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Strengthening supported housing strategy development

Learning from the Housing Toolkit Pilot





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Executive summary

What changed in practice

This report presents learning from the pilot of **SCIE's Toolkit for place-based strategies for housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability**, undertaken with Norfolk and Cumberland councils during 2025/2026. The pilot explored how elements of the toolkit could support local authorities developing supported housing strategies in practice. It focused primarily on two steps: Step 1 – understanding demand in the local area, and Step 4 – identifying preferences and needs through structured co-production. These steps were prioritised because they sit at the core of strategy credibility and were also identified by participating authorities as key areas where additional structure and support would help inform the development of their strategies. Drawing on interviews with staff involved in the work in both authorities, the report summarises key insights about applying structured demand modelling, co-production and partnership working within live strategy development processes.

In Norfolk, the toolkit strengthened the way demographic evidence was translated into projected housing need. Working with the authority's Information and Analysis team, SCIE supported the development of a projection calculator that combined national benchmarks with local data to estimate future demand across different types of supported housing provision.

This work helped move discussions beyond broad prevalence estimates towards clearer projections that could inform development planning and commissioning conversations. Making modelling assumptions explicit also strengthened confidence in the numbers and improved their defensibility when discussed with senior leaders.

In both Norfolk and Cumberland, the toolkit strengthened the alignment between engagement activity and strategic questions. Structured co-production ensured that conversations about housing, independence, safety and support generated evidence that could directly inform strategy development.

Norfolk combined a co-produced survey with follow-up one-to-one conversations, generating both quantitative patterns and qualitative insight. In Cumberland, the creation of a co-production steering group and structured engagement sessions helped establish a consistent framework for gathering views across cohorts.

The pilot also highlighted the importance of organisational context. In Cumberland, the integration of housing and adult social care within a single directorate supported closer alignment between engagement findings and commissioning discussions. In Norfolk, strong cross-team collaboration and leadership backing enabled modelling and engagement work to be undertaken with depth and consistency.

Across both authorities, the partnership model—where SCIE provided structured guidance, analytical tools and reflective challenge while local teams retained ownership—strengthened both the process of developing strategies and internal capability.

Key learning for the sector

Several consistent lessons emerged from the pilot that are relevant to other authorities developing supported housing strategies.

First, transparent demand modelling strengthens strategy credibility. Moving from general prevalence data to explicit projections helps connect evidence to planning decisions and makes assumptions easier to test and explain.

Second, co-production is most effective when it is structured around strategic questions. Engagement that is clearly linked to strategy development produces insight that can shape priorities rather than simply collecting views.

Third, organisational alignment matters. Close collaboration between housing, adult social care and analytical teams helps ensure that evidence, engagement and delivery planning inform one another.

Fourth, leadership backing and protected capacity are critical. Demand modelling and meaningful engagement require time and attention if they are to generate robust evidence.

Finally, the pilot demonstrates the value of national-local partnership models where external organisations provide structure, analytical support and constructive challenge while maintaining local ownership of decisions.

Overall learning

The experience of Norfolk and Cumberland suggests that supported housing strategy development is strengthened when three elements are brought together: clear analytical evidence, structured lived experience input and early consideration of delivery.

The Housing Toolkit provides a practical framework for aligning these elements. When applied thoughtfully and supported through collaborative working, it can help local authorities organise complex strategy development processes and build lasting capability within local teams. This approach also aligns with recent government guidance on [local supported housing strategies](#), which encourages local authorities to develop clear, evidence-based plans for supported housing provision. The toolkit offers a structured methodology that authorities can use to support this work in practice.

Introduction

SCIE's [Toolkit for place-based strategies for housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability](#) published in April 2025, was developed to support local authorities to design and deliver place-based supported housing strategies for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability. This focus reflects the particular policy, commissioning and housing challenges experienced by these groups, including the need for appropriate housing pathways, meaningful choice and alignment between housing and support provision.

The toolkit sets out 10 structured steps intended to guide authorities from understanding demand through to implementation and governance. It was designed to strengthen methodological clarity, ensure co-production is embedded throughout and support alignment between housing and adult social care. At its core, the toolkit provides a clear sequence and framework that helps local areas move from evidence to priorities and from priorities to delivery.

While the toolkit was co-produced with autistic adults and adults with a learning disability, its underlying approach is intentionally flexible. The structured sequencing, emphasis on transparent demand modelling and systematic co-production can be adapted to other cohorts requiring supported housing strategies. In a policy context where local authorities are increasingly expected to develop clear, evidence-based supported housing strategies across multiple groups, this flexibility is particularly important. The pilot therefore provided an opportunity not only to test the toolkit within its original cohort focus, but also to explore how its structured methodology can support broader supported housing strategy development.

