



Accessing shared ownership for people with disabilities in Wales: An overview of using the HOLD scheme

Last year, following the Winterbourne View Review, NHS England published a national plan that seeks to develop community services and close inpatient or campus facilities for people with a learning disability. The plan highlights the need to work closely with housing to develop innovative models of community based care and support at home for people with a learning disability.

In Wales, health and social service commissioner and housing partners face similar issues working with people with a learning disability, family and carers to identify a range of accommodation choices that best meets their needs and aspirations.

This case study reflects the lessons of using HOLD (Home Ownership for people with Long-term Disabilities) in Wales to part buy/part rent accommodation under a shared ownership scheme. It is based on the experience of one of MySafeHome's clients called Emma (not her real name) and briefly describes her personal journey to home ownership and the huge impact it's had on her life.

Written for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **David Abbey**, Managing Director, MySafeHome Limited.

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Emma's Story

Emma had been living with her family for the five years before she moved into her own home in Neath. Before that she was living on a National Autistic Society (NAS) campus with other residents; however, she was very unhappy here because of the noise from others and she desperately wanted to live in a secluded environment on her own. It took five years of her living with her family before she was able to secure her own home.

During this time, other housing solutions were considered such as supported housing and assisted living (MySafeHome always encourage buyers and their families to exhaust all possible options), and her family took her to several places which 'took in' people with Autism, but she was always unhappy at the thought of being with other residents, especially after her experience of sharing with another person in a bungalow on the NAS campus. In the words of her family,

"we realised the only realistic option was for her to live on her own".

As Emma was the first person in Wales to try to secure a home (in this case together with the support of Coastal Housing Group) using HOLD (Home Ownership for people with Long-term Disabilities) there were delays which sadly caused distress for her and her family. However, they and MySafeHome staff persisted and 13 months after setting off on her journey Emma finally moved into her new home. Of course as the lease structure and processes are now in place 4-6 months would be a more normal lead time these days, in fact all of the hard work has been done so many more people could, and indeed should, now be benefitting from HOLD.

Being able to live in her own home has made a huge difference to Emma. Again in the words of her family:

"she has been changed for the good in many ways, she loves her bungalow, she has day staff who take her out and about every day and a team of carers which gives her more stability".

Living in her own home has also helped her to integrate into her local community far more than ever before. She now goes to the bank with her carers to get her money, out for lunch on her day off and pops to the shops; in fact, quite a few of the staff in the shops in the area now know her. She even has her own car, giving her the kind of freedom and independence that just a few years ago would have been unimaginable.

Emma's new life has also had a huge impact on her parents too. As they acknowledge:

"we are happy because she is happy, she is near to our home and she visits us, comes home for her birthday, Easter and Christmas".

The only clouds on the horizon are the cutbacks in funding for care and support coupled with the relatively high turnover of PAs (arguably these two things are linked) as a stable team is extremely important to people with disabilities. This, however, doesn't detract from the importance of the model or Emma's family's unwavering belief in it, commenting that *"many people with disabilities do not want to be in a large group but feel happy and more secure in their own more private space"*. Happier, better integrated and more fulfilled ... isn't this the kind of life that people with disabilities in Wales truly deserve?

An overview of HOLD

As outlined in Emma's story above, HOLD has made a huge difference to her and her family (as well as the 1,200 other buyers that MySafeHome's been privileged to help). But how does the model work? And with the recent announcement in the Chancellor of Exchequer's Spending Review and Autumn Statement of the need to encourage more shared ownership in England, and to co-finance the supply of new housing in Wales and maintain levels of Supporting People funding for vulnerable people in a housing setting, can HOLD offer opportunities for people with long-term disabilities to get a foot on the ladder in Wales and England?

Qualifying Criteria

HOLD uses shared ownership to enable disabled individuals with a range of different impairments to part buy (together with a Housing Association) a home of their own. In this particular example, at the time, the Welsh Government provided a grant for 50% of the value of the property to Coastal Housing to pay for the rented part of the property and Emma obtained a mortgage for the purchased share of the property. Buyers can purchase a home from the open market or a Housing Association development. They'll purchase a share (typically 25% - 75%) using an interest only mortgage (they can borrow up to £100,000), the Housing Association buys the remaining share and charges them rent, paid for by Housing Benefit (HB). NB: Changes to HB announced in the Spending Review of November 2015 (especially in terms of tying it to the local housing allowance rate and under 35's rulings) DON'T apply to HOLD.

