


'I wouldn't change my flat for anything'. Is there scope for more people with learning disabilities to rent their own homes?

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Abstract

Background: Policy, research, and people's own experience in the UK consistently highlight the central importance of a home of choice for people with learning disabilities. Yet attention is mainly focused on the development of specialist as opposed to generic housing options for people with learning disabilities.

Methods: This article reviews the findings from a major research study looking at the rented housing sector for people with learning disabilities. The study comprised of a review of local authority learning disability strategies; a 'national conversation' with key stakeholders; and thirty-five, qualitative interviews with people with learning disabilities who rent their own homes.

Findings: The research found that local learning disability strategies are lacking in information on rented housing for people. A national consultation identified a range of challenges in accessing rented housing for people wishing to do so. Interviews with people with learning disabilities renting their own place confirmed some of these problems but also, crucially, highlighted the success for most who rented their own home. People liked renting and were managing their tenancies well with relatively modest support.

Conclusions: The evidence points to the possible benefits of a greater focus on renting for people with learning disabilities.

KEYWORDS

adult social care, learning disabilities, private rented housing, social housing

Accessible Summary

- People with learning disabilities want to live in a home they feel safe and comfortable in.
- Some—but not very many—people with learning disabilities rent their own homes from social housing organizations or private landlords. There is not much research about this.

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- The research in this paper looked at local authority strategies about housing and people with learning disabilities and then talked to lots of different people about the issues including people with learning disabilities who do rent.
- Overall, people enjoy renting their own homes and feel happy and settled.
- But people did not always get enough support to rent their own homes. It could be a complicated process, and information was often not very accessible.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Over 40 years ago, the seminal report, 'An Ordinary Life' (Towell, 2022) imagined a future where people with learning disabilities could live in 'ordinary' houses in 'ordinary' streets with 'the same range of choices as any citizen'. The National Disability Strategy (Disability Unit, 2021) restated how, '...a decent home is the foundation for an independent life'. The Good Lives Framework (Learning Disability England, 2022) reported on a series of national conversations with people with learning disabilities which strongly asserted how people should have the right to choose where they live. The Government White Paper, 'People at the Heart of Care' (Department for Health and Social Care, 2021), acknowledged the need to expand the choice of housing options, and for housing to be more joined up with social care and health.

However, there is a clear disjuncture between policy ambition and reality (Bevan et al., 2018; Mencap, 2012) and only a small minority of people live in their own tenancies (Hatton, 2017). In 2019/2020 of nearly 135,000 people with learning disabilities receiving long-term social care support in England, 12,635 rented from a social housing organization and 3600 from a private landlord (NHS Digital, 2022). Yet, people with learning disabilities repeatedly ask for choice in their accommodation, with a strong preference for housing which meets their hopes and needs for a comfortable and safe place to live with degrees of support that work for each individual (Mencap, 2012). Suitable housing has long been recognized as a cornerstone of an effective 'community care' policy (Means et al., 2008). However, for many years, there has been overwhelming evidence of a lack of appropriate housing available for disabled people in general (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). Where people have accessed housing, there are also concerns that people with learning disabilities are living in unsuitable and poor-quality housing, particularly in the private rented sector (Mencap, 2012) and that they are more likely to be over-represented in the homeless population (Van Straaten et al., 2017).

Whilst the Care Act 2014 outlined how housing support is an integral part of promoting well-being and independence, there is a lack of research on the role of social care support in supporting people in their own tenancies. In the recent past, housing providers have been relied on to provide tenancy-related support to people with support needs, particularly via the government-supported program, 'Supporting People'. However, ring-fenced funding for the program ended in 2011, and since then funding for floating support services that assist people to manage their own tenancies in the community has been severely reduced (St Mungo's, 2018). Further, studies have highlighted the

particularly adverse impacts of austerity on social care support for people with learning disabilities (Bates et al., 2017; Power & Hall, 2018).

