



# Housing and disabled people

A toolkit for local authorities  
in England: Tenancy support



Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

**Habinteg**  
Accessible homes  
Independent lives

## Purpose

This toolkit focuses specifically on support to sustain tenancies.

It is principally aimed at leaders and practitioners in housing, health and social care.

## Overview

Tenancy and housing support can take a variety of forms. It can include assistance with applying for housing, accessing adaptations and services, managing finances and participating in the local community.

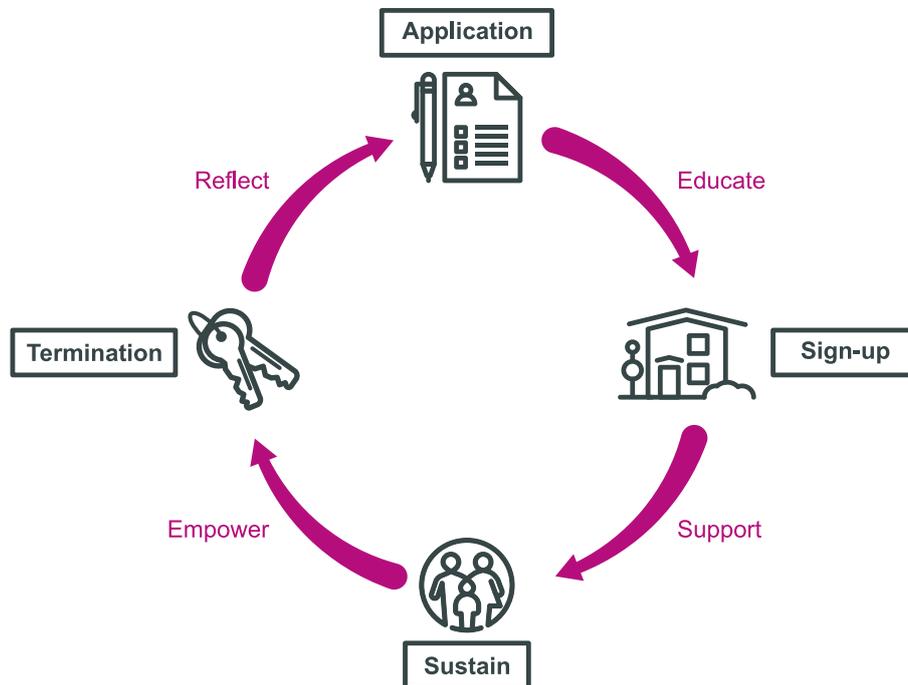
Tenancy support services should be available to all disabled people irrespective of whether they reside in residential, social or private housing.

### ✓ Good practice example

#### Central Bedfordshire Council<sup>1</sup>

Central Bedfordshire Council developed a tenancy sustainment loop following consultation with residents and staff members. Sustainment officers support tenants to live independently and sustain their tenancies, offering bespoke help with benefits and financial management, applying for properties and maintaining a property once housed. The team will signpost tenants to associated services or agencies when required. The approach is designed to minimise tenancy 'failure' by engaging with tenants and providing support at the key stages of the tenancy.

The council have reported that implementation of the tenancy sustainment loop has saved both time and money.



Courtesy of Central Bedfordshire Council.

## Support services

### Floating support

‘Floating support’ is broadly defined as housing-related support to help people manage their accommodation, live independently and be included fully in the community.

Floating support can be particularly beneficial in helping people to manage the transition between different forms of housing support, for example, as the shift from supported housing to general needs accommodation.<sup>2</sup> There is good evidence that timely, regular floating support helps people to sustain their tenancies, reduces housing management problems

(for example, rent arrears, property disrepair and antisocial behaviour), and can improve physical and mental health.<sup>3</sup>

**‘Having the lady, the floating support, probably saved my life to be quite truthful ... Actually having someone sit there saying, “We can do this, and you don’t have to do it on your own”, yes, it’s that support that’s made all the difference.’<sup>4</sup>**

Jenny – Floating support recipient

## Transforming Care

The Transforming Care programme is designed to support people with a learning disability, autism or both, who display behaviour described as ‘challenging’, to lead good quality lives in their communities. NHS England have made £100 million available between 2016-21, to support the delivery of settled and short-term accommodation. The programme has also worked with people with a learning disability or autism to develop guidance, which is available [online](#).

## Advice, advocacy and guidance

The provision of effective tenancy support can better ensure the health and wellbeing of individuals and reduce the likelihood of housing issues escalating. The effectiveness of housing support can be greatly enhanced if services are made available in a variety of ways and if support staff have an awareness of adaptations. Support staff can play a central role in facilitating application and installation of minor adaptations

## ✓ Good practice example

### Oxford City Council

Oxford City Council has a Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) which works with private landlords and tenants. It provides financial and tenancy management support as an incentive to landlords, in order to increase social housing provisions in the area.

The scheme also helps tenants to sustain a tenancy in Oxford’s increasingly unaffordable rental market, by offering tailored and flexible support to help them improve their financial situation. Typically, this means support to improve employability and help to claim other welfare benefits, or referral to independent debt and money management advice. More information about this scheme can be found [online](#).