Piloting the toolkit in live strategy development

During 2025/2026, SCIE worked in partnership with Norfolk and Cumberland councils to pilot elements of the toolkit within live supported housing strategy development processes. The areas of focus were identified jointly with the participating authorities and reflected priorities they had identified for the development of their strategies. The pilot therefore focused primarily on two foundational steps:

- Step 1: Understanding demand in your local area
- Step 4: Identifying preferences and needs through structured co-production.

These steps were selected because they sit at the core of strategy credibility. Robust demand modelling underpins commissioning and development decisions, while meaningful co-production strengthens legitimacy and alignment with lived experience. They were also areas of strong interest among authorities that expressed interest in the pilot during recruitment, particularly around translating demand into projected housing need and structuring co-production to inform strategy development.

Importantly, both Norfolk and Cumberland were actively developing their strategies prior to the pilot. The toolkit was not introduced into a vacuum. Instead, it was applied to strengthen clarity, consistency and coherence within ongoing processes, helping to organise and sharpen work that was already underway.

However, the learning extends beyond those individual steps. It provides insight into how structured approaches strengthens strategy development, how national-local partnership builds confidence and capability, and how cross-directorate leadership within local authorities is often necessary to bring together housing, adult social care and analytical functions around a shared strategy process. It also highlights what helps supported housing strategies move from descriptive documents to plans that can be delivered. As one local authority colleague reflected during the pilot, the toolkit “gave us a way of structuring what we were already trying to do — but in a more structured and consistent way”.

How this report was developed

This report draws on qualitative interviews conducted with staff involved in the strategy development process in both Norfolk and Cumberland. Conversations were held with local authority colleagues from housing, commissioning, adult social care and information and analysis functions who were directly involved in applying the toolkit in practice.

The discussions explored:

- how the toolkit steps were applied in practice
- what changed as a result of the structured approach
- how SCIE’s support influenced thinking and progress
- where challenges were encountered
- what learning could be shared with other authorities.

The report therefore synthesises learning from local teams who experienced the toolkit through live implementation. It is not a formal evaluation of outcomes, but a practice-based reflection on how structured approaches, reflective partnership and clear structure influence strategy development in real organisational contexts.

Quotations included throughout the report are drawn from these conversations with local authority colleagues and illustrate key themes emerging from the pilot.

The two pilot areas

Norfolk: strengthening evidence to inform strategy development

Norfolk entered the pilot with an established programme of work on housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability. The authority had already undertaken significant data analysis and engagement to inform its supported housing strategy. However, colleagues identified a need to strengthen the way existing evidence translated into projected housing need and to deepen understanding of people's housing preferences.

The pilot therefore focused on two areas: demand modelling and structured co-production. Working with Norfolk's Information and Analysis team, SCIE supported the development of a projection calculator that combined national and local evidence to estimate future housing demand across different provision types. This collaborative work helped make assumptions explicit and strengthened confidence in the projections.

Alongside this analytical work, Norfolk undertook a co-produced survey with autistic adults and adults with a learning disability, complemented by one-to-one conversations designed to explore emerging themes in greater depth. SCIE provided support in designing the engagement approach, shaping questions and reviewing emerging findings.

The work was led collaboratively across housing, commissioning and analytical teams within the council. The pilot strengthened the connection between evidence, engagement and strategic planning, helping ensure that the strategy development process was grounded in both data and lived experience.

Cumberland: embedding co-production within strategy development

Cumberland participated in the pilot during a period of organisational transition following local government reorganisation. Within the new authority structure, housing and adult social care were located within a single directorate, creating opportunities to develop a more integrated approach to supported housing strategy development.

The authority's focus within the pilot was on strengthening structured co-production. Cumberland established a co-production steering group bringing together practice leads across different cohorts and service areas. Engagement activities were designed to gather insight from people with lived experience, as well as from professionals working across housing, social care and provider organisations.

SCIE supported the design of engagement approaches, session structures and reporting templates, helping ensure that discussions focused on strategic questions and that insights could be synthesised consistently across different cohorts.

The pilot helped establish a structured framework for engagement within the strategy development process and supported coordination across service areas within the newly formed authority.

Key learning from the pilot

Piloting the Housing Toolkit in Norfolk and Cumberland generated practical learning that goes beyond the two areas involved. Although each authority worked in a different context, clear themes emerged about what helps supported housing strategies work in practice. The sections below set out that learning.

