

Step 3: Understand the local market

Housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability



Introduction

This step will support you to understand the key factors influencing the local housing market, costs and affordability, and how these relate to housing options for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability. Having found out about what the local housing provision is (in [step 2](#)), this step helps to understand why that is, and what are the key issues impacting on the future housing pipeline. These should help any potential developers and landlords to understand how the market operates, how they would fit in that market, and identify opportunities for development.

What this step will add:

- A description of the local market for housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability with an overview of factors driving the local market, affordability, scope for innovation, and opportunities for investment.
- It will start to highlight some of the benefits of investing in the locality based on opportunities offered in the local market. Benefits are further explored in [step 7](#): assess costs and benefits, and [step 10](#): social value of investment.



KEY QUESTIONS

- Has your local authority created a local development plan? What are the plans for developing the local economy that could relate to housing and/or social care? Are there specific plans for housing and/or support for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability?
- What are the key economic drivers that have influenced the local housing market? Have they improved over the years, what are the positives?
 - Consider affordability (rent/purchase price, monthly management fees/service charges), population demographics ([step 1](#)), access to relevant benefits, housing prices, rent levels, access to finance, and key drivers of the local and national economy.
- What is the profile of the market, both social and private? What types of organisations and products are currently available for different housing options, current and future needs, where are the gaps ([step 2](#))? These gaps may then be priorities for development.
- What types of developers are currently operating in the locality? Are there any mechanisms for market management regarding meeting people's needs, lease costs, and making arrangements with local authorities to allocate individuals to available accommodations?



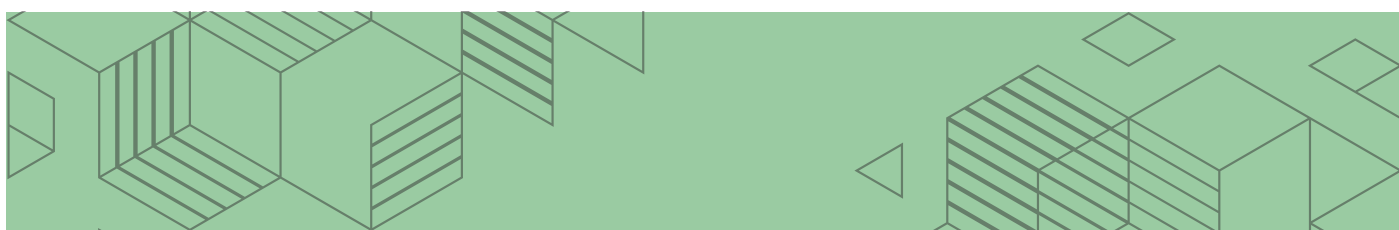
KEY QUESTIONS

- Does the local authority have a policy or offer any risk sharing agreement regarding voids and nomination? Voids are vacant (un-let) housing units. Housing nomination is where the local authority or housing authority puts forward a person or household to be considered for a property owned or managed by a registered provider.
- What is the scope for innovation and 'future proofing' new and existing development so that fewer people need to move out of their home if their health or mobility changes? Consider learning from previous experience and any feedback received.

How to?



- Highlight the advantages and support offered to developers and investors by the local authority and local partners identified in any local development plan, business plan, or housing strategy.
 - Consider support to mitigate risks of market constraints - such as land availability, lack of suitable sites of the right size, and planning policies and practices.
 - Identify key benefits to providers and developers, e.g. longevity of investment, stability of the local market, and value and demand including commissioning cycles.
- Highlight any economic growth measured in the past years. If available, present projections of growth forecasted as well as local authorities' investment plans and economy stimulus strategies relevant to the housing sector.
- Summarise key information on the local economy and housing affordability such as average house price, level of support needed, local income and access to funding, running costs, local affordability ratios, size of the market based on demographics, and income disparity across the local area including comparing rural and urban areas where relevant.
- Map the types of providers present in the area and different forms of operating, including arrangements with local authorities and the NHS. Commissioning frameworks may be a good starting point to identify active providers. Map any forms of market management in place to guide developers' activities and how this could influence the local market. For example, having shared accommodation in excess as opposed to self-contained, high lease costs, and overwhelming local support services with allocation of individuals from neighbouring localities through arrangements between developers and other local authorities.



