

HOUSING LIN POLICY BRIEFING

Independent Living Strategy – delivering on choice and control for disabled people

INTRODUCTION

In 2006 an Independent Living Review was set up to make progress on the Government's commitment that all disabled people (including older disabled people) have the same choice, freedom, dignity and control over their lives as non-disabled people. The Review followed the commitment made by the Government in 2005 to deliver independent living for all disabled people (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, (2005), 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People'). It was given the task of developing a cross-government five year Strategy to deliver independent living. It is jointly owned by the Office for Disability Issues (ODI), the Department of Health, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department for Transport, Department for Work and Pensions, Communities and Local Government, and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

The Independent Living Strategy, published by the ODI in March 2008, sets out the Government's policy commitments, identifying what difference these policies are intended to make, and how this will be measured and monitored. Its aims are:

- Disabled people (including older disabled people) who need support to go about their daily lives will have greater choice and control over how support is provided
- Disabled people (including older disabled people) will have greater access to housing, education, employment, leisure and transport opportunities and to participation in family and community life.

It takes a life course approach; it covers transition to adulthood (from the age of 14) through to very old age.

The Strategy was developed in partnership with disabled people to ensure it reflected people's knowledge and real life experiences of the barriers to independent living. It also seeks for comments and views on the strategy as part of a wider consultation period.

LINKS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Strategy pulls together recent Government initiatives on employment, housing and social care to remove barriers and to improve access to services, and increase choice and control. They include:

- a 31% increase in funding for the disability facilities grant over the next 3 years (a total of £460m); and £33 million to enable an extra 125,000 older people every year to get repairs and adaptations to their home to support them living independently, announced on 25 February by Communities and Local Government as part of the National Housing Strategy for an Ageing Society, *Lifetime Homes Lifetime Neighbourhoods* (2008). See Housing LIN Briefing <http://www.icn.csip.org.uk/housing/index.cfm?pid=522&catalogueContentID=3082>
- An additional £520 million to help Local Authorities transform social care services to deliver personalisation, choice and control, set out in *Putting People First* (2007) and the accompanying Local Authority Circular.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

The Strategy defines what independent living means:

Disabled people (including older disabled people) have challenged the meaning of 'independence'. 'Independent living' does not mean doing things for yourself, or living on your own. Instead, it means:

- *having choice and control over the assistance and/or equipment needed to go about your daily life*
- *having equal access to housing, transport and mobility, health, employment and education and training opportunities.*

Many people with physical and/or sensory impairments, learning disabilities, mental health support needs, long-term health conditions or who experience frailty associated with old age, have additional needs for assistance. Some of these additional needs are the result of disabling barriers, such as the need for a taxi if public transport is inaccessible. Others are integral to having a particular impairment or condition, such as the need for a lightwriter for someone who does not use speech, or assistance with daily living for someone who has dementia.

The strategy recognises that anyone, whatever their level of impairment, can express preferences and choices about how their needs should be met. The aim is that all disabled people, including those with significant learning disabilities or other forms of cognitive impairment (including dementia), are enabled to have choice and control over how their support needs are met.

KEY COMMITMENTS

Promoting independent living

To promote a shared understanding of the principles and practice of independent living the Strategy will:

- develop a programme to build awareness and change attitudes in order to create support for an independent living approach
- develop communication materials for practitioners to effectively explain the case and the ways of promoting it
- use these materials to communicate independent living messages to a wide range of practitioners
- communicate this agenda to disabled people with a particular focus on 'seldom heard' groups, for example, black and minority ethnic (BME) disabled people, older disabled people with high support needs, and young people with autistic spectrum disorder.

Action and Learning Sites and Regional Initiatives

The strategy will strengthen the evidence-basis to inform future policy development and investment, and demonstrate how to use resources to better promote choice and control. There will be two initiatives:

- Action and learning sites to demonstrate the redeployment of resources from professional assessment and care management to user-led support, advocacy and brokerage
- A regional initiative to demonstrate how we can invest in independent living for older disabled people in residential/nursing care or at risk of moving into care.

Housing

There will be action to maximise disabled people's housing opportunities and choices by:

- increasing the provision of housing advice and information
- updating the Lifetime Homes standard, making it an essential element in the Code for Sustainable Homes and making adherence to it mandatory for all public sector funded housing by 2011
- setting a clear target for the construction of all new housing to Lifetime Homes standard by 2013, with a commitment to review progress against this target by 2010
- encouraging the adoption of Accessible Housing Registers and supporting the dissemination of good practice models
- investing in rapid response repairs and adaptations services
- developing a method to enable early identification of individuals who are at risk of health and care crises
- increasing funding for, and improving, the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) system
- continuing to invest in the Supporting People programme which promotes independent living by providing housing related support.

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) will also be producing a toolkit and resource pack for commissioners of housing, care and support to local implementation of the strategy.

Transport and mobility

The Strategy will consolidate progress made in the areas of training, information, and accessibility in public transport and consider action required to enhance the mobility opportunities of people whose needs cannot be met by public transport. This will be achieved by:

- enhancing personal mobility and transport choices for disabled people based on evidence of what works
- promoting the training of transport providers in the needs of disabled people
- developing a strategy to provide information and confidence training for disabled people in using transport
- working with local authorities to ensure accessibility planning is reflected in Local Transport Plans and Local Area Agreements
- improving disabled people's participation in the development and implementation of transport policies.

