



Housing LIN

*Connecting people, ideas and resources*

## Viewpoint 98

# Design Guidelines for inclusive, enabling environments for adults with complex needs

**JANUARY 2020**

Written for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Archadia Chartered Architects and Planners**



# Summary

This viewpoint considers the current standards and typologies of specialist supported housing provision for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. It aims to reflect on several case studies by Archadia in both refurbishment and new build projects. Our experience suggests there is a lack of relevant design guidance; this viewpoint provides recommendations for further research needed in this area.

*Cover image by Sharon Green Photography*

## Introduction

In recent years UK policy has encouraged a shift away from institutionalised settings for people with learning disabilities towards housing models that enhance independence and choice, and support people in their local communities. However, there is a recognised deficit of appropriate housing for this group and this is most acute for those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD).

The number of people with PMLD is rising as is the need for housing that will provide a safe and dignified environment. Dr Theresia Baumker stated in her Housing LIN Viewpoint 88, *“too little housing exists for people with learning disabilities to allow them to make the choice to move away from living at home with ageing parents into settings other than traditional residential care.”*<sup>1</sup>

Mencap’s report, ‘The Funding Supported Housing For All report on Specialised Supported Housing for people with a learning disability’<sup>2</sup>, stated: *“Specialised Supported Housing (SSH) is one of those mechanisms which Mencap believes can deliver genuine housing choice. It is a way that living independently in the community can be made available to even those with the most complex needs. And as a result, we believe it must be part of the offer to people with a learning disability and others who need it.”* Although progress has been made by organisations such as Mencap, housing options for people with PMLD are still being overlooked.

The ‘Raising our sights’ report by Mencap and the PMLD Network<sup>3</sup> suggested, *“We know that many people with a learning disability are getting more personalised housing and support options. However, we also know that those with the most complex housing needs, for example people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), are often being left out of this.”*

At Archadia we are interested in developing innovative projects that provide people with PMLD a home environment that can support them to live independently and to actively encourage inclusion in our towns and cities. This viewpoint considers the current standards and typologies of specialist supported housing provision for this group. Secondly it aims to reflect on several case studies by Archadia in both refurbishment and new build projects. Finally, to reflect on the lack of design guidance and provide recommendations for further research needed in this area.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Do-we-need-to-re-think-our-approach-to-choice-and-giving-people-with-learning-disabilities-the-choices-that-are-spoken-of/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/News/Mencap-and-Housing-LIN-release-new-research-to-gain-a-better-understanding-of-Specialised-Supported-Housing-SHH/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2012.340-Raising-our-sights\\_Housing\\_V3\\_0.pdf](http://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2012.340-Raising-our-sights_Housing_V3_0.pdf)

# Existing context

As referenced in the government's planning guidance on housing for older and disabled people last year, *"good design can help to create buildings and places that are for everyone. It can help break down unnecessary physical and psychological barriers and exclusions caused by the poor design of buildings and places."*<sup>4</sup>

Although there is not one definition of supported living it is commonly understood that it means a person who needs support to live in the way that they want. Supported living allows people to have their own tenancy and choose their own support. Individual and communal housing settings for people with PMLD need to respond to a diverse range of needs. For people with more complex conditions living independently is possible through access to the right care, location and physical environment. This section will look at the current guidance for creating the right conditions for people to thrive and how the built environment can enhance or hinder this.

In the UK there is a range of guidance and legislation for the design of supported housing for different groups. Building Regulations Part M<sup>5</sup> use the Equality Act to set out design requirements to enable people with physical disability to use and access buildings. Organisations such as Habinteg have created comprehensive design guidance on accessible housing for wheelchair users. The Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)<sup>6</sup> design principles and publications have transformed the approach to housing and care for older people. Universities such as Stirling offer courses on designing for specific conditions such as dementia.

In 'Building the Right Home'<sup>7</sup>, NHS England, the LGA and ADASS aim to expand housing options for people with learning disabilities and/or autism, this report includes case studies that highlight design features. Archadia have found that although these existing resources are very useful there is insufficient research and holistic design guidance for people with PMLD who might have a number of different conditions that affect their wellbeing at home.

In the supported housing and care sector, Reach Standards<sup>8</sup> are used to ensure people living with a learning disability and/or autism are supported to live the life they choose. They consist of a set of nine voluntary standards rooted in human rights. The standards are formed around a series of questions that explore choice in different aspects of life, from asking: "I choose who I live with and where I live" (standards 1 and 2) to wider issues such as "I choose how I am part of the community" (standard 8).

