

A

Framework to

Develop Housing

Options

**For people with a
learning disability
in Swindon.**

28th February 2003

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Introduction

Different people think of different things when we talk about “strategies”. The Valuing People Support Team put some advice in their Newsletter about what should be in the strategy. We have put that advice into our introduction to give an idea of what to expect. Here is what they said.

“They need to be thorough, but not too detailed. A plan should not

- Try to describe everything you are going to do
- Give details of what everything will look like in a few years time
- Plan too far into the future

The problem with plans that do these things is that they can lock you into action that might not make sense.

Remember that we are still learning new things:

- About what people really want – through person centred planning
- About different priorities of partner organisations like housing authorities.

If we make detailed plans whilst we are still learning, then how can we change direction as we discover that

people want and need different things to those which we thought they wanted when we started out?”

We have tried to follow this advice. Our Partnership Board thought that this plan was ok. They think that it is just the start. Carers in particular feel that we must quickly develop clear priorities and act on them. Until we have these priorities we won't make any real difference and this plan will not achieve anything. We are all committed to developing wider choices about housing for people with learning disabilities.

The team also said what should be in a good plan. We have used what they said as the headings for each section.

“A good plan will:

- **Set down a vision and aspiration for where you are going and what life will look like for people in the future. Whilst this will include some specific things, it should not be too detailed about particular services.”**

“Four key principles of Rights, Independence, Choice and Inclusion lie at the heart of the government’s proposals. Legislation which confers rights on all citizens, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, applies equally to all people with learning disabilities...”

Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century.

The idea of being a full citizen is at the heart of this vision. This includes choosing where to live and who to live with. In line with “Valuing People...” no one will live in hospital accommodation.

People with learning disabilities, whatever their background, whatever their religion, whatever their difficulties or however much support they need, will have the same access as everyone else to a full range of housing options. Person centred planning will help them

to think about where they would really like to live. It will help them to work out if there are any changes they would like to make. Any support that they need to live a full and active life in their community will be separate to their housing, so that they can change their housing or support service without necessarily changing the other. Housing and services fitting the people, not people fitting the housing and services that are available.

Information will be gathered about peoples needs in good time so that realistic plans can be made. However, plans will be flexible enough to change if people's requirements change. Housing services will play their part in making sure that all services work together to solve problems, rather than services arguing amongst themselves about whose problem it is. Everyone will be able to get information about housing in a way that they can understand.

As family carers get older, good plans will be made about the housing needed by everyone involved, the carers and the person that they care for. Carers need to know what options there are for the future.

People with learning disabilities and their carers will be actively involved in planning housing services. If this happens properly there will be no need for a “special” housing strategy for people with learning disabilities in future.

Describe the first steps and how they are going to be taken and funded

Before we can move together towards our vision, we need to know where we are now.

The Learning Disability Service Planning Database is not in use at the moment. A new worker will be recruited in 2003 so that the information on the Database will be brought up to date by Summer 2004. Social Services and Health are working together to find the money to do this.

We collect information for the Database by sending people a list of questions – they fill them in and send them back. This is a good way of finding out facts about people – things like where they live, who supports them and that kind of thing.

It isn't a good way of finding out how people feel about things. This could be things like how people decided about where to live, did they have a choice about where to live and who with, are they happy there, what are their hopes for the future etc...

This kind of information can be collected in other ways like:

- Reviews for people that have services provided by Social Services or the Supporting People team.
- Feedback from Advocacy Groups about the people they work with
- Customer satisfaction surveys for people with learning disabilities and people supporting them who have wanted advice or a service from the Housing Department
- Research into the kinds of Housing and Support that we have not been able to find locally for people.

We need people to look at all of this information. We can use it to get an idea of where we are now – and how we can make things move towards the vision of how things should be.

We will have a Steering Group to do this. It will be their job to work out a plan that will make the vision become real, to decide what needs to be done, and make sure it gets done.

The Steering Group will need to have people on it from:

Housing Services

Social Services

Service Users

Carers

Advocacy groups

Organisations that provide Housing (Housing Associations etc....)

Organisations that provide support for people

The Group will need to be able to make decisions about what needs to be done, who should do it, and when it should happen.

