

THE HIDDEN HOUSING CRISIS



Leonard Cheshire Disability is the leading charity supporting disabled people. Our services include high quality care and community support together with innovative projects supporting disabled people into education, employment and entrepreneurship.

With over 7,000 employees we support over 4,600 disabled people in the UK alone. Worldwide, our global alliance of partners works in more than 50 countries.

Find out more and what you can do to help at:
www.leonardcheshire.org

KEY FINDINGS

1 in 10 people in Great Britain report some kind of mobility problem¹. That is 5 million people who are likely to need disabled-friendly homes².

But Britain's homes simply are not fit for people with mobility problems:

72%

Almost three quarters

say that they do not have an accessible door into their building (that is one that is easy to get into)

52%

More than half

say that they do not have doors and hallways wide enough for a wheelchair

50%

Half

say that they do not have stairs big enough for a stair-lift to be fitted³

Many thousands of people could be effectively trapped in a couple of rooms in their homes.

More than half (54%) of those with mobility problems who have looked for accessible homes said they found them difficult to find. Only around one in twenty (4%) said they found them easy to find.

Disabled-friendly homes are very difficult to find⁴.

At the same time more and more people in Britain are disabled. From 2002 to 2013 the number of disabled people in the UK as increased from 10.1million to 12.2million.⁵

We are also ageing. There are currently more than 10 million British people over the age of 65.⁶

¹ ComRes interviewed 2,006 GB adults aged 18+ online between the 4 and 6 June 2014; including 238 who self-identified as having a mobility impairment. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults aged 18+. Extrapolation was based on the Census 2011 data (47,754,569 people aged 18+ in Great Britain)

² By disabled-friendly home we mean homes built to either wheelchair accessible or Lifetime Homes Standards

³ ComRes's polling. Base (British adults aged 18+ who reported a mobility impairment): 238.

⁴ ComRes's polling. Base (British adults aged 18+ who reported a mobility impairment). For each statement, the base does not include people who selected "Don't know", or those who selected "I have not looked for accessible homes": 130. "Difficult" included respondents rating 8-10, and "easy" rating from 0-2, on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 = very easy and 10 = very difficult).

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions (2004, 2012). Family resources survey.

⁶ <http://ageing-population-conference.co.uk/>

THE HUMAN FACE OF THE HIDDEN HOUSING CRISIS

In just six years, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) predicts that people over 50 will make up almost half (47%) of our adult population.⁷ These people need disabled-friendly homes now – and millions more will need them in the years ahead.

Despite this significant problem, governments and local councils across Great Britain are not doing enough.

Though some areas, like London, have committed to building enough disabled-friendly homes,⁸ too many other areas are falling far behind. There is very little sign that governments in Westminster, Edinburgh or Cardiff, or in city and town halls across the country, have woken up to what needs to be done.

It is absolutely clear, therefore, that we need urgent action to build more disabled-friendly homes so that people are no longer deprived of the ability to wash or dress in privacy. That's why we are calling for:

- All new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards.
- 10% of new homes to be built to full wheelchair accessibility standards.
- A commitment from all political parties that any new settlements – such as the planned garden cities – are built with the housing that disabled people need to thrive.
- Housing associations and local authorities to work together to create accessible housing registers so people can find disabled-friendly social housing more easily.
- Governments to reform current housing rules – including section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the New Homes Bonus, and the Housing Bill (Wales) – to increase the supply of disabled-friendly homes nationwide.

SUE

Across the country, people like Sue (further details inside) are forced to live in homes that are damaging to their health and their dignity. Sue can't get upstairs in her own home. She has had over 40 falls moving between rooms, or transferring to the toilet, which have needed assistance from paramedics. All because her home is simply not up to standard.

Sue has had over 40 falls moving between rooms, or transferring to the toilet, which have needed assistance from paramedics.

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth (further details inside) and people like her are having to wash at their kitchen sinks or sleep in their dining rooms for years before being offered disabled-friendly homes. Elizabeth's local council refused to adapt her property by adding a stairlift so she could use the bathroom upstairs.