*"Every person has the right to express choice, whether with or without words. Everyone should be included in designing their own lives and the support they need to do this."*

**Reach Standards**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people#introduction>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved\\_documents/80/part\\_m\\_-\\_access\\_to\\_and\\_use\\_of\\_buildings](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved_documents/80/part_m_-_access_to_and_use_of_buildings)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/learningdisabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2015/11/building-right-home-guidance-housing.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://paradigm-uk.org/what-we-do/reach-support-for-living/>

This approach does not directly consider design but many of these choices depend on physical conditions, it also raises the question of how do we design homes “with, not for” people so their voice can be heard in the process. This sentiment is echoed in TLAP’s ‘Making it Real’<sup>9</sup>, a framework for care and support which looks at questions designed to support co-production between people, commissioners and providers. This is essential to create housing focused on the choice and need of the people inhabiting it.

Typologies of specialist supported housing differ across the country, there is not one model that fits all. Some people prefer to live in communal settings while others prefer to live alone or with their family. Archadia have worked on a range of specialised housing projects for all age groups and needs, from individual home adaptations to large scale housing projects we recognise the importance of inclusive design processes as well as getting the physical environment right.

The main ambition is to have a set of design guidelines which can fit many different tenure typologies whilst still providing high quality housing and choice.

## Case Studies

The following two case studies are projects undertaken by Archadia Chartered Architects for the charity Norwood. Norwood is the largest Jewish charity in the UK supporting vulnerable children and their families, children with special educational needs and people with learning disabilities and autism.

### **Lyonsdown Road: Specialist Supported Living in the Community**

The brief for this project was to adapt a property in Barnet, North London, to provide a new home for young adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities with the aim to incorporate innovative assisted technology that would give the residents maximum independence while keeping a high level of safety. The home would operate as a single household with up to six people where 24-hour care is provided for residents.



The aspiration was to provide three wheelchair accessible bedrooms on the ground floor, with two further en-suite bedrooms on the first floor to cater for residents with learning disabilities who can use the stairs. A shared kitchen, living and dining space is provided on the ground floor as well as a multi-use space that incorporates a sensory room. An office and staff sleeping space

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/TLAP-Making-it-Real-report.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/TLAP-Making-it-Real-report.pdf)

was needed and located on the first floor. Storage and a laundry/utility room were included on the ground floor. The home needed to be level access throughout including the garden.



Archadia worked closely with Norwood staff, healthcare professionals, and an assistive technology company to understand how to remodel the property to meet the needs of the residents. During the process, Norwood identified 2 out of 5 residents who would eventually live in the property. Stephanie, Joe and their families became involved in the design process including attending site meetings. There were a number of challenges in adapting the property including the ageing building fabric which resulted in the plumbing and electrics requiring a total overhaul, particularly to support the assistive technology which would enable residents to open doors, windows, curtains and other equipment through an eye gaze system.

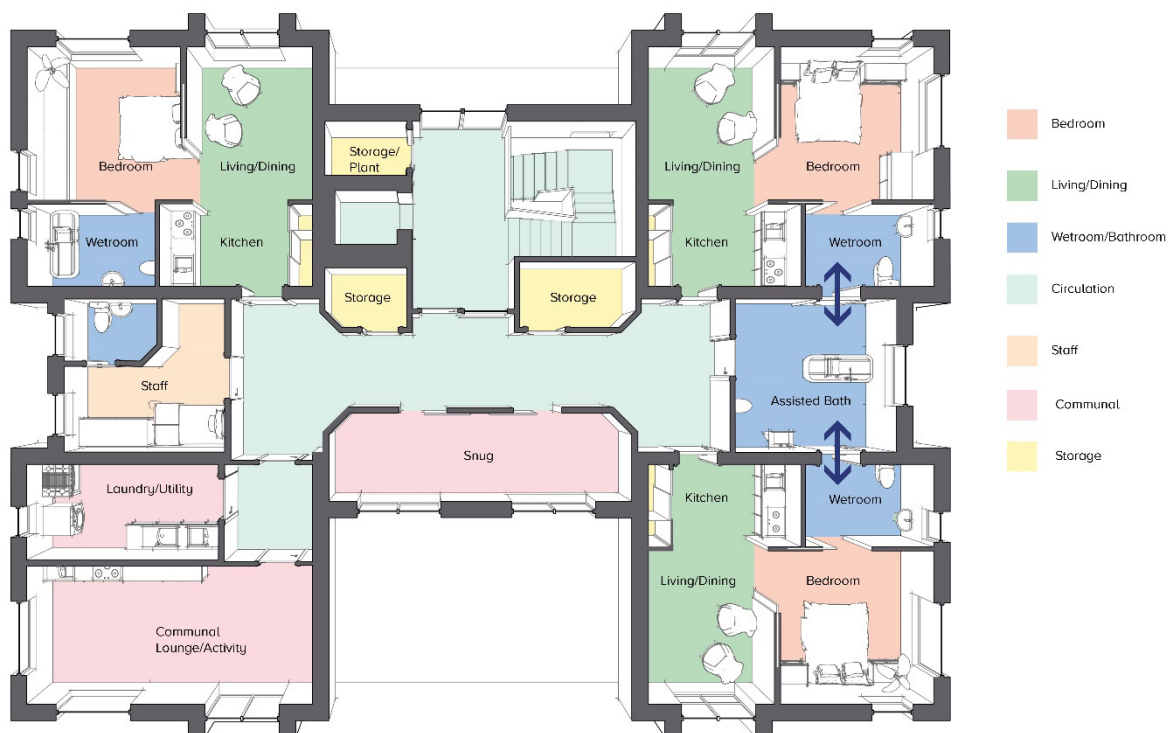
*“The idea behind the assistive technology is to allow (current residents) Stephanie and Joe to become as independent as possible within their own home. As well as being able to control their environment, Stephanie, Joe and future tenants will have the chance to benefit from the sensory room – a fun space and a learning space as well. Although assistive technology is really well-established in Norwood, this is the first site where we’ve really concentrated on the sensory side of things. We’ll be continuing to focus on this across our other accommodations.”*