Whilst funding for housing-related support has reduced, national policy has continued to focus mainly on people with learning disabilities with higher support needs. A series of national scandals about the abuse of people with learning disabilities brought sharply into view the devastating impacts of not meeting people's housing needs close to people's own communities of choice (Willis, 2020). Despite the 'lessons learned' rhetoric (Ryan et al., 2023) there is an impasse about improving choice and control over housing options for most people with learning disabilities despite ample evidence that people can identify their own needs and preferences (Gorfin & McLaughlin, 2003).

This paper attempts to redress some of the imbalances in recent policy, practice, and research debates about housing for people with learning disabilities with an emphasis on opportunities for home afforded by the rented housing sector and is to our knowledge, the first study with this specific focus.

2 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article reports the key findings from a National Institute for Health Research, School for Social Care Research funded study on housing for people with learning disabilities living in social housing and the private rented sector in England (2020–2023) and the intersection with adult social care services. The research was a collaboration between academics at the universities of York and Bristol, the national learning disability network—Learning Disability England, two self-advocacy organizations—My Life My Choice and York People First, an artist and activist, and the housing network, Housing LIN.

The study had three main components:

2.1 | Review of local authority learning disability strategies

A review of local authority learning disability strategies was undertaken in 2020 to assess their focus on housing. A stratified sample of half of the 151 English Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (NHS Digital, 2020) was selected for inclusion. While not a representative sample, councils were selected across all regions and types of local authority. Given the implications of the 2014 Care Act on obligations relating to housing and social care, only

strategies which commenced after 2015, or had been updated since then, were eligible for inclusion. We searched for the strategies online: while it is possible that strategies exist beyond those included in this review, our interest was in easily accessible strategies which were publicly available online.

2.2 | National consultation

In 2021, a national consultation was undertaken, led by Housing LIN, that included one national and eight regional roundtable events held online. The purpose of these events was to discuss renting in the social housing and private rented sectors and the support available for this for people with learning disabilities on the edges of social care eligibility.

The events were attended by just over 100 professionals and experts by experience including: people with learning disabilities, family carers, advocates, support workers, social and private housing providers, representatives from local authorities, the NHS, voluntary and community organizations and key national policy experts. Each event followed the same format with a presentation from the academics working on the research project followed by facilitated breakout sessions and a final open discussion with all involved.

2.3 | Interviews with people with learning disabilities

The main part of the research involved 35 interviews with people with learning disabilities who rented their own homes in England. All participants took part in an interview that lasted between 30 min and 3 h (average of 1 h). Recruitment was through our advisory group (see below), connections with self-advocacy groups across England, social media advertising, and word-of-mouth snowball sampling.

The research was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic in which those with learning disabilities in England were advised to shield, therefore, all interviews were undertaken online, usually by Zoom or by telephone. Participants received a £30 voucher as a thank you for taking part in the interviews.

Most people we spoke to (30) lived in social housing while five rented privately. Participants ranged in age from 'late 20's' to 66 and while the majority (27) identified as White (largely White British), four people identified as from minority ethnic backgrounds. Our participants ranged in years renting in the same property from under 1 to 30 years. People were receiving a range of formal social care support from no support to 20 h per week.

A thematic analysis of the interviews was undertaken in NVivo and informed by workshops held with the advisory group. The main limitation of the study was not having a representative sample of renters, and only a small number renting from private, individual landlords and the relative lack of ethnic diversity. We have no way of knowing whether we recruited people who were more likely to be settled in their tenancies as they were relatively well connected to

services—or the other way round, in terms of approaching others for support due to difficulties being experienced.

2.3.1 | Ethical considerations

The research was supported by an advisory group of self-advocacy experts with learning disabilities and research collaborators who co-designed the research approach, materials and analysis. The remit of this group changed considerably across the lifespan of the project, and we have written about this elsewhere (Leishman et al., 2023). The review and consultation stage of the process was granted ethical approval by the University of York. The interview stage of the research was given ethical approval by the Health Research Authority.