## ✓ Good practice example

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### Tower Hamlets Council and OREAL

OREAL is an independent advice, advocacy and guidance organisation working in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

It is part-funded by Tower Hamlets Council and has contracts in place to deliver specialised services to disabled people. It has a parallel relationship with the council and works with a variety of teams including social workers, the head of social services, the head of commissioning (contracts manager) and more recently the principal social worker. It is considered to be a critical friend by the local authority.

To make the relationship efficient for both parties, there is a structured approach to communication with the local authority on individual cases. Between 2017-18, 6,788 disabled people used the service for a variety of reasons including financial advice, housing and social care.

## ✓ Good practice example

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### Chesterfield Borough Council

Chesterfield Borough Council is part of a two-tier authority within the Derbyshire County Council area and is responsible for housing.

The council offers tenancy sustainment support to tenants who find it hard to keep their homes. They work with a variety of at-risk groups including disabled people, those with a physical or mental health condition, people with learning difficulties and people whose accommodation may not be suitable for them.

Potential users can access the service directly via the Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) or by a referral from other teams, for example, social services. The TSO carries out an initial needs assessment which helps identify the type of support that can be offered and whether another agency is better equipped to help.

Examples of support include help with:

- understanding tenancy responsibilities
- accessing support from agencies who specialise in particular needs, for example, mental health, and
- managing money, claiming benefits and dealing with debt, including rent arrears.

## Tools

### 1. Gap analysis

The table below can help you to identify gaps in the provision of tenancy support.

Question	Yes	No
Do you record the common reasons for failed tenancies, eviction and abandonment?		
Do you provide any of the following support services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tenancy support</li> <li>- floating support</li> <li>- housing occupational therapy</li> <li>- welfare advice</li> <li>- housing advice</li> </ul>		
Do third party organisations in your local area provide any of the following services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tenancy support</li> <li>- floating support</li> <li>- housing occupational therapy</li> <li>- welfare advice</li> <li>- housing advise</li> </ul>		
Do you undertake promotion and signposting of support services?  Do you provide information about support services in alternative formats?		
Do you record how many people use support services?  Do you measure the satisfaction rates for people using support services?		

Question	Yes	No
Do you provide staff responsible for providing support with training in any of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- disability confidence/awareness</li> <li>- disability benefits</li> <li>- systems/processes regarding adaptations</li> <li>- systems/processes regarding moving home</li> <li>- processes for obtaining a Blue Badge</li> <li>- housing/accommodation transfers</li> </ul>		
Do you collate and act on feedback from your staff on the strengths and weaknesses of current tenancy sustainment services?		



## 2. Engage and consult with disabled people

Consult with disabled people in your area to inform your evaluation of tenancy support provision. (See the [supplementary guide to planning engagement with disabled people](#)).

The table below provides some suggested questions to ask.

Question	Findings
How do disabled people find out about tenancy support services?	
Do disabled people find the services easily accessible? If not, what could make them more accessible?	
Where is their most demand for tenancy support?	
What issues do people need most support with?	
How could current services be improved to meet people's needs, particularly those who are hard to reach?	

### 3. Reviewing improvement options

The table below is designed to prompt consideration of improvement options for tenancy support services.

Question	Yes	No
Can your current support services be delivered in different formats? For example, face-to-face, digitally, or scheme visits to areas where there may be pockets of at-risk people.		
Are there opportunities to establish partnerships with third party providers or team up with neighbouring authorities to commission third party services?		
Are there opportunities to fund third party organisations to deliver a service?		
Are there opportunities to support a third party support service without direct funding? For example, by providing office space.		
Can you work with your communications and marketing department to improve your signposting to internal and external services?		

## Useful resources

Here are some useful resources that you can start using straightaway.

Organisation	Where to find it
<p>Scope – DIAL service</p> <p>The charity Scope co-ordinate a network of advice services for disabled people, called DIAL. DIAL provides one-to-one support for disabled people, working with them to complete complex application forms which would deter some applicants, and provides support to help secure adaptations and maintain tenancies.</p>	<p>More information about the DIAL service can be found <a href="#">online</a>.</p>
<p>Local Government Association</p> <p>The Local Government Association provide specialised guidance on housing which is tailored for people with learning disabilities.</p>	<p>More information about the DIAL service can be found <a href="#">online</a>.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Central Bedfordshire Council (no date) 'Tenancy Sustainment Loop Voids and Tenancy Support a Single Approach' [accessed: 8 August 2018]

<sup>2</sup> Leff, S., Chow, C. M., Pepin, R., Conley, J., Allen, I. E. and Seaman, C. A. (2009) 'Does One Size Fit All? What we can and can't learn from a metaanalysis of housing models for persons with mental illness', *Psychiatric Services*, 60(4), pp.473–82.

<sup>3</sup> Eliot, J. (2013), *Understanding the New NHS Framework for Mental Health: Implications for housing associations*. London: National Housing Federation.

Neuberger, J. (2003) *Housekeeping: Preventing Homelessness through Tackling Rent Arrears in Social Housing*. London: Shelter.

<sup>4</sup> Mind (2017) *Brick by brick: A review of mental health and housing*, p.32.

# Contacts

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