

Housing Strategy and Action Plan for people with a Disability

2010 - 2013

Introduction

This document is an update of the Leeds Disabled Peoples Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011. It sets out how Leeds City Council will deliver local and national housing objectives and improve access to advice and housing options for people who have a disability, including physical or sensory impairments. For the purposes of this action plan a physical impairment is a condition affecting the body, perhaps through sight or hearing loss, a mobility difficulty or a health condition.

It makes reference to the government Independent Living Strategy of 2008 to provide more choice over how support needs are met and to remove barriers that are in place when accessing housing and connected support services. The action plan shows the priorities, objectives, and detailed actions with timescales and expected outcomes. It recognises that people are individuals with a wide range of housing and support needs and housing preferences, therefore a range of flexible services and housing options are needed which are designed around the individual, and that these can respond to changes in support needs or housing aspirations.

In 2005 the Government's published its vision, 'Improving the Lifechances of Disabled People' with the aim that by 2025 all disabled people should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people, this was supplemented by the Independent Living strategy identifying the need for a single community based support system for disabled people.

Recently the personalisation of support services has been explored through the use of direct payments and pilot of Individual Budgets. Housing related support will reflect this move towards self directed support by improving the opportunities for people with a physical impairment to take ownership of funding and arrange services around their own needs. Housing support will also be integrated into a wider package of health, social care and employment support services so it compliments the full range of services that enable people to live fully independent lives.

Aims & Objectives

The initial aim is to remove barriers that may exist in accessing information and advice services and to help people have more control over their housing options. Mainstream housing advice and support services should be fully accessible to all at the point of contact, and where appropriate enhanced support offered to people to help them access the processes. The Disability Discrimination Act and forthcoming Equalities Act both place a duty on service providers and local authorities to use resources to provide enhanced services to people with a disability.

There is a range of housing options broadly available in the social rented, private rented and owner occupier sectors, however people with a physical impairment may encounter greater barriers compared to others in accessing more mainstream housing options beyond social renting. This strategy will seek to remove these barriers and maximise access to wider mainstream housing options.

The strategy contains four broad aims:

1. Providing high quality housing options for people who have a disability.
2. Ensuring Housing services are accessible and promote choice and control
3. Maximise opportunities for people to achieve independent living where they choose to do so.
4. Improving access to Housing Options for specific groups of people who have a disability.

Key housing issues experienced by people with a disability

Consultation has been carried out with the Leeds Disability Reference group who highlighted the following themes:

- A recurring theme is the difficulties experienced when accessing the 'housing system' and understanding which service to contact in order to make a housing enquiry. Therefore this strategy will aim to provide accessible information in the form of a directory on the housing and support options, the adaptations system, and associated services that can assist people to access grants and benefits connected with housing.
- The Choice Based Lettings system through which all Leeds ALMO and many housing association properties are allocated can be difficult for people with a physical impairment to engage with on fair terms. The initial application process may be web-based or involve lengthy application forms and the process of making bids and viewing any properties can require greater time and support. Consultation has indicated a preference for one to one individual assistance when accessing the Choice Based Lettings system and having more time available for people to arrange the viewing of properties and consider if the property location is suitable.
- The availability and range of information about vacant properties is an important issue for people with support needs when considering an offer of accommodation. Currently there is limited information on location to essential services and the suitability of a property for adaptation or proximity to essential services such as transport and local doctors and shops. This can be improved by making available an Accessible Housing Register which provides clear and concise information about properties and potentially could be used as a model for all vacant housing across the social rented, private rented and owner occupier sectors.
- Many people who have a disability have specific needs when considering housing options such as the need to be near support, the accessibility of a property and it's size and there are a limited number of properties that meet these needs. We therefore need to look at different ways of meeting housing needs and wider solutions by exploring wider housing options such as shared ownership, owner occupation and use the private rented sector to create more choice.
- Having the right support in partnership with housing is essential for helping people feel safe and enjoy where they live in the community. Community Alarm support systems and Telecare can help by allowing people to live more independently with reduced intrusion from support staff. Housing services have the potential to link up with partner agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and the Independent Living Fund to provide joined up services so people can access information on the range of benefits and services in one joined up process rather than by the time consuming process of applying to different agencies.