3 | FINDINGS

3.1 | Review of learning disability strategies

Our online desk review found 20 English local authority learning disability strategies/plans (covering 26 authorities as a small number of authorities shared plans with neighboring authorities) from a search of 77 with adult social care responsibilities. While it is possible that other councils had reviews located elsewhere, over half of the sample had no publicly available or easily accessible, post-2015 learning disability plan or strategy.

Our primary focus was the extent and nature of the focus on housing in learning disability reviews. Nineteen of the 20 strategies accounted for housing in some way. In many cases, consultations carried out with people with learning disabilities and their family and carers for these strategies identified housing, accommodation and, in several cases, 'home' as key areas of concern and priorities. Home, housing or 'where I live' were either explicit stated priorities or had dedicated sections in 14 of the strategies identified. House or housing were directly referred to in 17 of the 20 strategies.

The strategies included a range of discussions on housing. Choice was often central to this, largely in terms of people with learning disabilities having autonomy over *where* they live but also on occasion, in relation to *who* they live with. Providing affordable housing was seen as a cost saving for some local authorities, reducing the need for residential accommodation. Links were also made between addressing the health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities and housing. Housing was also a key feature of future planning particularly for those transitioning from child to adult social care services.

However, although housing was a priority in most of the reviews, housing was often referred to in general terms without details. References to working with housing providers were few and far between. Only two strategies referred to both social housing and the private rented sector (and one additional strategy to social housing).

With only limited references to rented housing providers, there was little on the detail of working together.

3.2 | National consultation

The national consultation revealed that people with a 'mild' or 'moderate' learning disability are often overlooked when it comes to housing and support, with priority focused on those with a more 'severe' learning disability. It was suggested by people working in services and local authorities that housing providers can still view people with learning disabilities as 'risky' tenants. In terms of social housing, they also reported that it could be very challenging for individuals to find social housing, particularly in areas where there are social housing shortages such as London. The process of applying for social housing, generally through choice-based lettings, was also challenging, even with support. The bidding process was difficult to understand and the competitive nature of it placed significant pressure on people with learning disabilities. It was argued by a full range of participants that the system needed to be made much more understandable and that having well-informed support through a move and maintaining a tenancy was essential. Access to social housing may be improved using local lettings plans rather than through choice-based lettings.

With respect to the private rented sector, there was a particular concern about insecure tenancies, professionals and family members questioned whether the sector was a suitable tenure model for people with learning disabilities. One hybrid model was discussed, where council and/or housing associations lease property from private landlords to let to people with learning disabilities. It was also reported that some private landlords appeared to be interested in providing housing for people with learning disabilities but there was a lack of information to support them with this.

It was widely reported, but particularly by people with learning disabilities, that people had only limited access to social care support to find and maintain a tenancy. Support with renting therefore often fell to family, and the community sector. It was said that local authorities and housing associations with dedicated housing officers for people with support needs were able to better support individuals. Some social workers did provide tenancy support in their annual reviews. However, this help often stopped once the individual had been housed and there was little support to sustain a tenancy long-term.

Overall, consultation participants stated that there was a lack of accessible information and advice on housing for people with learning disabilities and their families. A key point was that prevention-type services and small packages of support had reduced significantly in the period of austerity. This very often impacted the very people who might need support to enter into and manage a tenancy. Local authorities were seen as needing to take a lead in building stronger relationships with people with a learning disability, the private rented sector, social landlords and the voluntary sector to ensure that housing provision locally was sufficient for people with a learning

disability. There was suggestion that this could be well served by a long-term national strategy which addressed the intersection of housing and social care support.