Health

The Strategy aims to enhance the understanding of health services' contribution to independent living, to enable disabled people to have choice and control over their non-acute healthcare needs, and to enable them to manage their own long-term conditions. It will do this by:

- designing and delivering an education and awareness programme for National Health Service (NHS) staff on increasing choice and control, and on the Disability Equality Duty (DED)
- increasing the take-up of self-management programmes, such as the Expert Patients Programmes, and develop new approaches that work for disabled people
- scoping good practice in enabling people to have choice and control over their continuing health care needs, and publishing good practice guidance.

Employment and economic wellbeing

An aim of the Strategy is to enable individuals to remain in employment when they acquire an impairment or when an existing impairment or condition deteriorates. It will ensure that benefit and charging systems, and recent reforms, do not create unnecessary barriers to independent living. It will:

- act to improve specialist employment support services for disabled people
- develop a cross-government national strategy to enable people to remain in employment when they acquire an impairment or their condition worsens
- increase access to volunteering opportunities for disabled people

- change benefit reclaim processes and, if required, regulations to address disincentives and enable participation in public and civic life
- examine the combined impact of reforms to the benefit system (Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Housing Benefit), employment support programmes, and charging policies within adult social care, to assess their role in promoting disability equality
- consult on amending guidance on charging for residential care, (in line with current guidance on charging for community services), to remove the current disincentive to paid employment. The Department of Health (DH) will be considering this proposal, along with other proposals to amend the Charging for Residential Accommodation Guide (CRAG)
- review how Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) can better support independent living.

Personalisation, choice and control

The Strategy supports the transformation of social care to deliver a system which will focus on timely, preventative and high quality personally tailored services. The aim is for everyone – whether they receive state-funded support or fund support themselves – to have maximum control and power over the support services they receive. The long-term aim will be to ensure that every disabled person in receipt of social care, and/or related funding, has the opportunity to have choice and control over the state funding they receive. It will promote:

- increased personalisation of support through, for example, individual budgets and direct payments
- a strategic shift towards investment in early intervention and preventative approaches through initiatives such as the Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPP)
- the development of user-led organisations
- access to better information, advocacy and support so that people are able to navigate health and social care systems
- the take-up of direct payments.

Support, information, advocacy and brokerage

The strategy recognises that effective support, information, advocacy and brokerage services are key aspects of enabling disabled people to make choices for themselves. It includes a commitment to a universal information, advice and advocacy service for people who need support in their lives. In particular:

- Local organisations should consider the needs of disabled people within their community for support, information, advocacy and brokerage services and should consider co-ordinating their approaches through local strategic partnerships (LSPs)
- It will examine the case for investment in advocacy support in situations where disabled people are particularly at risk of losing choice and control
- the Department of Health (DH) will invest in Action and Learning Sites to deliver the Life Chances commitment that by 2010, each locality will

- have a user-led organisation modelled on existing Centres for Independent Living (CILs)
- The Department of Health (DH) will develop a National Advocacy Qualification for independent advocates.

Older people

The Strategy promotes a co-ordinated, strategic approach to investing in independent living for older disabled people, and seeks to ensure that older disabled people's voices are heard and that they are enabled to participate in the development and delivery of services. Most of the commitments in this Strategy will promote independent living for older disabled people.

Specifically:

- the Office for Disability Issues (ODI), in partnership with other government departments, will develop and publish a cross-government toolkit that provides a 'one stop' information resource on independent living for older people at a national, regional and local level
- the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) will investigate the case for investing in independent living for older disabled people in residential/nursing care or at risk of moving into care.

Young disabled people in transition to adulthood

The Strategy seeks to ensure a seamless transition into adulthood for young disabled people, including those with complex health needs, in all aspects of their life, including between children's and adults' services, as well as housing, transport, employment, education and training.

Disabled parents

The Strategy promotes more joined-up working between health, education and social care to provide timely and flexible support where this is needed by families affected by parental disability. It also encourages policies and services aimed at parents in general to include families affected by parental disability.

The Strategy includes new investment from Government, and is also about using current resources in more effective and empowering ways. The new initiatives in the Strategy involve new investment of up to £3million in 2008 to 2011.

A commitment is written into the strategy to monitor its impact, year-on-year, in partnership with disabled people.

User led organisations (ULOs)

The strategy includes funding for User Led Organisations (ULO's). The ULO's are divided into two categories.

Category One

These are applicants who have £50,000 .They will use the grant to improve their business and organisational skills. It will also help them make links with - and get support from - local authorities and PCTs and other sources.

Category Two

These are applicants with £100,000. They are advanced and well established and will act as mentors to foster the development of organisations in areas where they currently don't exist.

For further information visit:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Socialcarereform/Userledorganisations/index.htm>

Having your say

If you would like to have your say, you are invited as part of a consultation exercise until 20th June 2008. The consultation seeks views on how to involve disabled people in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.

For further information visit:

<http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/working/independentlivingstrategy.asp>

About the Housing LIN

In addition, as part of our Housing LIN Promoting Independent Living programme this year, we will be helping to support implementation of the strategy with housing with care commissioners and providers.

If you would like to receive further briefings from the Housing LIN and/or information on our national/regional events and associated learning tools and resources, please email us at housing@csip.org.uk or write to Housing LIN, CSIP Networks, 304 Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG or visit www.icn.csip.org.uk/housing.

Yvonne Maxwell
On behalf of the Housing LIN at CSIP

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