- People from minority groups in Leeds who have a disability may not be aware of the range of support services available to them or how to access these services. This may be a result of current services may not be promoted in suitable ways to reach these groups. The strategy will explore how information and advice can be provided and will consult with these groups to identify best practice to allow equal access to services for all.

Local Strategy influences

There are also a range of housing related strategies and plans that will inform the development and delivery:

- Leeds Housing Strategy 2009-2012
- The Leeds Strategic Plan and Local Area Agreement 2008-2011
- The Leeds Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2009-2012
- The Leeds Vision Strategy 2009 – 2014 (section 5.6)

Guiding Principles of the strategy

This action plan has been produced within the following guiding principles:

- The strategy action plan should contain specific, achievable objectives rather than equivocal aspirational objectives.
- It should include clear definitions of desired outcomes.
- There should be a clear framework for putting the action plan into practice and the mechanism by which it will be monitored.
- The strategy links together housing outcomes from related strategies, including the Leeds Housing Strategy and Leeds Strategic Plan, to focus resources and achieve these joint goals and outcomes.
- The action plan builds on existing knowledge of needs.

- The action plan will be delivered through partnership working between the Council, local support agencies and the voluntary community sector in line with best practice within the Leeds Compact to achieve the best housing and support outcomes for people with a disability.

The action plan develops the broad strategic vision of the Leeds Housing Strategy 2009 -2012 to “create opportunities for people to live independently in a quality, affordable housing’

Specific goals from the Leeds Housing Strategy which align to this document are contained within the strategic priority of ‘Promoting Independent Living’.

Strategic Theme: Promote Opportunities for Independent Living

- Deliver high quality and enhanced housing options services so that people are able to find a solution to their housing need or requirement
- Enable people to live independently through housing-related support, adaptations, lettings and assistive technology
- Modernise housing provision for vulnerable people in social rented, private rented and owner occupier properties.
- Develop and implement an action plan for delivering Individualised Budgets including housing-related support.
- Work with partners from the social services authority and NHS Leeds to establish the contribution Telecare Services make to the independent living agenda and consider investment options.

The ‘Promoting Independent Living’ theme also contributes to the following performance indicators, which are included within the National Indicator Set:

- NI141: Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living
- NI187: Tackling fuel poverty
- NI142: Number of vulnerable people maintaining independent living

By achieving the above objectives and delivering the action plan we continue to:

- Ensure that mainstream housing services, advice and application processes are accessible to people with a disability. Housing services provided by Leeds City Council through the Housing Options Service should be fully accessible and comply with Part 5A of the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act, by
 - Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
 - Taking steps to take account of a person's impairment even where that involves treating the person more favourably than other persons;
 - Promoting positive attitudes towards people with a physical impairment
 - Encouraging opportunities for participation in public life through wider agendas connected with housing
- Improve joint working between Housing services, Social Services, Adaptation Services and Voluntary Agencies to achieve better awareness of each other's roles and improve on working arrangements so that people with a disability enjoy seamless delivery of different aligned services.
- Create greater opportunity for people to exercise choice and control in achieving their housing options through commissioning a range of housing related support services including floating support services that are available to people regardless of tenure.
- Ensure that housing support services are delivered in line with models of self-directed support, and housing support makes links to local community based health and employment support services.
- Improve housing options and support services for people with a disability.
- Develop a better understanding of the number of people in Leeds with a disability and how we can continue to develop services that meet changing future housing and support needs.

Delivery

This Action Plan will be delivered by a Strategic Working Group and progress reports given to the Leeds Housing Partnership.

Action Plan

Strategic Theme 1 Provide high quality Housing Options for people with a disability					
Priorities	Objectives	Actions	Timescales	Lead Officer	Anticipated Outcome
High quality Social Rented housing is available for people with a physical or sensory impairment.	Social housing property is of a high standard and is suitably adapted to ensure it is accessible.	ALMO properties are improved to the decency standard and where required adaptations arranged during improvement work.	April 2010 ongoing	John Statham	ALMO decency target is met and continues beyond 2010. Protocols are in place to include tenants with a physical impairment in the planning of improvements and including adaptations work due to take place in their homes.
	New build housing by Leeds City Council and other Registered Social Landlords after 2011 meets the Lifetime Homes Standard and built with reference to expert opinion on accessibility in design.	Monitoring of new build standards through Leeds Housing Partnership in delivery of the Lifetime Neighbourhood for Leeds PFI bid to meet the Lifetime Homes criteria from 2011 as a minimum standard.	April 2010 ongoing	Liz Cook	
The Private rented sector is accessible and a realistic housing option for people with a physical or sensory impairment.	Information on the range of private rented options is in accessible formats.	Audit the current range of information and ensure the most suitable range of formats are available in consultation with service user groups.	Mar 2010	Rob McCartney	Accessible information and protocols to assist customers with a disability are reviewed.
	Support is available through Leeds Housing Options service to access private rented accommodation.	Provide training to staff at the Leeds Housing Options service are aware of support and advocacy services and can make referrals on behalf of service users.	April 2010	Rob McCartney	Staff training completed