3.3 | Interviews with people renting their own home

3.3.1 | Finding a place to rent

The main theme to emerge from people's accounts was a lack of choice and also constraints on people's ability to find a suitable place to rent. For some, the actual decision to rent in the first place depended upon the support and approval of others, both support providers and informal carers/family members. For some, it was not always a self-directed choice, for example, one person did not want to move from their residential accommodation at the time but were 'encouraged' to move out. Another renter spoke in a similar vein about their accommodation pathway:

So I lived in a residential place and one of the senior staff, 'Oh it's about time you moved on...' So, I said, 'Ooh what, well where can I go and live then to be independent?' And they said, 'Oh we can get you into [provider name]'. (Renter 18)

Most people had only seen one or two properties in their search for rented accommodation. For those where the first property shown to them was suitable for their needs, this lack of choice was not a problem. However, for others who saw less suitable property, this more obvious lack of choice in local rental markets was a source of concern. This experience reflects the poor availability of rented accommodation in the United Kingdom for households on low or modest incomes generally, and the particularly constrained choice within the residualised social housing sector. For our few private rented sector tenants, availability was less of an issue than the cost of possible rents, in particular, finding somewhere that was affordable. In both rental sectors, along with affordable, good quality accommodation, people were looking for a property in a safe area close to family, friends, community activities and facilities.

Some people had bid for properties using choice-based lettings. This process was said to be complicated to understand. Sometimes there were lots of properties to look at, but very few that met people's needs and/or there were too many people bidding on the same properties.

Most interviewees were aware that they were not going to be offered many properties to choose from by social landlords. Some felt under pressure to take properties that were not suitable to their needs for fear of not being offered anything else. For the small number of people in our sample who had experienced homelessness and in line with general homelessness practice, people were usually only offered one property.

Q: It sounds like there was a lot of pressure to just pick something?

A: Yeah, yeah, just go for this tower block, who cares whether you like it or not, you know.... (Renter 22)

Within this context of constrained choice, effective support with the process of finding accommodation was crucial. Social care support could facilitate a smooth transition from one type of accommodation to another and there were examples of this.

We found it pretty easy because at the time, we were both under Social Services and we both had separate care managers and it was them that helped us find what we've got now. (Renter 14)

Help from support providers, social care and family were also important:

I was homeless for 8 months. I was staying, staying somewhere, obviously it wasn't... a home, it was somewhere, it was somewhere for me where to stay... I got this flat from [support provider], from Social Services and through [support provider], and also through [support provider]. (Renter 12)

Q: You said your sister helped you find this place...?

A: Well, she actually found a couple of places but one of 'em was in a real bad state anyway, it's one of the high story flats here in, in [southern seaside town] and then she found this place which was much more quieter and it's near the seafront. (Renter 1)

A couple of people received extra assistance from housing officers including a specialist council housing officer for disabled and autistic people.

I had massive help from this lady who used to do housing in the council, and I don't think she's there anymore...she managed to move me up the bands to, to get, to get somewhere quicker, so.... the lady who were supporting me, she says, 'That's kind of a bad area, are you sure?' So, she was actually hinting bad areas from me to steer clear from...so that were a massive help. (Renter 29)

3.3.2 | The experience of renting accommodation

It was not possible to assess whether the homes of people we spoke to met the Decent Homes Standard for social housing (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2021); however, most homes did not appear to have any serious defects, most had modern bathrooms and kitchens and there were few reports of problems with heating or very cold houses. Nonetheless, there were exceptions and a couple of people had multiple problems with their housing quality

and one renter had persistent mold. There were also reports of homes not retaining heat and/or having a lack of insulation. That said, getting repairs undertaken was a big issue for many people with some significant delays cited. Generally, people felt that they needed support with navigating the repairs system and several spoke of feeling ignored.

The importance of accessibility was a theme that ran throughout interviews. This was often related to changing needs over time, particularly reduced mobility as people became older. In some cases, people had been allocated a suitable ground floor property and adaptations had been made but sometimes with considerable delay and bureaucracy.