Elizabeth had to wait for a suitable home for nine years – during this time she had to wash in her kitchen and use a commode in her dining room.

ANTHONY

Every week, disabled people like Anthony⁹ (more details inside) are offered homes by their local council, which are unfit for them. When the only choice is to live in a care home, this costs the taxpayer more and deprives Anthony and others of their choice to live in the way they choose.

Anthony's only choice was an unsuitable home, so he had to move into a care home.

⁷ Ageing Society, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁸ The London Plan requires 10% of all homes in London to be built to wheelchair accessible housing standards, and 100% to be built to Lifetime Homes standards

⁹ Name has been changed to protect the person's identity.

MORE THAN FIVE MILLION ADULTS HAVE A MOBILITY PROBLEM



FOREWORD

Where did you wash this morning? Was it in a family bathroom surrounded by rubber ducks and kids toys? Was it in a shower with numerous bottles of shampoo and shower gel? Or did you move aside your dirty dishes, set up your toiletries on the draining board and wash in the kitchen sink?

There are some things none of us should have to endure in twenty-first century Britain. At Leonard Cheshire Disability, we believe that washing every day in your kitchen, at the sink where you peel your potatoes and wash your plates, is one of them.

But our nation's shortage of disabled-friendly homes is forcing people to live in these Victorian conditions. Worse still, as the number of disabled and older people grows, this hidden crisis is going to get worse and worse.

Unless of course we choose to do something now. Everyone from the Government to a young couple trying to find a flat to rent knows we need to build more homes. We can choose now to make sure that we build the right kind of homes for our future. Making that choice today will make a difference not just to millions of disabled and older people and their families today, but tens of millions of people who become disabled in years to come.

Most of the time when we want to make a huge change to people's lives, we have to make a large sacrifice to do so. We have to increase public spending, decrease investment elsewhere or we put in place tough, new regulations. Difficult decisions.

In this case, we only need to make a very small change.

Building a home to Lifetime Home standards, with wider doors and walls strong enough for grab-rails in case the owners need them in the future, costs an average of £1,100 extra per property. A fully wheelchair-accessible property costs an extra £13,000. So, not only is this the right thing to do – it's also the smart thing to do. Adapting property after it's built is so much more expensive and less effective. And not adapting it condemns people to the misery of Victorian strip washes and ultimately possibly to leaving their own home and incurring massive care costs, when they would prefer to stay and live independently.

Difficult decisions, easy answers. In some parts of the country, housing policies have already been changed. It is now time to make those policies standard across the whole of the UK.

We are launching our Home Truths campaign to ask people, and Governments to be both caring and smart. Caring, because building more disabled-friendly homes will stop hundreds of thousands of people enduring the misery of being stuck in unsuitable homes. And smart, because by making this choice we will be planning for our nation's future.

Developers, housing associations, local authorities, estate agents, charities, Governments and policy-makers: all of us can do something to help. If you care and you're smart, please join our quest to build the disabled-friendly homes we need. Go to www.leonardcheshire.org/hometruths and see what you can do today.

Clare Pelham
Chief Executive

INTRODUCTION

There are 27 million homes in Great Britain¹⁰ for almost 50 million British adults¹¹ and their children.

Of those fifty million adults, more than five million¹² report having mobility problems. More than one in ten British adults say that they have difficulty or are unable to move, walk or stand independently.

Some of those people will use a walking stick to help them get around, others will use a frame. Some won't need to use any equipment at all, while others will use a wheelchair some or all of the time.

But most people with mobility problems need some adaptations to their home to allow them to live comfortably and with dignity.

These adaptations may be very minor – some people will need a grab-bar installed on their staircase to stop them from slipping and falling; while others will need more significant – such as a ramp to the front door, a hoist, or enough space in their bathroom to fit a wheelchair alongside the toilet.

Sadly, these adaptations are simply impossible in a disturbingly large proportion of the homes. Too often, walls are not strong enough to install grab-bars, bathrooms are not large enough to fit wheelchairs, or stairs aren't wide enough for a stair-lift.

