

Preparing for Adulthood



Top Tips When Looking for Housing for Young People With SEND

A home is much more than a physical building; having a home where you feel safe, comfortable, and close to the people and things you love and need are important to improving and maintaining independence. The quality of accommodation, its location, and security of tenure are all important aspects that contribute your wellbeing. This guide is written for families and supporters to share with young people. If you have a social worker, they should be able to help.

1. Think carefully about what kind of place you want to live in

Think about whether you want to live alone or with other people, and how much privacy you want. Plan ahead as much as possible. Find out what the housing options are in both the public and private sectors, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. For more information, please go to:

<https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/independent-living/no-place-like-home-guide.htm>

2. Think about where you would be willing to live

If you are open to several areas this increases the availability of different housing options. It is worth looking at some areas that you don't normally visit to see if you can add them to your list of possible locations. Think about access to transport, local amenities, and job opportunities; remember, you don't have to accept a property that is not right for you.

3. Do some research locally

Search the internet for:

- charities that help with housing
- housing associations
- the council that deals with housing in your area
- estate agents who let out properties
- local housing workshops that you can attend.

4. Make a list of the adaptations that you might need in a property

This will come in handy if you apply for housing or are viewing a property.

5. Think about how you will pay for your housing

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates relate to the area in which you make your claim. You can find out what the local rate for a postcode is by going to: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/>

Housing Benefit is a means tested benefit that is intended to help meet housing costs for rented property. The local council is responsible for Housing Benefit and it can help pay the rent if you're unemployed, on a low income, or claiming benefits. It's being replaced by Universal Credit. You can make a new claim for Housing Benefit if any of the following apply:

- you're getting the severe disability premium, or are entitled to it
- you got, or were entitled to, the severe disability premium within the last month and are still eligible
- you have reached State Pension age
- you're in supported, sheltered, or temporary housing

Universal Credit helps pay your daily living costs and you may be able to get Universal Credit if you are out of work or have a low paid job. There is an easy read explanation of it here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/easy-read-universal-credit>

6. Put your name on the housing register that is run by the local council

In order to be considered for social housing or local authority housing, individuals have to be on the local authority housing waiting list. There is great demand for this kind of housing. General needs housing is probably most appropriate for people with milder learning disabilities. Apply as early as you can because waiting lists can be long.

The system is often known as the choice based letting system. You can write in if you can't get to the council offices, or you can fill in the application form online. If that is too difficult, you can ring the local housing department. You will need to make clear what type of place you need and that you will require support, including help to complete their form.

If there is unlikely to be anything suitable available through their system, you can say that you will find it very difficult to bid for properties and you wish to be considered for a direct allocation outside of that process.

7. Consider if home ownership is a possible way forward

Your local area may have some shared ownership schemes running. Ask the housing department at the council for information. There is a government scheme designed to help people with a long-term disability buy any home for sale on a Shared Ownership basis (part-rent/part-buy). It is known as HOLD (HOLD stands for Home Ownership for People with Long-term Disabilities). There are some specific conditions attached to HOLD so please visit the website: www.ownyourhome.gov.uk/scheme/hold/ for more information.

8. Take time to understand a tenancy agreement

A tenancy is your agreement between you and your landlord. Your agreement has terms and conditions. Terms and conditions are rules about what you can do in your home. So if you break the rules, you might have to move out of your home. Your agreement will say how much rent you need to pay. You can hold a tenancy if you can understand that you, as the tenant, must pay rent in exchange for your home and that you must look after the property.

It may help you if the tenancy agreement contains pictures or diagrams. To ensure your rights are protected, take a look at the Real Tenancy Test: <https://www.ndti.org.uk/resources/publications/the-real-tenancy-test1>. If you cannot understand what it means to be a tenant, someone else can sign the agreement for you. This could be someone who already acts as a deputy for you or someone who has lasting power of attorney that you appointed. If you are at risk of losing a property and cannot sign, a Best Interests Meeting should be held to agree that you can have an unsigned tenancy agreement. This can be done as an interim to measure prior to someone signing on the person's behalf.

9. Try these contacts if you need more help

- For **renting**, you can send in a query on the contact form: <http://www.letsforlife.org.uk/>
- For financial advice on **shared ownership**: <https://www.mysafefuture.com/>
- For **housing advice and information**: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/housing>

These top tips were created by Tammy Murray | Head of Business Development, Reside and Carol Robinson | West Midlands & South West Regional lead, Preparing for Adulthood © June 2020

www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk | info@preparingforadulthood.org.uk | 01225 789135

PfA is a programme delivered by National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) and funded by the Department for Education as part of the delivery support for the SEND reforms