)

**You can download Fact Sheets and Quick Briefs from  
[www.housingoptions.org.uk](http://www.housingoptions.org.uk)**

*"A big thank you for the accessible tenancy information you sent me. This will help us significantly in our work and make a big difference to peoples' lives."*

(Resettlement project manager)



## Housing Options Advisory Service

This is a national independent advisory service on housing, accommodation and support options for people with learning disabilities, their carers and families, advocates and other professionals working with disabled people.

- The aim is to help people choose where and how they live
- To give ideas about the range of possibilities
- Making decisions better informed
- Giving examples from other people's experience
- Trying to turn ideas into reality
- Recognising that choice is a very personal and individual matter
- Needing to take account of many professional and practical issues as well

### The service

- Provides free advice by telephone, post and e mail
- Offers detailed individual advice and assistance on a fee paying basis
- Produces fact sheets, briefings and publications on housing, finance and law
- Spreads ideas and information through conference and workshop events
- Carries out special research work to develop opportunities further
- Maintains a Website - which is very well used
- Refers people on to other sources of help or information
- Describes what different organisations may be able to offer
- Explains the framework of rights, benefits and law on housing and support

### Advisors

Lead advisors: Nigel King and Maurice Harker.

National Co-ordinator: Nichola Griffiths

Ten regional advisors.

### Workshops/conferences

Housing Options is running 4 regional mini-conferences this year. Contact us or visit the website for details.

### Publications linked to Housing Options

- Ownership Options: A Guide to Home Ownership for People with Learning Disabilities, N King, 1996, NHF
- An Ordinary Home, M Harker, 1999, Local Government Association, London
- Making Housing Choices, N King & M Harker, Pavilion 2000
- Leaving Home, Moving On, N King & M Harker, Pavilion 2000, Mental Health Foundation
- Living Alone or with Others, N King, 2001, Mental Health Foundation
- Family Homes: Using parental property to provide future housing for people with learning disabilities, N King, Foundation for People with Learning Disability, 2001
- Renting Your Own Home, M Harker & N King, 2002, British Institute for Learning Disability
- Designing for Special Needs, M Harker & N King, 2002, RIBA Enterprises
- Buying, Renting & Passing on Property, N King & S West, 2001, Housing Options
- Housing Options Resource Pack, 2004
- Your Place to Live, Manual & Video
- Information Sources, 2004.
- Tomorrow's Big Problem, M Harker & N King, 2004, National Autistic Society

*This list is continually being added to, so please contact us if you can't find what you are looking for.*