Wherever these adaptations can't be made though, the results are the same – people's health and dignity suffers.

For some people this will mean tripping and falling on the stairs – needing an ambulance to come and help them, or an expensive trip to the local hospital. For others it will mean having to sleep in the lounge because they can't get to their bedroom, or like Sue and Elizabeth (opposite), having to wash at the kitchen sink every day because they can't get their wheelchair into the bathroom.

Others still will move into residential care, like Anthony, not because they want to but because there is no alternative.

What can we do?

Fortunately, there are clear guidelines available for how to build homes for the future that avoid these problems.

Lifetime Homes¹³ are ordinary houses and flats which incorporate 16 design criteria that can be universally applied to new homes with an average cost £1,100 or less.¹⁴ These standards actually save money in the long run, by ensuring that things like grab-bars and stair-lifts can be easily and cheaply installed if people's needs change.¹⁵

Wheelchair accessible homes, specifically designed for those who use wheelchairs, cost a little more¹⁶ but are essential to ensuring that disabled people can live comfortably and safely.

We can and should make sure that the homes we build in the next five years are all built to Lifetime Homes standards, and one in ten are built to full wheelchair accessibility standards.

Only then will our housing be fit for the growing number of us who have mobility problems.

SUE'S STORY

Sue lives alone in the South West of England. She became a wheelchair user following an accident in 2012, and has been trying to move house every day for more than two years, but has not been successful.

'The local housing associations won't help. They keep putting restrictions in my way. I'm 'not old enough' - I'm 52. Or 'not disabled enough'.

'I haven't been upstairs in my own house for two years, and I have to sleep in the lounge. I have a care worker who comes in the morning and helps me get washed at the kitchen sink, but there is no privacy – the neighbours can see in to where I wash, and I just want to have a bathroom where I can do these things myself in private.

'They have put in grab rails in the house but I've had over 40 falls since then, when moving between rooms, or transferring to the toilet. The ambulance crew who have to come and help are even telling me that I have to move, but I can't do anything about it.'

Sue has put in more than ten bids for a disabled-friendly home but not been successful – because there just aren't enough available. She says she doesn't know how much longer she can continue living in one room with no privacy. The door on her downstairs toilet had to be removed in order to fit her wheelchair inside, so if people come round to visit they have to leave if she needs to use the toilet.

She also can't use her garden as there is a step and the housing association won't provide a ramp.

Sue is calling on Housing Ministers from all parties to meet her and commit to a plan to build more disabled-friendly homes.

**Sign Sue's petition here:
www.leonardcheshire.org/hometruths**



¹⁰ Chartered Institute of Housing, UK Housing Review, 2014, Table 17a

¹¹ Census 2011 data

¹² ComRes's polling. Base (those who reported a mobility impairment): 238. Extrapolation was based on the Census 2011 data (47,754,569 people aged 18+ in Great Britain).

¹³ Lifetime Homes standards were developed by Habinteg and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, details are available here: <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/about-us.html>

¹⁴ Estimates vary. The CLG Housing Standards Review Consultation Impact Assessment estimated the average cost as £1,100. A previous CLG estimate put the average cost at £547. DCLG The Future of the Code for Sustainable Homes, 2007.

¹⁵ Details of the Lifetime Homes Design Standards can be found here: http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/data/files/For_Professionals/accessible_revisedlthstandard_final.pdf

¹⁶ Around £13,000 for all sizes of home, according to CLG, Housing Standards Review Consultation: Impact Assessment

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING?

In order to understand the scale of the problem people with mobility problems currently face in their own homes, we worked with ComRes to survey 2,006 British adults.

11% reported¹⁷ that they had a mobility problem so we asked them how difficult they found undertaking a series of everyday tasks in their current homes (on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is very easy, and 10 is very difficult).