**Norwood Assistive Technology Manager Joanne SurrIDGE**



## Ravenswood Village: New Build Residential Homes that support Independence

Norwood's Ravenswood Village was established in 1953 by four families who wanted to provide education and care for their children with learning disabilities. Now home to 109 people with a broad spectrum of learning disabilities in Berkshire, Ravenswood has evolved into a vibrant community where many residents have lived since childhood. In order to continue to deliver outstanding support to current and future residents of Ravenswood, Norwood spearheaded a review of the site to ensure it is better positioned to support the people who benefit from their services, not just now, but well into the future.



Archadia worked closely with staff, family and residents at Ravenswood Village to understand their aspirations and to create new accessible homes and facilities that could support residents with a wide range of needs. The new housing consisted of 5 new residential homes with each resident having their own self-contained apartment with the same basic dimensions but the layout could be adapted depending on how they would like to live. Environmental conditions were also a factor in where people wanted to live, for example, the site location and orientation meant some apartments would be closer to activity whereas others would be quieter, some would have more direct sunlight which some people liked whilst others preferred less light for sensory reasons. These homes also provide communal living spaces and a shared kitchen designed to enable residents, their caregivers and families enough space to cook together and socialise.



To fund the new buildings and raise capital for ongoing activities, Norwood worked with a private housing developer to provide market rate and affordable homes on part of the site. This new community would be an opportunity for Ravenswood to create an integrated neighbourhood but they also recognised the importance of working closely with residents and families as it was a big change. A landscape firm GreenStone Design<sup>10</sup> who had previously created designs for sensory gardens at Norwood was appointed to work with Archadia on the new masterplan to provide guidance on the open space, opportunities for sensory gardens and planting, routes and boundary conditions.



<sup>10</sup> <http://www.greenstonedesign.co.uk/>

# Key Reflections - Recommendations

This viewpoint aims to highlight the current lack of standards and design guidance for both adaptations and new build housing for people with PMLD. Two case studies are used to capture the process and design consideration for two scales of PMLD housing undertaken by Archadia Chartered Architects using a wellbeing approach.

This research has been a way to critically reflect on the current standards and typologies of specialist supportive housing provision. As previously mentioned, HAPPI standards help to transform the approach to older person housing. However, we believe that we need a concerted cross disciplinary effort to create better standards and guidance for housing for people with PMLD.

At Archadia we believe we need:

- **Collaboration** between housing providers, assistive technology companies, healthcare professionals, architects, planners and the people who the housing is for, their caregivers and families to understand what works.
- **Research** that provides better evidence for designing enabling environments for people with PMLD
- **Advocacy** increasing awareness about the lack of housing options and how to address this in the planning system locally and nationally
- **Legislation** that builds on Part M and the Equalities Act and includes new build and adaptation of existing homes
- **Guidance on Assistive Technology** as an enabling tool but also better understanding of its current limitations
- **Professional development** and specialist training for design professionals on process and product
- **Homes made for Everyone** with better designed adaptations - without a baseline of what good looks like it is hard to strive to achieve better