1. Why structure matters

From narrative strategy to clear logic

A common theme across both authorities was that strategy development can easily become descriptive rather than directional. Authorities often hold strong data and strong engagement relationships, but without structured sequencing it can be difficult to demonstrate how evidence translates into priority and action.

The toolkit acted as methodological scaffolding. It clarified the sequence of thinking and required explicit articulation of logic. One interviewee highlighted:

“I think what I found most helpful, firstly, is the structure of the toolkit to get us going, because I think sometimes that's the problem, like where's your starting point and having a toolkit to guide you through that is really helpful.”

This structure reduced drift, strengthened coherence between different workstreams and helped enable engagement from colleagues across the local authority who were involved in housing strategy development.

2. Step 1 in practice: strengthening demand projection in Norfolk

Translating prevalence into projected housing need

Norfolk entered the pilot with detailed demographic data and a strong history of supported housing development. However, colleagues highlighted that prevalence data alone did not automatically translate into clear housing projections. While the authority had a broad understanding of population trends, there was less clarity about what those trends meant in terms of projected housing units over time and across different types of supported provision.

As one Norfolk colleague put it:

“We knew broadly what the numbers looked like, but not necessarily what that meant in units over the next five or ten years.”

The toolkit's emphasis on moving from prevalence to projected demand required explicit articulation of assumptions linking demographic data to housing units. Rather than presenting static figures, the process required the team to define how evidence translated into projected need.

As part of this pilot, a projection calculator was developed combining national and local evidence to support the projection of housing needs across different types of supported housing provision over future years. The calculator drew on national prevalence data and benchmarking evidence alongside local cohort data and intelligence. It allowed projections to

be modelled across service types—for example, shared supported living, self-contained units and other supported arrangements—and across the years.

Crucially, the calculator was developed in partnership with Norfolk’s Information and Analysis team. It was not produced externally and handed over; it was co-developed, tested and refined collaboratively. This strengthened both confidence in the outputs and ownership of the methodology.

The result was not a single fixed figure, but a clearer and more transparent logic chain from demographic evidence to projected housing need. Colleagues described this as shifting the conversation from “broad estimates” to something that could inform commissioning and development planning with greater confidence.

Importantly, the projection calculator was designed in a way that can be adapted and replicated in other localities and similar strategic contexts. The structured approach—combining national benchmarks with local data and making assumptions explicit—provides a model that other authorities can apply when developing their own supported housing strategies.

Making assumptions visible

A particularly important shift described in interviews was the visibility of assumptions. Previously, modelling had contained elements of professional judgement that were not always articulated. The toolkit process required those assumptions to be surfaced and discussed.

One interviewee reflected:

“Traditionally, prevalence modelling based purely on background population data doesn’t always tell you very much about what you actually need to commission. What this work has done is start to connect that modelling with what we know locally about people and services. For once, prevalence modelling based purely on background population data actually has some value.”

The comment captured a sense that modelling had moved beyond broad estimation to something that could meaningfully inform decision-making.

Another colleague noted that the process “made it easier to defend the numbers,” particularly when presenting to senior leaders.

The modelling did not eliminate uncertainty. Instead, it clarified where uncertainty lay and what confidence levels could reasonably be attached to projections. That distinction strengthened credibility.

Analytical collaboration strengthening local capability

Several colleagues highlighted the strengthened relationship between housing leads and the Information and Analysis function. Rather than modelling being commissioned externally and handed over, the projection work was developed collaboratively. Analysts, housing colleagues and SCIE worked through assumptions together, testing how national evidence and local data translated into projected housing need.

This collaborative approach increased both ownership and confidence in the projections. By developing the modelling logic together, local teams were able to understand and challenge the assumptions underpinning the projections. The process also supported knowledge

translation between national evidence and local data, strengthening analytical capacity within the authority. As a result, the modelling framework is now embedded locally, representing lasting capability rather than one-off technical support.

Linking projections to delivery

The modelling directly influenced development conversations. Instead of referring generally to “increasing demand,” teams could reference projected ranges over defined timeframes.

One interviewee described this shift as:

“It turned it from a narrative about need into something we could actually plan against.”

The learning for the sector is clear: Step 1 is not about producing numbers for inclusion in a document. It is about strengthening the link between evidence and delivery.

3. Step 4 in practice: structured co-production

Aligning co-production activities to strategic questions

Both Norfolk and Cumberland were already committed to co-production. What the toolkit introduced was stronger alignment between co-production activities and specific strategic questions. With support from SCIE, local teams designed engagement approaches that combined surveys, one-to-one conversations, facilitated sessions and professional consultations to gather evidence from people with lived experience and those supporting them.