The results show very clearly just how devastating the impact of the lack of disabled-friendly homes can be. In their current homes thousands of people are left unable to carry out the most basic tasks:

17%
One in five say they find it very difficult (scoring 9-10) to use the stairs safely

52%
More than half say they find it very difficult (scoring 9-10) to sleep in their bedroom, rather than the lounge or kitchen

7%
More than one in fifteen say they find it very difficult (scoring 9-10) to get into their building or home

When we asked people with mobility problems which of a set of standard adaptations their current homes had, the results were a disgrace:

72%
Almost three quarters report that the door to their property is not properly accessible (for example because it had steps, or no ramp)

52%
More than half report not having stairs large enough for a stair-lift to be fitted

44%
Almost half report not having strong enough walls in their bathrooms, for the installation of grab-bars¹⁸

These are standard features included in all homes built to Lifetime Homes Standards. If installed when houses are being built, these cost on average £1,100 or less for all but the largest houses.¹⁹

Further, of those reporting mobility problems:

- two thirds (66%) report not living in a one storey house or flat
- two thirds (63%) report not having a bathroom large enough to fit a wheelchair;
- More than half (52%) report not having doors and hallways wide enough to allow for wheelchair access.²⁰

£1,100 is a small price to pay to stop people being trapped in their homes or unable to go upstairs. It can also save thousands in hospital costs:

One trip to hospital for someone who slips on the stairs because they can't install a stair-lift costs an average of almost £1,800²¹ - 60% more than installing Lifetime Homes features in a new home

A hip fracture costs over £28,000²² - and brings no end of pain and upset to families across the country - and could easily be prevented by the installation of grab bars in halls and bathrooms.

The case for requiring **all new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards** is clear - on both a financial and an individual level.

While not everybody with mobility problems will need to use a wheelchair, there are currently around 1.2 million wheelchair users in the UK, making up 2% of the population,²³ and this number is expected to increase in the years ahead.

A recent report by Habinteg and the South Bank University estimated that there was an unmet housing need for wheelchair users in England alone of almost 80,000 homes.²⁴

As such, in order to close the gap between the demand for, and supply of, wheelchair accessible homes we are calling for **10% of all new homes** to be built to full wheelchair accessibility standards, for at least the next five years.

¹⁷ 238 British adults

¹⁸ ComRes's polling. Base (British adults aged 18+ those who reported a mobility impairment): 238.

¹⁹ Estimates vary. The CLG Housing Standards Review Consultation Impact Assessment estimated the average cost as £1,100. A previous-CLG estimate put the average cost at £547. DCLG The Future of the Code for Sustainable Homes, 2007.

²⁰ ComRes's polling. Base (British adults 18+ who reported a mobility impairment): 238

²¹ Source: Cabinet Office unit cost database (2011/12)

²² Better outcomes, lower costs: Implications for health and social care budgets of investment in housing adaptations, improvements and equipment: a review of the evidence

²³ NHS purchasing and supply agency 2000

²⁴ Mind the Step: An estimation of housing need among wheelchair users in England, Habinteg, London South Bank University (2010)

**£1,100 IS A
SMALL PRICE
TO STOP PEOPLE
BEING TRAPPED.**



ELIZABETH'S STORY

Elizabeth lives in Suffolk and has multiple sclerosis (MS). Sixteen years ago she became unable to use the stairs in her three bedroom semi-detached house.

'I waited nine years for suitable housing. Being washed in the kitchen is no fun.'

For five of those years, she had to be washed in the kitchen and use a commode in the dining room as she could not get up to the bathroom.

'I was told we were on the waiting list so they couldn't do any adaptations such as add a ramp at the front door for my wheelchair or install a stair-lift. We waited for five years and then were offered another property but this still didn't meet my needs and I had to sleep in the dining room as there wasn't space for the bed in the bedroom.'

Only after talking to her solicitor for advice did Elizabeth get any help to move. In 2005, the local council promised to build her a bungalow. This has changed Elizabeth's life.

'I'm very happy with my house now: it has lowered counters, enough space to move my wheelchair and a wet room. But I don't understand why it took almost a decade for me to get a house where I could sleep in my bedroom and wash in my bathroom.'

DISABLED-FRIENDLY HOMES ARE HARD TO FIND

The problem of accessing disabled-friendly homes is not only limited to a lack of stock, however. Troublingly, even those disabled-friendly homes that do exist are very difficult to find.

