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Supported living – evidence summary

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Disclaimer: This evidence summary includes relevant literature identified from searches on the above topic. It is not an exhaustive list, it presents key finding and not recommendations for practice.

Overview

For the purpose of this report the term supported living refers to housing where support and/or care services are provided to help people to live as independently as possible.

This report looks at challenges faced in the provision of supported living, and for the people who use these services. It looks at specific groups of people who use supported living and the challenges these people face including people with a learning disability, autistic people, care leavers, and people who have experienced homelessness.

There was limited research looking specifically at supported living, especially looking at the specific groups of people who use them, so not all groups who may use this service are included in this report.

Challenges for supported living

Supported living can be beneficial and offers many people the chance to develop their independence. However, supported living services face many challenges, these include difficulties with the provision of services, and issues for those who use supported living services.

Challenges in the provision of supported living

Supported living providers face challenges in providing sufficient, good quality services. The various issues are outlined below.

- Funding / budgetary constraints [1]
- Rising running costs risks services closing down [2]
- Challenges sustaining the current supply [1]
- Increasing demand for supported living [1]
- Lack of access to long term or reliable funding to develop new provisions [1]
- Limited availability of suitable housing stock for development of new provisions [1]
- Workforce retention and recruitment [1,2]
- Increased complexity of need requiring more intensive and higher levels of specialist support [1]
- High demand for move-on accommodation not being met which leads to 'blocking' within supported housing [1]
- Particular issues in areas with high market rents or rural locations [1]
- Failures in the system may hamper the ability to respond when people need support [3]

Challenges faced by supported living workers

Social care staff face many challenges and supported living workers are no exception. These issues are discussed in the workforce evidence summary which can be found on the literature searches and evidence summaries pages on our website.

Challenges faced by those requiring supported living

The ongoing challenges within the supported living sector can impact on those who access these services. The issues they face may include:

- A lack of choice for the person needing supported living [4]
- Having unmet care needs [5]
- People risking becoming institutionalised within supported living [4]
- Negative or intolerant attitudes towards supported living services and the people who use them [4]
- Lack of guidance or support around opportunities for people to participate in their chosen communities [4]
- Lack of physical access to community spaces [4]
- Limited services meaning they are placed in unsuitable and inappropriate settings [2]
- Inconsistent outcomes, as not everybody receives the same level of personalised care [3,5]
- Funding issues meaning budgets are prioritised above person-centred care [3]

People with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities are one of the groups that use supported living. Specific challenges they may face with supported living include:

- Closure of services due to policy changes and underfunding [6]
- Lack of appropriate housing meaning staying in supported living when they don't need to [7]
- Living in inappropriate supported living [7]
- Some landlords not providing adaptations and repairs when needed [8]
- Not getting enough support [9]
- Some accommodation being too small and feeling crowded [8]
- Lack of support to move on to mainstream housing [7]
- Assuming supported living is the default option, other options are often not considered [7]
- Being more likely to move due to an issue rather than a planned move [10]
- It being trial and error to find a place which works best for them [10]

- Delays due to issues with funding, having to apply for housing through council bidding systems, a lack of suitable homes, or properties falling through [10]
- Properties being in poor condition, dirty, smelly, and being expensive to furnish [10]
- Finances restricting them doing more in the community [9]

Autistic people

Autistic people are one of the groups that use supported living. Specific challenges they may face with supported living include:

- Finding some supported living settings, like hostels, distressing [11]

Care leavers

Care leavers are one of the groups that use supported living. Specific challenges they may face with supported living include:

- Being placed in unsuitable supported accommodation [12]
- Not being able to bring pets [12]
- Being isolated from family and support networks [12]
- Lack of specialist staff expertise [13]
- Some young people being placed in temporary accommodation instead [13]
- Lack of accommodation meaning some young people are in supported living longer than they would like [13]
- A drop off in support from social services [13]
- Leaving the care system being chaotic and abrupt with a lack of planning [14]
- Being at risk of homelessness if not supported or with care ending abruptly [14]
- Hostels not being the best environment, with other residents with complex issues and a lack of support [14]
- Lacking trust or feeling distrustful of services and social care practitioners [14]

People who have experienced homelessness

People who have experienced homelessness are one of the groups that use supported living. Specific challenges they may face with supported living include:

- Staff trying to support mental health they are not equipped to deal with [11]
- Local communities pre-judging homelessness and fearing having supported accommodation in their areas [11]
- Limited / unbalanced diets due to limited finances [11]
- Having to choose between getting a job and staying in supported living [11]

Search strategies

Basic searches of Google were completed for each area, and then a search with a detailed search strategy was completed using Scopus. Strategies are listed below.

Supported living issues – Scopus

“supported living” OR “supported housing” OR “supported accommodation” OR “assisted living” OR “extra care housing” AND Issue* OR problem* OR challenge* OR difficult* OR obstacle* OR complication* OR dilemma* (abstract) AND england OR scotland OR wales OR "united kingdom" OR UK OR Britain (affiliation country) Limit: 2021-2026

Supported living and learning disabilities – Scopus

“supported living” OR “supported housing” OR “supported accommodation” OR “assisted living” OR “extra care housing” AND "learning difficult*" or "learning disabilit*" or "intellectual difficult*" or "intellectual disabilit*" (abstract) AND england OR scotland OR wales OR "united kingdom" OR UK OR Britain (affiliation country) Limit: 2021-2026

Supported living and autistic people – Scopus

“supported living” OR “supported housing” OR “supported accommodation” OR “assisted living” OR “extra care housing” AND “autism" OR “autistic” (abstract) AND england OR scotland OR wales OR "united kingdom" OR UK OR Britain (affiliation country) Limit: 2021-2026
No relevant results were found.

Supported living and care leavers – Scopus

“supported living” OR “supported housing” OR “supported accommodation” OR “assisted living” OR “extra care housing” AND “care leaver*" OR care-experienced OR “leaving care” (abstract) AND england OR scotland OR wales OR "united kingdom" OR UK OR Britain (affiliation country) Limit: 2021-2026

Supported living and homelessness – Scopus

“supported living” OR “supported housing” OR “supported accommodation” OR “assisted living” OR “extra care housing” AND homeless OR homelessness OR "sleeping rough" OR "on the streets" (abstract) AND england OR scotland OR wales OR "united kingdom" OR UK OR Britain (affiliation country) Limit: 2021-2026
No relevant results were found.

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