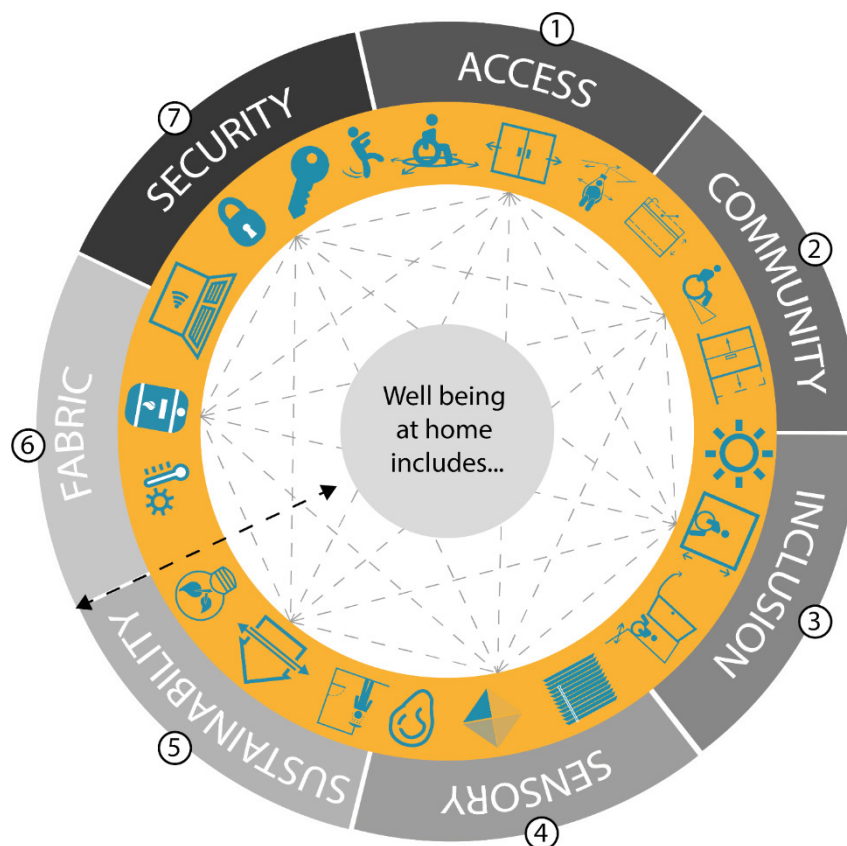


# Conclusion

In conclusion, we need a collaborative multidisciplinary effort to change legislation and planning to help create an environment where PMLD housing is more easily developed, funded and maintained. Movements like Housing Made for Everyone (HoME) show the awareness and desire for change within professional organisations. They aim to tackle the UK's acute and growing shortage of accessible homes. "HoME is calling for the 'accessible and adaptable' design standard to be made the mandatory baseline for all new homes; for Local Authorities to ensure their housing policies adequately reflect the needs of older and disabled people; and for housing associations and developers to commit to providing high quality homes fit for the future."<sup>11</sup> However, this needs to go further to ensure there is the opportunity for appropriately designed homes for people with PMLD to provide them with housing choices that allow them to live independently.

While Archadia believe the best architectural solutions are born from collaboration throughout the design process with the users of the building, design guidance can help as an initial starting point and provide basic information at the commencement of a project. In the absence of such guidance PMLD housing will not benefit from the shared knowledge and experience to be gained from a variety of sources, with each design being undertaken in isolation.

Archadia believes there is a real need for a PMLD Housing Design Guide in order that we can start to make the most out of the silos of information throughout the sector.



<sup>11</sup> <https://www.habinteg.org.uk/homecoalition>

## Other useful reading / links

Cairns, G. 2016, Plans for new Furzedown homes will help residents with physical and learning disabilities in Wandsworth, SW Londoner, <http://www.swlondoner.co.uk/plans-new-furzedown-homes-will-help-residents-physical-learning-disabilities-wandsworth/>

Houlden, A. 2015, *Building the right support, A national plan to develop community services and close impatient facilities for people with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition*, NHS England, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ld-nat-imp-plan-oct15.pdf>

Secretary of State for Health, 2001, *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century*, Assets Publishing Government, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/250877/5086.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/250877/5086.pdf)

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Doukas, T. Fergusson, A. Fullerton, M. and Grace, J. 2017, *Supporting people with profound and multiple learning disabilities CORE & ESSENTIAL SERVICE STANDARDS*, PMLD link, <http://www.pmldlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Standards-PMLD-h-web.pdf>