To measure the scale of this problem, we asked 2006 British adults to rate the ease with which they were able to find accessible homes on a scale of 0-10 (where 0 is very easy, and 10 is very difficult).

54%

More than half²⁵ of those reporting mobility problems who have looked for an accessible home say they found them difficult (scoring 8-10) to find, thirteen times more than the one in twenty four (4%) who said they found it easy (scoring 0-2).

These responses also resonate with the findings of other organisations. In 2012, the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign's Trailblazers report found that the private property market is unable to provide essential facilities for wheelchair users.²⁶ They found that estate agents and housing websites were preventing young disabled people from moving away from home and living independently because they fail to understand their situation or provide crucial information about whether properties are disabled-friendly.

For example, the report found that estate agents were making basic errors such as taking wheelchair-users to view properties that were up several flights of stairs. It also found that many estate agents had little or no understanding of accessible property, failing to list relevant features such as step-free access on their websites and not understanding the need for essential facilities such as fully accessible bathrooms.

Many respondents to the study said they had been forced to search through thousands of properties individually, as leading property websites failed to offer an easy way of searching for disabled-friendly homes.

To date, the number of disabled-friendly properties listed on the National Accessible Property Register remains low.²⁷ Currently this lists only three disabled-friendly properties to rent in all of Greater London.²⁸

This is clearly a serious problem that needs to be addressed. To ensure that people who need disabled-friendly homes are able to find them, local councils, estate agents and housing associations should all look at the way they advertise homes, in order to make it easier for people desperately searching for somewhere safe to live.

In particular:

- Housing associations should use the accessible housing register to report disabled-friendly properties to local councils.
- All estate agents and housing associations should filter online and offline property searches for disabled-friendly housing.
- Estate agents and housing associations should work with disability, ageing and housing charity partners to develop a 'disabled-friendly' kite mark, so people can easily identify homes which will work for them.

ANTHONY'S STORY

Anthony²⁹ is 68, and has multiple sclerosis (MS). At 63, due to his medical condition, he was left unable to use the stairs or the bathroom in his home, and was forced to move.

Anthony approached his local authority to find somewhere appropriate, and he was offered a housing association flat in a new development locally.

Unfortunately, when he saw the flat he knew the design was not suitable for him. There was no tracking hoist installed – which is used to transport people who use a wheelchair into their chairs, or into the bathroom to use the shower or toilet. Further, the flat was on the 5th floor and there was no 'help phone' available to call his carer if he had a fall or needed urgent medical assistance.

Despite these problems, Anthony was asked to sign up to live in the flat straight away, and was offered no alternatives. Even though he asked if he could sign up for a trial with the flat to see if he could make it work, he was told that this was not possible, and he would have to live there for at least a year if he accepted tenancy, even if he had serious difficulties with the flat.

As he knew he could not live in the flat, Anthony was forced to decline the offer, and instead moved into residential care – where he has now been living for five years – at a hugely increased cost to the local authority. While some people prefer to live in residential care, this is not what Anthony wanted.

²⁵ ComRes's polling. Base (British adults aged 18+those who reported a mobility impairment; the base does not include people who selected "Don't Know", or those who selected "I have not looked for accessible homes"); "Difficult" included respondents rating 8 – 10, and "easy" rating from 0-2, on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 = very easy and 10 = very difficult).

²⁶ The findings are based on the experiences of 200 disabled young people who related their dealings with estate and letting agents, local authorities and private landlords. The report, entitled Locked Out, is cited in <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2012/jul/04/young-disabled-estate-agents-property>

²⁷ <http://accessible-property.org.uk/holidays/national-accessible-scheme.htm>

²⁸ http://accessible-property.org.uk/property/county.htm?retail_type=let&h=London

²⁹ Name has been changed to protect the identity of the case study

MORE BRITISH PEOPLE ARE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY, AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THESE DISABILITIES IS INCREASING



FACING UP TO THE FUTURE

Who is tackling the problem and who is lagging behind?

