

Housing strategy

for people with a learning
disability in the Royal Borough of
Greenwich
2017 - 2022

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You can find the document
on which this is based -
'A strategic review of housing
for people with learning
disabilities in Greenwich'[Error! Hyperlink
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Foreword

We are pleased to present the Royal Borough of Greenwich's housing strategy for people with a learning disability.

This document is the Council's response to the report "A strategic review of housing for people with learning disabilities in Greenwich", which was commissioned by the Council from Golden Lane Housing. That report looked at the suitability of current accommodation, as well as what was likely to be needed both presently and in future years. It was developed with those who use these services; their parents and carers and other interested parties and set out a series of recommendations which this strategy responds to.

The provision of good quality housing is a key part of supporting people to achieve their outcomes and to live the life they want to lead. As a Council we are committed to providing good quality, cost effective services; maximising people's mental and physical wellbeing through:

- supporting people to find the right home
- providing access to education, training and employment opportunities
- helping people to develop independent living skills
- promoting healthy lifestyles
- providing access to good quality health services and
- helping them to be full and active members of society

It is important that every individual that uses our services is at the centre of any decisions made about their care and support. This is just as important when thinking about housing, and we are confident that this strategy sets out the steps we need to take to ensure that people with a learning disability in the Royal Borough of Greenwich continue to have choices about how and where they live, are able to maximise their independence and fulfil their aspirations.

Councillor David Gardner
Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

Key to the successful delivery of this strategy will be a whole Council approach and, in particular, health and adult services will work closely with colleagues in Children's Services, Housing and Regeneration to plan for and deliver the housing solutions that people want and need. It is also vital that we continue to include people that use our services in the development of new housing options and service improvements.

Delivering the housing that people need will be challenging; especially as demand grows over the next few years. However, we cannot afford to do nothing. You will see that our costs are set to rise by some £9 million over the next five years. Better quality housing that is efficient to manage and which maximises the use of assistive technologies; services that keep people safe but respect their rights. It explores opportunities to support more people into the workplace and to otherwise participate in meaningful activities and supporting families to continue caring for their loved ones in appropriate accommodation is essential if we are to provide affordable, good quality care and support for people with a learning disability in Royal Greenwich.

In the face of these challenges it is important that we are clear on how we will face them and this strategy includes a series of clear pledges that detail the action we are committed to taking.

We would like to thank Golden Lane Housing for the work they have done developing this strategy and look forward to working with them to deliver the strategy's pledges. We would also like to thank all those stakeholders who participated in the development of the strategy, in particular those people who use our services, their families and other advocates and our Learning Disability MPs from the local People's Parliament.

Councillor Averil Lekau
Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty

Summary

Across the country great progress has been made in housing for people with learning disabilities. To ensure that Royal Greenwich continues to support this, the Council commissioned Golden Lane Housing (a part of the national charity Mencap) to undertake a comprehensive review of housing for people with learning disabilities.

The scope of the review was to examine both the suitability of current accommodation with our two largest providers, as well as understand better the housing that was likely to be needed both now and in the future.

We also asked that they set out a series of recommendations suggesting how we could respond to the conclusions of the review.

This strategy sets out our commitment to those recommendations in the form of a series of pledges.

We know that more people with a learning disability with generally more complex needs will require housing in the future. Our findings show a clear and progressive increase in both the number of younger people with a learning disability and autism and of older people with learning disabilities; who are living longer and healthier lives; and we know that this trend will continue for some years to come.

In the face of these changes and challenges to do nothing is not an option; and this strategy is but one piece of the transformation programme currently underway within the Council targeted on improving the life chances of our residents.

Getting it right

We want to make sure we get this strategy right. That's why we're involving people with a learning disability, their families and carers and other people important in their life throughout the process.

The scope of this strategy

This strategy sets out the housing needs for people with a learning disability currently living in mcch and the Council's in-house support provider Greenwich Living Options (GLO) properties, alongside estimated future housing needs.

It summarises the key finding of the Golden Lane Housing report and our response to them; giving some idea of the potential costs. Clearly, until more detailed work is undertaken these costs can only give some idea of the potential magnitude and should not be seen as firm costings.

The principles it contains will also guide the Council's general activities and priorities in this area, which will also inform its full housing strategy, which is expected to be available for consultation later this year.

All of the detail upon which the findings and pledges are based can be found in the Golden Lane report; which also contains a series of appendices which provide significant further detail.

Findings and Pledges

Growing housing need

Over the next five years, it is estimated that 120-140 more people with a learning disability will require suitable housing and support within the borough.

In recent years the Council has been unable to local housing solutions to everyone. As a result, over the last 10 years, 70 people have moved outside of the borough and more than half of these were under 30 years old when they moved. There are now 106 people living outside of the borough due to a lack of appropriate housing and support and some of these may wish to move back.