BH Speakout, 2019, *Independent advocacy for adults with learning disabilities in Brighton & Hove*, BH Speakout, <https://www.bhspeakout.org.uk/>

HoME Habinteg, 2019, *HoME - Housing Made for Everyone*, Habinteg, <https://www.habinteg.org.uk/homecoalition>

Baumker, T. 2017, *Do we need to re-think our approach to choice, and giving people with learning disabilities the choices that are spoken of?*, Housing LIN, <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type/Do-we-need-to-re-think-our-approach-to-choice-and-giving-people-with-learning-disabilities-the-choices-that-are-spoken-of/>

Housing LIN and Mencap, 2018, *Funding supported housing for all Specialised Supported Housing for people with a learning disability*, Housing LIN, [https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Other\\_reports\\_and\\_guidance/Funding-supported-housing-for-all-Specialised-Supported-Housing-for-people-with-a-learning-disability.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/Funding-supported-housing-for-all-Specialised-Supported-Housing-for-people-with-a-learning-disability.pdf)

PMLD Network and Mencap, 2017, *Raising our sights, How-to guide 5 Housing for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities*, PMLD link, [http://www.pmldlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2012.340-Raising-our-sights\\_Housing\\_V3\\_0.pdf](http://www.pmldlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2012.340-Raising-our-sights_Housing_V3_0.pdf)

Reach, 2020, *Paradigm Pushing boundaries*, <https://paradigm-uk.org/what-we-do/reach-support-for-living/>

Housing LIN, 2020, *Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)*, <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government ,2019, *Housing for older and disabled people*, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people#introduction>

Think local act personal, 2018, *Making it real*, Housing LIN, [https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/TLAP-Making-it-Real-report.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/TLAP-Making-it-Real-report.pdf)

# About the authors

**Sophie Morley** is an Architect and consultant at Archadia. She joined Archadia in October 2014, and became an Associate in 2015. Her experience ranges from large-scale housing to specialist disability projects and she previously led Archadia's practice-based research. Sophie has worked as a part-time lecturer in Architecture at Oxford Brookes University, De Montfort University and Reading University. She continues consulting with Archadia as well as currently working in North America for the Neighborhood Design Centre a charity that provides design and engagement services to low income communities in Washington DC and Baltimore. She is also an associate of the charity Architecture Sans Frontières - UK and leads inclusive community development projects in the UK and West Africa.

**Kathryn Thomas** is a Project Architect at Archadia. Kathryn joined Archadia in 2017, studied for her Part III at the University of Nottingham. She has worked as a part-time tutor at the University of Nottingham. Kathryn is particularly interested in design for older persons and for people with disabilities. She is leading Archadia's practice-based research programme, working closely with several councils and universities. She is currently working on several housing projects on garage sites for a local housing association, disabled facilities grants, as well as a large social housing projects in West London.

## Note

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

## About Norwood

Norwood is the largest Jewish charity in the UK supporting vulnerable children and their families, children with special educational needs and people with learning disabilities and autism.

Norwood supports more than 4,000 people every year, giving them the tools they need to live the most fulfilling lives they can.

Norwood works with 56 local authorities, delivering wide-ranging services in a variety of residential accommodation and supported-living services, short-break facilities and family centres across London and the South East.

Through a workforce of more than 2,500 - made up of 1,250 staff and about 1,500 volunteers - we provide the highest-quality care to transform the lives of children and their families, and vulnerable adults.

It costs £32m a year to deliver Norwood's services, £12m of which must be raised from voluntary donations.

# About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 25,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England, Wales and Scotland to exemplify innovative housing solutions for an ageing population.

Recognised by government and industry as a leading 'ideas lab' on specialist/supported housing, our online and regional networked activities, and consultancy services:

- connect people, ideas and resources to inform and improve the range of housing that enables older and disabled people live independently in a home of their choice
- provide insight and intelligence on latest funding, research, policy and practice to support sector learning and improvement
- showcase what's best in specialist/supported housing and feature innovative projects and services that demonstrate how lives of people have been transformed, and
- support commissioners and providers review their existing provision and develop, test out and deliver solutions so that they are best placed to respond to their customers' changing needs and aspirations

To access a selection of related resources on housing for people with a learning disability and/or autism, visit our dedicated pages at:

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingLearningDisabilities/>

And for more information about how the Housing LIN can advise and support your organisation transform your services and/or improve the housing choices for people with complex needs, including people with a learning disability or autism, go to:

[https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/HousingLIN\\_Transforming-Care\\_brochure\\_2019.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/HousingLIN_Transforming-Care_brochure_2019.pdf)

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