- Identify the scope and current priorities for housing innovation to better support autistic adults and adults with a learning disability (link this with steps 1 and 4).
 - Consider architecture and design, building materials and efficiency, facilities and functionality, support approaches, and tech enable care approaches.
- Define and provide information on the approach adopted to manage voids and nomination risks.
 - Consider ways to reduce the risks to housing providers, such as commissioners taking the lead on agreements for voids and nomination and by separating housing and care provision.



SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Existing local documents: Strategic housing market assessment, market position statements, housing and social care local strategies.
- Commissioning frameworks – list of current providers.
- Local Government Association – [understanding the local housing markets](#).
- Office for National Statistics – [property price, private rent and household statistics](#).
- Office for National Statistics – [house price statistics for small areas in England and Wales](#).
- Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research – [understanding supply, demand and investment in the market for retirement housing communities in England](#).
- DWP data on recipients of disability benefits in a local authority area.





PARTNERS TO INVOLVE

It is highly likely that no single group or body will hold the range of information needed or will be able to interpret the data that is held. Working across teams and with skilled data analysts will make best use of existing data.

- Local authority staff from commissioning, planning, and regeneration teams
- Strategic housing and social care policy teams
- Allocations/lettings, property services/surveyors
- Accessible housing register teams
- Specialist teams, for example, tenancy support/independent living/outreach and community services
- Housing associations, particularly those with housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability
- NHS, Integrated Care Partnerships and Better Care Fund managers.



CO-PRODUCTION

The 'I' and 'We' statements below are illustrative examples of co-production outcomes associated with this step. We encourage housing partnerships to adapt them as they see fit to best reflect their local context.

For individuals:

- I say what my experience is of getting a home, and what makes that easy or hard.
- I help decide what could make it easier or harder to build more housing in the future.
- I share my experiences of local organisations that provide housing and support for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability.

For the partnership:

- We make information accessible and facilitate individuals' understanding of key local market drivers. We highlight how these factors can influence their lives, particularly their access to different types of housing.
- We have conversations and take on board individuals' views on the most significant factors that impact on their experience of accessing housing, as well as their experiences with local housing organisations.

Further information about the benefits and principles of co-production, as well as examples of co-production in the housing sector can be found [here](#).



EXAMPLE: CORNWALL

Cornwall recently developed its Supported and Specialist Housing Strategy 2023-2050. The strategy presents information on the benefits and opportunities for investing in the locality and provides information on key aspects to help developers and investors to understand key advantages, including:

- Outlining an approach for delivering the strategy highlighting how the council will work closely with a range of providers of supported housing.
- Highlighting plans to involve providers at an early stage in discussions around the reconfiguration or disposal of existing supported accommodation.
- Managing the supported housing and accommodation market to encourage and facilitate a wide range of supported housing options that meet the local need.
- Outlining current nomination rights agreement with registered providers and what can be expected for by new providers.
- A desire to develop a housing pathway which includes a mix of housing and supported accommodation, which offers people different housing choices, from housing options with 24-hour support, seven days a week through to access to mainstream housing with packages of care/support tailored to individuals' needs.
- The alignment of the strategy with the local health and wellbeing strategy, business plan, market position statement, housing strategy, and other relevant strategies.
- Ensuring that the Council has the necessary governance and decision-making structures in place to facilitate a unified, coordinated and holistic approach to commissioning, funding and reviewing supported housing, to ensure all residents can "[s]tart well, live well and age well".

The strategy presents a summary of market opportunities based on evidence of needs and provision. The opportunities are presented in relation to cohorts of peoples and needs, highlighting the emphasis on preventative approaches. The market opportunities presented include:

- An assumption that mainstream housing suitably designed and/or adapted will be appropriate for many people with support and/or care needs.
- Inter-generational living as a key part of housing options offered.
- Options of multi-functional schemes mixing mainstream housing, supported housing, and other facilities.
- A focus on assisting and facilitating the inclusion of people in the community.
- Use of home adaptations, digital technology, and support services to support and promote independence.

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Toolkit available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/housing/toolkit-for-place-based-strategies-for-housing-for-autistic-adults-and-adults-with-a-learning-disability/>