<p>People with a physical or sensory impairment who are owner occupiers are helped to maintain independence in their homes.</p> <p>Housing is safe and affordable.</p>	<p>Accessible information on Income Support relief on mortgage interest and HOMES shared ownership is widely available.</p>	<p>Identify if these schemes are feasible in Leeds and produce accessible information on how to apply.</p>	<p>April 2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p>	<p>Accessible guide completed and available with alternative formats.</p>
	<p>The Care and Repair Leeds HIA and handyperson scheme is promoted for owner occupiers.</p>	<p>Information to be included in guide to housing options . Raised awareness of Care and Repair made through promotion via networks such as the PSI network.</p>	<p>April 2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p>	<p>Care and Repair information is contained within the Accessible Guide to housing and support options.</p>
	<p>The adaptations service is easy to access for both customers and professionals and the eligibility criteria is clearly understood.</p>	<p>Assess range of information available to customers through Leeds Housing Options against accessible standards in partnership</p>	<p>April 2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p>	<p>Accessible guide contains information on the adaptations services, eligibility and referral routes.</p>
	<p>People are helped to avoid fuel poverty and given help to access schemes which assist with energy efficiency.</p>	<p>Establish links between Fuelsavers team and voluntary sector groups within the city to promote awareness.</p>	<p>Mar 2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p>	<p>Increased awareness of the services available</p>
	<p>Reduced numbers of Cat 1 hazards for people with a physical impairment living in private Back to Back housing.</p>	<p>Implement Leeds Back to Back housing strategy priorities specifically targeting those with a physical impairment living in unfit housing.</p>	<p>2010</p>	<p>Mark Ireland</p>	<p>Increased uptake of property improvement by disabled occupiers and private tenants.</p>
		<p>Identify those occupying back to back housing who can be offered advice on wider services such as adaptations and housing related support.</p>	<p>2010</p>		

Strategic Theme 2 Housing services are accessible and promotes choice and control					
Priorities	Objectives	Actions	Timescales	Lead Officer	Anticipated Outcome
The Choice Based Lettings process is accessible to people with a physical or sensory impairment.	Appropriate support is available to help complete applications, respond to general questions and bid and in accessible formats, e.g. audio tape.	Assess the feasibility of training housing options advisors to provide dedicated support and direct contact via a dedicated telephone number.	April 2010	Rob McCartney	Improved support for customers with physical impairments accessing the Choice Based Letting system measured through customer feedback.
	People are given sufficient time to consider offers and arrange viewings with carers or support workers.	Review the timescales within the lettings policy to ensure sufficient time is given to customers with support needs to assess the location, identify if support is available before making a decision on an offer.	Oct 2010	John Statham	Enhanced lettings policy in place for disabled customers.
	The Medical Priority award process reflects fairly the housing needs of people with physical impairments. The Expiry of priority need and ensuring people are aware of the need to renew is reviewed to ensure it does not discriminate against disabled people.	Review the lettings policy and medical priority award criteria to ensure sufficient priority is awarded.	Oct 2010	John Statham	Medical priority award reviewed and agreed outcomes for priority applicants.