Our Pledge – *The Council will prepare a comprehensive programme of development with partners to meet these needs; including building new properties or purchasing them, as well as by ensuring that the needs of people with learning disabilities are reflected in regeneration plans. Together with partners we will develop a business plan to identify the capital investment required and will set this out in a series of business cases to be agreed by the end of February 2018. Our medium term financial strategy will reflect these plans. The Council will explore alternative financial models to deliver the plan; including the opportunities currently afforded by co-investment of ‘Right to Buy’ receipts, borrowing for direct investment, use of Council owned properties and from securing grant funding from central government. Consideration in local plans will include preventative approaches for people with learning disabilities whose needs do not reach eligibility criteria for social care funding but who will need lower levels of support. We will also work with all landlords – both private and public sector – to ensure that as broad a range of options as possible is made both available and sustainable; including the expansion of current schemes such as ‘Shared Lives’. In all new housing developments, we will ensure that Assistive Technology is used to maximise the freedom, security and choice and control of those who live there.*

As an indication of costs, if all of the 120-140 new requirements were to be met through purchases of

property on the open market then around £16.9m of investment would be required.

People’s homes

We have found, in general, that existing services are in good locations, and many are on the ground floor and accessible. Most of the properties will meet people’s needs but require investment. Some are satisfactory as they are, while others need remodelling and very few are not suitable at all. Many are in need of routine repair or refurbishment or some adaptations.

In addition, a large number of older people with a learning disability are living in these homes and the properties no longer meet their needs. At present there are no suitable alternative properties for them to move into.

Our Pledge – *Together with Greenwich CCG and partners, the Council will agree a programme of investment in the current stock with a prioritised timetable for implementation. Current estimates are that this programme is likely to cost around £8m and will fall to a range of property owners including the Council, NHS and others. As part of this programme we will also ensure that there is a move towards Supported Living models within these properties, as they provide people with learning disabilities better rights and greater person-centred services. We will also develop age-appropriate housing that better meets the needs of the ageing group.*

Caring for loved ones at home

Many families want to continue caring for their loved ones at home but are struggling due to the housing situation. Although research is incomplete, it is estimated that over half of all adults with a learning disability living within the borough are cared for by their families.

Our Pledge – *We will develop new tenancy options that allow people to occupy homes better suited to meeting their specialist needs for as long as they need them. This may mean an extra bedroom to accommodate a teenager with behaviour that challenges; larger rooms to accommodate adaptations; a garden etc if this is*

vital to them being able to continue to support their loved ones.

Information and advice

Having information and advice about housing and support will help people know what the options are and be able to make plans. Many people we spoke with expressed the need for better information and advice as well as practical support.

For elderly carers in particular, carers are often able to cope better if they have reassurance about what the future holds.

Our Pledge – *We will establish a Housing Brokerage service. This will provide advice, information and guidance to people with learning disabilities and their carers seeking housing.*

We will also work with elderly carers as part of a separate service within Brokerage to help them plan for the future.

The Brokerage Service will provide access to all types of accommodation options, including Shared Ownership.

Working Better

Information and planning

One issue that became clear through Golden Lane’s research was the Council’s need for better information so that we can more accurately plan to meet the needs of our population. For example, we know that we can improve our understanding about:

- The number of younger people with learning disabilities who are likely to move into adulthood and need housing.
- The number of people with learning disabilities who are likely to need to move in future; for example, as they transition into old age.
- The number of people who are not in touch with the Council but known to local voluntary organisations.
- We have significant gaps in understanding the age of carers of those who still live at home with them. This is key in estimating when it is most likely that they will be unable to continue caring.
- We also have some way to go in reaching – and understanding – people with learning disabilities from black and minority ethnic groups in Greenwich.

Our Pledge – We will improve our systems and processes so that social care staff capture more housing information at appropriate times in people’s lives; including their current and desired future housing.

We will also work better together across Council departments - and with partners – to fill these knowledge gaps.

Property arrangements

The review of existing services has shown that there were some uncertain arrangements that had been made with regard to some leases; resulting in maintenance and other responsibilities being unclear.

Our Pledge – We will work with those who are responsible for these arrangements to ensure that they are put on a proper footing so that properties are brought up to – and kept - in good condition.

Working with partners

Previously, learning disabled people have struggled to access Council services outside of social care departments.

We have also, sometimes, not included care providers in the planning process for people’s housing soon enough; and we need to treat them more as ‘partners’ than ‘providers’.

Everyone has different needs. By using a joined-up approach with teams across the Council and other partnerships we can better understand a person’s needs and provide homes to help them live the life they choose.

Our Pledge – By ensuring that the whole Council is signed up to this strategy we are showing that we are committed to working better collectively in the interests of people with a learning disability, their families and carers. Ensuring that we take a ‘whole life’ approach to people and consider their access to work and leisure as well as housing will be vital and ‘housing with work’ schemes will be part of our ambitions.

How people with learning disabilities access housing through the Council will be re-designed to make it as simple and effective as possible.

We will also endeavour to involve Care Providers earlier in a person’s move, allowing direct access to that person and their interested parties.

Implementing the strategy

Understanding people’s housing needs has only just started. We have developed our thinking about what needs to be done in partnership with those who use our services, their families and carers and relevant local organisations. This has ensured that we truly understand the current position and people’s aspirations for the future, but this does not stop there.

Our pledge – We are committed as a Council to developing our services together with our residents and will continue to develop and implement the plan that will deliver the pledges in this strategy in true co-production.

Contact us

For more information about the work to implement this strategy please contact Golden Lane Housing:

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