People valued outside space including gardens, patios and balconies and most said that they had the main facilities in their home that they needed and valued having their own things.

It's got half a kitchen, got a dishwasher, washing machine, new microwave, cooker, DVD, got bedroom, got shower, everything. (Renter 17)

Affordability was rarely an issue for people in their housing. The vast majority explained that they received direct payments with their rent which covered the full rent charge. Some people knew the rent that they were being charged, but most were unaware of the amount.

Most of the interviewees had rented their own homes for some time and felt relatively secure in their tenancies. A few people, however, did not and this could be a cause of worry. In one case, the private landlord was selling the property, and they were having to move out despite having been a tenant for 12 years:

I've been here twelve years and there isn't the security even for a longstanding. I mean housing benefit pay me rent and council tax and there's never been any arrears, I do everything on time...the neighbours like me, I, I look after the place. So the only reason they're doing it is because they can do it within the law and unfortunately it, it's kinda in their favour. (Renter 24)

3.3.3 | Location and neighborhood

Having a quiet and safe location mattered a lot. Several tenants had experienced problems with antisocial behavior from other tenants or others in the local neighborhood, or in previous properties. Some explained that they had found the response from the landlord to be slow, for example, one person had to get their local MP involved, and the council eventually moved them after a year.

A: I used to live in [previous area of city] but that, that area were a bit bad for me, you know, unsafe..., the flats, you know, neighbours and stuff, it were all drugs and burning fridges in gardens and bellowing and shouting. I had to ring Police once or twice.

Q: *Is that why you moved then?*

A: *Yeah, it were unsafe. But it were a load of hassle to get moved; every time you, you rang the council up they kept saying write a diary; I thought I'm stressed enough as it is without writing an essay, like how crap it is... just like continually fobbed off until like I had to, well me sister wrote a letter to MP. (Renter 26)*

Noise was one of the biggest issues mentioned by people. This was sometimes due to the behavior of other neighbors, 'TV on loud late at night, loud music, slamming doors' (Renter 25), for others, it was the wider location in terms of being in a busy area, for example, with drunk people outside at night or simply just being centrally located with ambulances and police cars at all times of the night.

3.3.4 | Support from landlords and social care

Renters spoke about different kinds of relationships with their landlords, but overall, there was a lack of personal contact. Some people knew their landlord or housing officer, but there appeared to be a trend of knowing them less well over time, if at all.

Q: *...Do you have a housing officer or not?*

A: *We do but we, we never see her. (Renter 11)*

One renter explained that they used to have a named maintenance person which had been 'fantastic', but now there was only a central number to report repairs.

Probably something like over ten years... we had someone called (name of maintenance person) who did like little jobs... If we had like a problem with a tap or whatever, you might see him around the area, and you'd go, 'Oh (name of person) can you help me, the tap's not working', he will write it down and log it. Now, you'd have to ring up and wait ages to get through. (Renter 9)

There were a few, on-going and positive relationships, and examples of how a relatively small amount of support made quite a big difference. One renter said their housing officer was in touch monthly. Another used the email address for their housing officer and attended tenant's meetings. The amount of overall social care support received by participants varied from none to 20 h a week. It was often unclear to us why some people would receive less or more than others. The focus of the support varied from person to person as agreed in their social care assessment. We heard examples of useful support with managing tenancies, money, and bills.

So, I get tenancy related support, so if I need it, like if I have a, a problem with, like the bills, also shopping, that, that kinda thing... it's in me support plan. (Renter 24)

Social care support hours had sometimes been cut back or lost over time. For example, one person explained that they used to get support but then charges were introduced which were unaffordable.

I [got support] for a while but they wanted to charge me £14 for a couple of hours...which I couldn't afford, so I had to stop doing that, and I do get my bills on the computer, you know, but there's, I always get money worries and especially if like utility companies, like electric companies, they get folded; mine's gone through liquidation, what do they call it? (Renter 1)

Social care support workers could provide an invaluable advocacy role:

Oh I, I get my support worker to ring up about stuff cos of just getting fobbed off by 'em, you know. (Renter 26)

3.3.5 | Information

Communication processes with landlords were usually standardized with few or no reasonable adjustments to meet people's needs.