<p>The Choice Based Lettings system provides detailed information about properties to allow informed choices to be made.</p>	<p>An Accessible Housing Register model is used which provides information on property layout, proximity to nearby services and the potential for future adaptation.</p> <p>Any adaptations fitted in vacant properties are maximised through identifying equipment, informing via accessible housing register, and matching to suitable applicants.</p>	<p>Assess the feasibility and then design and introduce an Accessible Housing Register.</p> <p>Assess the feasibility of extending this model for managing information on a city wide basis for private rented and owner occupied properties promoted through estate agents.</p> <p>Scope the feasibility of collecting adaptations information and how this will be linked to an accessible housing register.</p> <p>Co-ordinate the inspection of empty properties to capture details of current adaptations and assess future adaptation potential.</p> <p>Inform applicants of any current equipment in accessible housing register.</p> <p>Identify if preference can be made to people with a physical impairment for available properties that already have adaptations installed.</p>	<p>July 2010</p> <p>April 2010</p>	<p>Rob McCartney</p> <p>John Statham</p>	<p>Accessible housing register is in place which meets the approval of service user groups.</p> <p>New protocols introduced to inspect vacant properties and capture adaptations information.</p> <p>Leeds Homes publication and website indicate available adaptations and potential for future adaptations.</p>
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Housing Advice available through Leeds Housing Options service is fully accessible for people with a physical or sensory impairment.	Leeds Housing Options Staff can meet the communication and support needs of customers with physical impairments.	Deliver disability awareness training to Leeds Housing Options staff.	Ongoing during 2010	Rob McCartney	Disability awareness training delivered to all staff.
	Staff at the Leeds Housing Options service are knowledgeable on the range of housing options and support services available.	Produce a directory for staff giving information on the support services and specialist housing providers for people with a physical impairment in the Leeds area.	April 2010	Simon Pickering	Guide is produced and available to staff
Disability Equality is promoted generally through service delivery.	Housing related support service providers meet equality standards and have Equality Action plans in place.	Contract management of housing related support service by the Supporting People team with updates on findings.	Ongoing 2010 – 2011	Debbie Forward Supporting People Commissioning Body	All housing related support services for people with a disability have in place Equality Action Plans.
		Equality Impact assessment completed on the advice services provided by Leeds Housing Options to include physical access, communication methods (Telephone systems, alternative formats, option for personal advisors for disabled customers)	2010	Rob McCartney	Leeds Housing Options offices and One Stop shops are accessible to wheelchair users and those with visual impairment including communication methods.

Strategic Theme 3

Maximise opportunities for people to enjoy Independent Living

Priorities	Objectives	Action	Timescales	Lead Officer	Anticipated Outcome
Housing services have a better understanding of the number of people in Leeds with a physical or sensory impairment and their housing needs.	Identify any unmet housing or support needs. Inform future planning of new housing and support service commissioning.	Establish working group to include stakeholders from Leeds City Council Housing Strategy, NHS Leeds, and Adult Social Care. Using data from the CAA measure current housing need and projected future needs.	August 2010	Mick Ward Debbie Forward	Working links are established between housing services, health and social care to promote housing support through local community based networks.
Current housing related support services enable independent living opportunities A range of Housing Related support is available that is flexible to meet varying needs and portable. People have the same choices to move and retain their support.	Information is widely available in accessible formats on the range of services such as visiting support, Care Ring and Care and Repair Leeds. Service providers are aware of routes into lower support services to allow moves on to more independent living. Any gaps in support services are identified to ensure support services are high quality and meet existing needs.	An audit of information provided on the range of housing related support services – format, distribution. Engagement with community groups to promote services. Supporting People reviews test the awareness of service providers and their knowledge of referral routes to allow people to move on to independent living. Carry out a Sector Review of Supporting People funded services for people with a physical impairment.	May 2010 2010 ongoing 2011	Debbie Forward Debbie Forward Debbie Forward	Information is checked and assessed for accessibility in consultation with community groups. Completed consultation programme with community groups. Completed service reviews of services for people with a physical impairment. Sector review completed and gaps identified. Services remodelled or commissioned to meet any unmet needs.