Crucially buyers are free to remain in their home for as long as they wish, providing the kind of peace of mind and security that no other housing solution delivers, with the mortgage being repaid when the property's sold. The mortgage itself is paid through Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) with an additional top up payment being made from their other benefit entitlement. To ensure that they have sufficient income to make these payments this model is only open to buyers on High or Middle Rate Care Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or the equivalent PIP. MySafeHome also insist on a number of other strict qualifying criteria. They must be:

- 18-80 years old with clean credit history and no outstanding debts
- In receipt of Disability Living Allowance High or Middle Rate Care (under 60s) or Attendance Allowance (over 60s) together with other qualifying benefits
- Unable to work in conventional employment (under 60s only)
- Ideally looking to live on their own, although they can share with caution!
- In possession of suitable Care & Support package confirmed by Social Worker
- Able to put down a deposit and pay fees associated with buying their new home – this costs c.£10,000 (this includes a 5% deposit on their share of the property PLUS getting them ready for home ownership and ensuring it's sustainable) AND able to contribute to their housing costs of c.£30 per week.

Shared Ownership – How It Works

The illustration below shows how shared ownership works. Costs have been broken down into their component parts and illustrates how some of these can be met with existing benefits. It also shows the sort of top up contribution that one may need to pay (NB: this is based on a mortgage rate of 4.12% and an SMI rate of 3.12%).

Property Value £120,000 Housing Association Shared Ownership

75%	25%
Sale	Rent
£90,000	£70pcm



Service Charge – Housing Association (Repairs & Maintenance) £130pcm

BUY



Home Purchase Fees £5,000 approx
Deposit of at least 5% £5,000
Mortgage from Building Society £85,000



Rent = £70pcm Housing Benefit direct to Housing Association
Service Charge = £130pcm Housing Benefit direct to Housing Association

Mortgage Interest charged by the Building Society = £292pcm
Paid by SMI benefit direct to Building Society = £221pcm

Top up paid by Homeowner direct to Building Society = £71pcm

NB: HOLD IS EXEMPT FROM THE 'BEDROOM TAX' SO TWO BED PROPERTIES CAN SAFELY BE PURCHASED USING THIS MODEL!

A Note on Legal Capacity

If a buyer is deemed unable to act on their own due to their disability a Deputy can be appointed to act on their behalf instead. This is done through the Court Of Protection under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. This process may take 6 months or more to complete.

Benefits to the buyer

- The chance to choose where and how they live (subject to the availability and affordability of a suitable property of course).
- The security of tenure and peace of mind that only comes with having a financial stake in their home.
- The opportunity to integrate more effectively into their local community.

Benefits to the buyer's Local Authority and the Welsh Government

- Demonstrates a clear commitment to the personalisation agenda by providing disabled people with a much wider range of housing options that reflects their personal wishes.
- Can save up to £100,000 per person per year in cases where an individual moves from a costly (and possibly unsuitable) Assessment and Treatment Unit.

Conclusion

With the emphasis on shared ownership in the Spending Review of November 2015 coupled with the fact that owning a home of their own makes a huge difference to people with disabilities, whilst also potentially saving considerable sums of money, the argument for the active promotion of and support for HOLD by both the Welsh Government and Local Authorities is particularly compelling. To date just 6 people in Wales have benefitted from HOLD compared with more than 1,200 in England. This is partially down to a lack of awareness and a lack of suitable mortgage lending. Whatever the reason, people with disabilities in Wales have limited opportunities compared to their counterparts in England and this is surely something that should be urgently addressed.

Note

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

About MySafeHome Limited

Working closely with the UK Government's affordable homes agency we were instrumental in developing HOLD back in 1997, with our first buyer securing their own home in 1999. Since then we've helped over 1,200 others realise their dream of home ownership. More information at: www.mysafehome.info



And if you found this of interest, check out HOPE (Home Ownership for People in Extra Care). This has been tailored to help older buyers with support needs too. Read the earlier Housing LIN viewpoint by MySafeHome, 'Sharing Hope: Extra Help for Extra Care' at: www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint50_ExtraHelp.pdf

About Coastal Housing Group

Coastal Housing Group is a not-for-profit industrial and provident society, existing only for the benefit of the community, operating in Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, and Carmarthenshire. It was formed in 2008 after a merger between Swansea Housing Association (formed 1978) and Dewi Sant Housing Association (formed 1991) with the objective of regenerating older stock and building new houses to improve the local community and provide good quality affordable homes.



Coastal Housing Group have over 5000 properties for rent and for sale and are experts in supporting older people, those who require adapted homes and people who need help managing their tenancy. More information at:

www.coastalhousing.co.uk

About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing LIN is called upon by a wide range of statutory and other organisations to provide expert advice and support regarding the implementation of policy and good practice in the field of housing, care and support services.

Further information on housing options for people with a learning disability can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingLearningDisabilities

For further information about the Housing LIN Cymru's comprehensive list of online resources, go to: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/Wales We are grateful to the Welsh Government and housing with care providers in Wales for their support.

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