The housing forms could be more, and the things what they put on internet could be a lot better, easy read, more understandable. That needs to change if they want more people to sort of rent places. (Renter 27)

I think instead of just giving me a load of paperwork and saying there's your tenancy agreement and blah-blah-blah, for them to have actually gone through it with me. So, I don't think it was so much the information wasn't there, it was the way it was presented to me. (Renter 25)

3.3.6 | Feelings about renting a home of one's own

The renters in our study had moved to renting their own homes from a variety of other parts of the housing and care sector including living at home with family members, being in assessment and treatment units, in hospital, in supported living schemes and so on. A seemingly banal but very significant finding was how much people enjoyed renting their own homes. Compared to previous living situations, many people talked about the beauty of privacy, safety, and a general lack of surveillance and intrusion from other people. One person who had lived in a supported living setting with no real say over who they lived with and with a staff room in their 'home' commented on the difference:

Renting independently has; you get a bit of privacy when you go to your door, you get, you don't hear the people going, de-de, de-de, saying the name of that support worker all of the time. The thing that also has changed, and I was also thinking about this is that you don't have a staff room. (Renter 3)

There were expressions of pride, of happiness, of feeling settled:

I wouldn't change my flat for anything, for anything else, cos where I am I've got a lovely, a lovely, a lovely view where I am. So, it's no way will I, there's no way would I move out of here. (Renter 16)

I always say to myself, this is my first home, and I will, and I tell everybody this, this is my first, this is my first home, I've never ever had a home, never ever had a home of my own and this is my first home. This is my, this is my dream come true, this is my dream; hold on, let me rephrase that. This is my dream come true, oh God, this is, my dream, my dream come true cos this is, this is my first home. (Renter 5)

It's me own place, you know, I, I can do what I want in it, and I can have friends over, and family and all that. (Renter 17)

4 | DISCUSSION

This is the first study that provides insights into people with learning disabilities that are renting their own homes, with and without formal social care support. The most striking finding is the extent to which people are living happily in ordinary housing and most with relatively low levels of informal and/or formal support. Examples of the support said to be most useful included help with understanding inaccessible information, help with money and bills, and help with contacting people about repairs. In our first stage consultation, key stakeholders told us that landlords were often reluctant to rent to people with learning disabilities, fearing they might not be able to cope and/or may be taken advantage of, and therefore not be suitable or 'good tenants' (Hall, 2004). While this study did not include a representative sample of people with learning disabilities, it did show that these assumptions need questioning.

Most participants described themselves as living 'good lives' (Learning Disability England, 2022). Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, most felt settled in their homes and connected to their communities. Many were also undertaking paid or voluntary work and were clearly 'net contributors' to their communities, challenging stereotypes of people with learning disabilities as *only* being recipients of things (Flynn et al., 2021).

The study highlighted several crucial aspects of housing and support needed to ensure that people could lead good lives. Housing

needed to be decent, adapted where needed, secure and in a safe and connected community in a location that was both safe and proximate to facilities, transport, friends and relations. Whilst this was being achieved for many people, there was scope for improvement especially in relation to repairs, noise and accessible information. It was our sense that as happy as most people were with their homes, change was viewed as difficult or problematic—an assumption from providers and the overall 'system' that once living in a place, people with learning disabilities would want to, or indeed should, stay there forever. There were also examples of people finding it difficult to move when they needed to. This is deeply problematic and reveals a lack of ambition in extending to people with learning disabilities the right to assign importance to where they live at different stages of their lives (Lashewicz et al., 2021).