<p>People with a physical or sensory impairment have the opportunity to arrange support using Self Directed Support models.</p>	<p>Housing related support resources are made available to give people the option for an assessment and allocation of funding.</p> <p>Service providers can meet the demand for personalised support delivery.</p>	<p>Remodelling of services, alignment to other funding streams and assessment models through the Supporting People sector review.</p> <p>Develop the support market to identify the available service providers who can meet potential demand for personalised support services.</p>	<p>2010 – 2011</p> <p>2010 - 2011</p>	<p>Debbie Forward</p> <p>Debbie Forward</p>	<p>Outcomes of Supporting People sector review implemented to provide a range of services that meet the needs of people who are planning their own housing related support.</p>
<p>Assistive Technology is utilised fully to help achieve independent living.</p>	<p>Information on the range of Assistive Technology and application process is in accessible formats and widely distributed.</p>	<p>Review the range of information and referral process.</p> <p>Promote awareness of the services within the voluntary sector agencies, support providers and service user led organisations.</p>	<p>2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p> <p>Martin Kennard</p>	<p>Awareness sessions held with service user led organisations. Information provided to support providers.</p>
<p>Housing related support is integrated into wider support services.</p> <p>Longer term alignment of housing and support services to provide one common assessment point.</p>	<p>Investigate options for housing related support to be delivered via Neighbourhood Network</p> <p>Align housing support funding streams including Workchoice, Access to Work, Disabled Facilities Grant and the Independent Living Fund.</p>	<p>Joint working between Housing services, Job centre Plus Social Care departments to assess scope for developing more integrated services.</p> <p>More joint working between housing services, Social Services and Jobcentre Plus to identify ways of streamlining application processes.</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>Jan 2010</p>	<p>Debbie Forward</p> <p>Mick Ward</p> <p>Debbie Forward</p>	<p>Decision if housing support can be delivered through existing neighbourhood networks.</p> <p>Continued work to align the pathway to housing support with employment and adaptations services in parallel with the Right to Control.</p>

Strategic Theme 4 Improving Housing options for specific groups of people with disabilities					
Priorities	Objectives	Actions	Timescales	Lead Officer	Anticipated Outcome
People from BME communities in Leeds who have physical or sensory impairments can access housing advice and make full use of housing support services.	Information on housing options and housing related support is made available in accessible formats.	Check availability of leaflets and alternative translations or formats at Leeds Housing Options and one stop shop locations.	April 2010	Simon Pickering	Completed audit of information and pathways to advice, confirmed with service user groups these are accessible. Agreement on the most effective way of delivering advice on housing support and related services to BME communities in Leeds.
	Information is delivered to communities in the most accessible format; by considering outreach or community based advice services at places of worship.	Check procedures for interpreters or BSL availability at Leeds Housing Options and one stop shop locations.	April 2010	Simon Pickering	
		Carry out feasibility study with BME community groups to their preferred method for accessing housing and housing support advice.	April 2010	Simon Pickering	
People with low vision and hearing impairment can access housing advice and housing support options that are suitable for their support needs.	Information and advice is accessible via Leeds Housing Options and the physical environment is designed to accessible standards.	Review the accessibility of housing support service information. Carry out an audit of access methods, layout and procedures for Leeds Housing Options and One stop shop services and identify improved methods in partnership with service user led organisations.	April 2010	Simon Pickering	Completed checks of all front line housing services, information and customer service practices and service user recommendations implemented. Continued delivery of PFI project and guarantees of Lifetime Homes standards. Sector review completed and recommendation for low vision services identified.
	New build housing should refer to design best practice, such as that recommended by RNIB or Thomas Pocklington Trust.	Through the Leeds Housing Partnership and Lifetime Neighbourhoods Bid ensure new build housing references these best practice standards.	2010 – 2013	Liz Cook	
	Appropriate housing related support services are available to meet support needs of people with low vision.	Complete the Supporting People sector review or services for people with a physical impairment.	2010 - 2011	Debbie Forward	

<p>People who have physical or sensory impairments and experience domestic violence are able to obtain support to remain in their home and live independently of they wish to do so.</p>	<p>Information and referral process to Sanctuary Scheme is accessible and widely available.</p>	<p>Carry out audit to test how accessible the Sanctuary information and application process is for people with a physical impairment, in partnership with service user led groups and best practice.</p>	<p>August 2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p>	<p>Completed audit of Sanctuary information, referral and installation processes.</p>
		<p>Promote the service to raise awareness throughout disability action and voluntary sector groups across the city.</p> <p>Check that Sanctuary fitments are compatible with those who have reduced mobility or vision.</p>	<p>August 2010</p>	<p>Simon Pickering</p>	<p>Evidence of a planned promotion with support services and groups.</p> <p>Checks have been carried out to ensure that fitments are compatible with mobility and sensory needs of applicants.</p>