There is no doubt about the seriousness of the problem we face.

Some organisations, councils and governments are putting in place forward-looking strategies, making sure that in their areas there will be more disabled-friendly homes in the future, while others are building homes which ignore the evidence, and the anguish, of people like Sue, Elizabeth and Anthony.



London

Since 2004, both Mayors of London have tackled the issue head on. The 2004 London Plan set out to address the dearth of disabled-friendly housing in the capital by requiring:

- new developments to be built to Lifetime Homes Standard
- at least 10% of new homes to be built to wheelchair accessible standards³⁰

Though there have been some differences in performance across London – with some boroughs missing their targets – in general, performance has been strong.

Last year, 84.5% of homes given building approval in the city met Lifetime Homes Standards, and 8.4% were wheelchair accessible. For new builds that rises to 95.1% built to Lifetime Homes Standards and 9.5% built to wheelchair accessible standards.³¹

The current draft Housing Strategy, Homes for London, commits to carry these targets on for the next four years – and notes that disabled-friendly “design standards have been successfully adopted as planning policy through the London Plan”.³²

The strong leadership on this issue taken by consecutive Mayors of London should act as a model for change to be adopted across the country.

³⁰ <http://www.london.gov.uk/thelondonplan/thelondonplan.jsp> accessed 13/06/14

³¹ London Plan Annual Monitoring Report 10, 2012-13, published March 2014

³² https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Draft%20London%20Housing%20Strategy%20April%202014_0.pdf



Wales

Some good progress has also been made in Wales. The Welsh Government currently require all publicly funded housing to be built to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (effectively comparable to the Lifetime Homes Standards) and all social landlords in Wales to improve the homes they provide to the same standard by 2020.³³

The Welsh Government has also made a number of helpful commitments to expanding information about accessible homes in the Framework for Action on Independent Living (FAIL) – including the promotion of local authority accessible housing registers.

These are welcome developments, and ones that are likely to save significant amounts of money in the long term, both in relation to the cost of future adaptations to council homes and to money saved in health and social care costs.

However, this commitment could go further. It is vital that both publicly and privately funded homes are built to be disabled-friendly, and more needs to be done to provide wheelchair accessible housing to those who need it.

We invite the Welsh Government to build on the progress they have made, and extend the Welsh Housing Quality Standard requirements to all homes, while requiring 10% or more to be built to wheelchair accessible standards.



Northern Ireland

The Department of Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) have also made impressive strides towards meeting the need for disabled-friendly homes.

All new homes in Northern Ireland are built to Lifetime Homes Standards, which means that more homes will be easier to adapt if people's needs change as they age or become disabled.

The ongoing ringfencing of the Supporting People fund in Northern Ireland is also an extremely positive way of providing the disabled-friendly homes that people need, particularly those who need help from care workers.

We commend the lead taken by Northern Ireland in this area – and the proactive disabled-friendly housing policies provided by the NIHE. However, we think that more could be done to provide fully wheelchair accessible homes, and recommend the adoption of a target of at least 10% wheelchair accessible homes in all new developments.

What more should be done?

We need to take bolder, quicker action to really face up to the challenge of more and more of us becoming disabled. Pockets of good practice are not enough.

Reforming the Housing Rules

All sorts of policy levers exist to promote the building of affordable housing and community infrastructure. Section 106, the New Homes Bonus, the Community Infrastructure Levy, the Garden Cities project and Help to Buy currently have no obvious link to the promotion of disabled-friendly homes.

Over the next two months, we will be talking to central governments, the housing industry, local government and others to see how these levers could be reformed to help increase the number of disabled-friendly homes and what we at Leonard Cheshire Disability can do to help.

We suggest governments across the UK begin by:

Encouraging the use of section 106 agreements

Across the UK local councils often use section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, and its equivalents³⁴, to agree with developers a minimum number of 'affordable' homes to be built in new developments. We think that these agreements should also be used to require all new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards, and at least 10% to be built to wheelchair accessible standards.