In terms of support, for most, a small amount of adult social care support was going a long way to ensure people could manage their tenancy. Support from family and friends remained crucial and probably instrumental in whether a tenancy would materialize or succeed. But it was almost impossible to discern why one person with no social care support in one part of the country was less in need of it than someone else in a different part of the country who was in receipt of say 10–20 h a week (Public Policy Projects, 2022). Social care support could be precarious and subject to review always with the worry that review really meant withdrawal. There were still participants worried about money and bills both in terms of affordability and in terms of accessibility, that is, receiving letters about money that they did not understand. The assault on support for people with learning disabilities at the edges of social care eligibility is widespread (Forrester-Jones et al., 2020, 2021) and people with learning disabilities left without support in the rented sector are disproportionately likely to be exposed to debt, eviction, exploitation, homelessness and mental health problems (Daly & Smith, 2022; Doherty, 2020; Macdonald et al., 2022; Stone et al., 2019). The costs of remedying these problems as crises mount become extremely high as 'specialist' alternatives become considered (Ince et al., 2022).

We saw only very few examples of cohesion between the housing and the social care system. Linkages between the very ideas of housing, well-being and social care seem diminished. Statutory roles, obligations and professions seem siloed in relation to housing and social care. Relatively isolated instances of joined-up work seemed to make a big difference especially where there was either co-location of housing and social care staff and/or a role for someone with both housing and social care responsibility in their job description.

Across the rented sector and in terms of support, we heard of unhappiness at the remoteness of relationships with landlords, difficulties in getting repairs done and the absence of easy-read tenancy agreements or information. In our national consultation, we also heard examples of long-term tenancy relationships in the private rental sector with landlords becoming friends with tenants over time and going out of their way to make the home a comfortable place to live. We also heard about good social landlords where there was a

named person that someone could liaise with about problems. However, in both sectors, we heard about dissatisfaction with being listened to, and very few people participated in the governance structures of the social housing organizations they rented from (Soaita, 2022).

The statistics tell us that only a very small percentage of people with learning disabilities are renting their own homes. We suggest a few possible explanations. There are currently no meaningful policy drivers to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities. Inertia and disinterest drive the absence of change. The Transforming Care agenda is widely believed to have failed (Taylor, 2021) and attempts to reform social care stall time and again (Needham & Hall, 2023). In addition, there is a widely shared view that the private rented sector is 'not for people with learning disabilities.' We recognize the well-established problems with the private rented housing sector and concerns about people who may be made vulnerable through a lack of proper support (Shelter & Crisis, 2014), but we may also need to ask whether there is something paternalistic in the diversion away from this sector for people with learning disabilities (Bowey, 2005)? Twenty years ago, the social rented sector was able to draw on the government-funded Supporting People Program to provide low-level intensity support to people with learning disabilities alongside other groups; this ring-fenced resource is now long-gone. Yet this study shows that relatively small amounts of support can go a long way in supporting people in both tenures and how a secure stream of revenue funding (alongside the availability of suitable properties) from either housing and/or social care could unlock the potential for independence for many more people with learning disabilities. There is no reason that the basic model of renting with support and the desirability of 'having your own front door' could not be extended to people with learning disabilities with higher levels of support need. It would simply require the level and nature of support to be different and more substantial. The benefits of greater housing choice may well go further than the goal of an 'ordinary life' (McMahon et al., 2019) but, to borrow from Ryan et al. (2023) a 'flourishing life.' We hope to use our research findings to continue to work coproductively to inform and influence policy makers, housing providers, people with learning disabilities, and those that love and support them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all our research participants. This study was funded by the National Institute for Health Research, School for Social Care Research. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Quilgars, D., Leishman, E., Abbott, D., Clarke, S., Cooper, B., Hodgkins, S., Scarrott, P., Pollin, A., & Beech, L. (2024). 'I wouldn't change my flat for anything'. Is there scope for more people with learning disabilities to rent their own homes? *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 52, 362–370. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12584>