

# Housing and Independent Living

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## Background

Housing plays an integral role in ensuring that people with learning disabilities can lead full, healthy, and productive lives in their communities.

Despite significant progress towards independent living over the last 30 years, people with learning disabilities continue to face barriers to accessing suitable housing and support. They can be denied choice about where they live, who they live with and the support they receive.

Overcoming these barriers is crucial to people with learning disabilities' full and equal enjoyment of their human rights including the right to live independently in the community.

Making independent living a reality for all requires housing options for people with learning disabilities to be accessible, affordable, sustainable, and meet individuals' varying needs.



## What SCLD wants to see

- People with learning disabilities understand their human rights to good housing and independent living.
- People with learning disabilities get the support they need to make their human right to good housing and independent living a reality.

- People are able to exercise maximum choice and control over where they live and in what type of housing.
- People with learning disabilities should have clear and effective routes to redress when they feel their rights have not been respected.
- Housing allocations and adaptations should be streamlined and made easier for people with learning disabilities to navigate.
- Availability of accessible housing increased across Scotland.
- Housing professionals understand the housing and support needs of people with learning disabilities.
- People know where to go for housing and support services and for advice and support.



## What is the consultation proposing?

The Scottish Government is proposing five areas for action in relation to housing:

1. The development of advice, advocacy and guidance.
2. The development of local neurodivergent and learning disabilities strategies which could require that local authorities must report how independent living principles are embedded into assessment and allocation policies.
3. The development of mandatory awareness training for housing professionals.
4. Improving data collection at a national and local level which could include collecting data on how many people with learning disabilities are considered not to have access to appropriate housing.
5. Documents in relation to housing to be available in easy read formats.



## Current SCLD thinking (Jan 2024)

SCLD believes all these proposals have a part to play in improving housing outcomes for people with learning disabilities.

We strongly support the development of housing advice, advocacy and guidance for people with learning disabilities. SCLD has strong evidence that people with learning disabilities require access to good-quality, accessible advice and advocacy to help them understand their options and be supported to make informed choices.

In our view, this should focus on delivering a 'housing options approach'. This could offer a more personalised approach to housing advice, through exploring all possible tenure options and considering people's wider personal circumstances and support needs alongside their accessible housing needs.

If adequately resourced, SCLD believes this could ensure that people with learning disabilities can be empowered to make choices around their housing options on an equal basis to others.

SCLD supports the development of local learning disabilities and neurodivergent people strategies which require local authorities to report on how independent living principles are embedded into assessment and allocation policies. We also think it is important that Local Housing Strategies (LHS) evaluate the needs of people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people and measures progress against this.

We are concerned by the lack of choice and restriction on independent living which results from persistent challenges around the supply, availability, and accessibility of housing. Furthermore, we believe that suitable housing and support solutions must be determined through a person-centred approach.

To achieve real progress, additional resources will be required to enable all people with learning disabilities to realise their right to independent living.

SCLD believes that improved data at a national and local level is also critical. There is currently a lack of reliable data on the needs and preferences of people with learning disabilities to inform the Local Housing Strategy which set out local authority priorities.

We are concerned that local authorities frequently rely on a weak evidence base for assessing people's needs for accessible housing and related services. We believe improved data at a national and local level would facilitate more detailed assessment of people with learning disabilities' housing circumstances, needs and preferences.



## Glossary

**Independent Living** is about people having choice and control over their own lives. It does not necessarily mean living alone or without support. It is about making informed decisions about living arrangements and support requirements. It is living an independent life without the dependency created by institutions.

**Local Housing Strategies (LHS)** allow local authorities to plan for meeting current and future housing need and demand, and the effective delivery of housing-related services.

**Redress** is to set right an unfair situation.



## Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities

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