One of the first things that we shall do is look at how things are done now and how they can be made better from now on.

Sometimes the group will need to check things out with other people before deciding what to do or how it should be done. They might need to invite other people to meetings to ask for their advice or help.

The important thing about the people in the group is that they are there because they want things to change – and that they are supported by the people or organisation that they represent.

Say who is responsible for making things happen

The housing strategy will be developed by the steering group chaired by the Council's Housing Strategy Manager, who also has responsibility for the corporate housing strategy and the housing business plan.

We will bring on board people who can make decisions and allocate resources. The partners on the steering group will have the ability and commitment to ensure that Swindon's housing strategy for people with learning disabilities is robust, sustainable and deliverable.

In developing the strategy the steering group will seek to ensure that it is based on sound and current data regarding

- * existing provision
- * current needs for accommodation and support
- * emerging needs for accommodation and support
- * available resources, now and in the future.

The housing strategy will link into other appropriate plans and strategies of stakeholder organisations to ensure a

joined up approach to the accommodation and support needs of people with learning disabilities.

The strategy will only be developed following wide ranging consultation and involvement of all stakeholders. The implementation and effectiveness of the strategy and action plan will be monitored, through the steering group by the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.

Describe how you will know whether the things you are doing are working and achieving the desired outcomes (or not).

It can be difficult to know if you are getting things absolutely right. There are some pointers that will give us an idea if we are going in the right direction. We would expect to see

- ✓ More people living in ordinary houses on ordinary streets – especially people with lots of different needs
- ✓ More planned changes in how people are supported or where they live, that happen at the right time for the person and those close to them
- ✓ Fewer people with learning disabilities having to move to other parts of the country to find the kind of support they want or need
- ✓ More people having their own tenancy
- ✓ More people being supported to live in their own home – by people they like and value
- ✓ Fewer unplanned changes in how people are supported or where they live in crisis situations, like when their main carer becomes ill
- ✓ Older carers and the people living with them will have a written down plan about what will happen about housing when they cannot live together any more

- ✓ More children with learning disabilities having a plan about what they want and need for the future as they approach adulthood
- ✓ Local information about housing will be available in lots of different formats, leaflets with pictures, audio tapes and videos for example
- ✓ People with learning disabilities taking part in tenants groups

We will get this information from:

The Learning Disability Database
Older Carers Support Project
Housing Satisfaction Surveys
Tenants Participation Groups

Describe how people are going to be involved in planning and action over the coming months and years so that everyone is listened to and the next steps planned.

People with learning disabilities and carers will be involved in the Housing Strategy work. Representatives from organisations of people with learning disabilities and carers will have places on the steering group. By representing bigger groups, service users and carers will have an opportunity to talk to others and find out what they think. They will also be able to use their own experiences to help with shaping how things are done.

The Steering Group will use groups like “Jargon Busters” (a local clear communication group) to help make sure that everyone can understand what is going on.

Housing will use its existing tenant participation schemes. They will continue to develop them so that they are easy for people with learning disabilities to take part in.

The Housing Steering Group will report back to the Partnership Board. This will give other agencies and groups of people a chance to be involved by making comments and suggestions.

How this plan was put together?

This plan was put together by: -

Peter Holohan	Housing Strategy Manager
Larry Grady	Manager, Community Team for Learning Disability
Helen Dorr	Joint Planning Officer – Learning Disability and Carers

They asked the Partnership Board to look at the first draft and to make comments and suggestions. The Partnership Board thought that the plan was ok. They wanted to make it very clear that this plan is just the start. The Housing Steering Group will need to set some priorities that everyone can work towards. The Partnership Board will regularly check on the progress the Housing Steering Group. The full Partnership Board will help the steering group as much as it can.

We have tried to put together a plan that tells people how we are going to look at housing for people with learning disabilities. It is meant to show that we are serious about doing this and that we know what a big job it is to do it properly. We are going to build real partnerships to do

this work. When we have agreed this plan with the Valuing People Support Team we will produce a version that is very easy to understand so that everyone can know what we are going to do.

If you want to know more about this plan you should contact :

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