Reforming the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The CIL is a charge applied to new housing in England and Wales. While discounts or exemptions are currently offered for people who build their own homes, or provide social housing, there is no incentive for developers to build disability-friendly housing. Offering a CIL discount for all new homes built to Lifetime Homes Standards, or wheelchair-accessible standards, would encourage developers to build more of these homes that are so desperately needed.

Reforming the New Homes Bonus

In England the New Homes Bonus is money paid to local councils by central Government for building more homes in their area. Currently, an additional payment is made for all 'affordable' homes, and we think this should be extended to homes built to Lifetime Homes Standards, or wheelchair-accessible standards.

Housing (Wales) Bill:

The Welsh Government has the opportunity to ensure the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order is worded so that people who cannot live in their homes as a result of problems with accessibility are considered homeless, and should be appropriately rehoused. They should also ensure the Codes of Practice are written for landlords and agents to require them to make the necessary adaptations to their properties to make homes disabled-friendly.

³³ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-regeneration/publications/whqsrevisedguide/?lang=en>

³⁴ Scotland ('section 75 agreements' in Scotland), Northern Ireland (Article 40 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 in NI)

The garden cities opportunity

We welcome the Westminster Government's commitment to build a new garden city at Ebbsfleet, and several more garden cities thereafter.

As well as addressing overall housing need, these cities provide a perfect opportunity to embed disabled-friendly housing at the heart of new developments across England. They could meet the needs of the hundreds of thousands of people who will need adaptations to their houses as they get older or become disabled in the years to come.

The Government should take this opportunity to set the same targets for disabled-friendly homes as the Mayor of London, delivering 100% of homes built to Lifetime Homes Standards, and 10% built to wheelchair accessible standards, in all garden cities.

Doing so will ensure that Ebbsfleet and future garden cities became models of cost-effective community living – ensuring that people can continue to live in the neighbourhoods they value as they age, or become disabled – as well as allowing people with mobility impairments to fully integrate with their local communities.

Sadly, no political parties have made clear commitments regarding how many wheelchair accessible or Lifetime Homes Standard properties they will build in the next Parliament (2015-2020).

Ensuring accessible social housing registers are in place

An accessible housing register lists which housing association and local authority properties are accessible. This means that people looking for social housing know immediately which properties may be suitable and which definitely aren't. Maintaining this data everywhere would mean adapted properties are matched to people who need them, rather than adaptations being removed when a disabled person moves out.

GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL COUNCILS ARE NOT DOING ENOUGH. THERE IS VERY LITTLE SIGN THAT OUR LEADERS HAVE WOKEN UP TO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE



CONCLUSION

The massive deficit of disabled-friendly or adaptable homes in Great Britain is a national scandal. Our research shows that thousands of disabled people are living in accommodation that simply does not meet their needs.

This means thousands of people who have spent years living in half of their house, stuck downstairs completely unable to access their bedrooms, bathrooms, or even their children's rooms.

It means people ending up stuck in hospital for months on end after an accident, or people living in care homes when that's not their choice.

It means people falling every time they try to go to the toilet – and costing the NHS tens of thousands of pounds, for want of a £1,100 investment when their property was built.

All political parties are looking at ways to increase the supply of housing, but too often disabled people are missing from their vision of the future. Unless new homes are also disabled-friendly homes then millions of people will be forced to live in misery and discomfort for years to come.

To avert this crisis, all political parties should commit to:

- **Building all new homes to Lifetime Homes Standards;**
- **Building 10% of large developments to wheelchair access standards;**
- **Making sure that any new 'garden cities' are beacons of good practice in terms of accessibility and inclusive communities;**
- **Ensuring that all local authorities maintain an Accessible Housing Register to keep track of disabled-friendly and adapted social housing in their area; and**
- **Reforming current housing rules – including section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the New Homes Bonus – to increase the supply of disabled-friendly homes nationwide.**

www.leonardcheshire.org/hometruths



Leonard Cheshire Disability is a registered charity no: 218186 (England and Wales), and no: SC005117 (Scotland) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England no: 552847. VAT no: 899 3223 75. Registered office: 66 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London, SW8 1RL.