Activities focused on issues central to supported housing planning, including safety, independence, living arrangements, support and choice. This thematic structure helped ensure that discussions remained focused on strategic priorities rather than becoming general conversations about housing.

As a result, engagement findings could be synthesised more clearly and connected directly to strategy development.

Cumberland: co-production in a context of change

Cumberland undertook engagement within the context of a recently completed local government reorganisation. Integration of housing and adult social care within a single directorate created enabling conditions, but cultural alignment was still developing.

The structured toolkit framework provided stability and clarity during this period. As one colleague described:

“Working with yourselves really helped us to... validate the approach that we wanted to take.”

Engagement was delivered flexibly across cohorts, but thematic consistency allowed coherent analysis. The process not only gathered lived experience input but also supported internal alignment within the new authority.

Challenging professional assumptions

Across both sites, structured engagement prompted reflection on professional assumptions. Participants did not always prioritise progression towards greater independence in the way service models sometimes assume.

As one colleague reflected:

“It really does add the level of value... it should create... a really authentic strategy that does represent the views of people that experience across the different range of cohorts.”

In some cases, what professionals initially interpreted as housing issues were more closely linked to support practice and relational stability. These insights helped shape how priorities were framed and reinforced the need for diverse housing options.

Co-production as a core evidence source

Across both Norfolk and Cumberland, Step 4 went beyond consultation. It combined structured dialogue with deliberate evidence gathering, ensuring that lived experience informed strategic thinking in a practical way.

In Norfolk, this included the co-design and delivery of a survey alongside one-to-one conversations and the design of a wider engagement programme. The survey was co-produced, with input on language, accessibility and question framing to ensure that it generated meaningful data rather than superficial responses. Colleagues reflected positively on being able to shape the questions around known evidence gaps, while also drawing on expertise around accessible language and lived experience challenge. The result was a dataset that combined quantitative patterns with qualitative insight.

The inclusion of follow-up one-to-one conversations—delivered by local teams—allowed for deeper exploration of themes that emerged through the survey. This was aimed at strengthening understanding beyond headline findings and helped ensure that the strategy reflected nuance rather than aggregated themes alone.

In Cumberland, the establishment of a co-production steering group brought together practice leads across cohorts and created a consistent framework for engagement. Structured session plans, note-taking templates and thematic grouping are helping to ensure that discussions were purposeful and aligned to emerging priorities. Professional consultations with social work teams, providers and advocacy groups were also integrated into the process, widening the evidence base beyond a single source.

What distinguished Step 4 in practice was the combination of structure and flexibility. Engagement was organised around clear questions and priorities, but local leads were able to adapt methods to suit their cohorts. This balance reduced the risk of engagement becoming either overly rigid or overly open-ended.

For the wider sector, the learning is that effective co-production benefits from both design and structure. Surveys, facilitated discussions, one-to-one conversations and professional insight can complement one another when they are connected through a shared framework. When co-production is treated as a core evidence stream rather than a parallel exercise, it strengthens both legitimacy and strategic clarity. The experience from the pilot reinforces the rationale for embedding co-production as a central element of the toolkit and confirms the importance of maintaining this structured approach within supported housing strategy development.

4. Organisational alignment and leadership

Integration supporting coherence in Cumberland

The integration of housing and adult social care within a single directorate was repeatedly described as an enabling condition. The development of the supported housing strategy brought together cohort leads and practice leads from across service areas, creating a shared forum for discussion and alignment.

This organisational configuration reduced fragmentation and made it easier to connect engagement findings to commissioning conversations. The consistent reporting approach and shared session materials further supported coherence across cohorts.

While not all local authorities will have housing and adult social care located within the same directorate, the pilot highlighted the importance of creating structured opportunities for collaboration across these functions. In Cumberland, integration supported this alignment, but the structured approach provided by the toolkit also helped bring together colleagues from different service areas around a shared strategy development process.

At the same time, local government reorganisation inevitably introduced complexity. The strategy process itself became a mechanism for bringing together different perspectives within the new authority structure. Rather than assuming alignment, the work required deliberate coordination, and the structured approach helped provide that anchor.

Clear roles and visible leadership backing

Norfolk colleagues emphasised the clarity of roles within the housing and commissioning team. Complementary skillsets and established working relationships meant that modelling, mapping and engagement activity could progress in parallel while maintaining coherence. There was a shared understanding of responsibilities and a clear route back to collective decision-making points.

Leadership support was reflected in the protection of time for engagement and analytical work. Colleagues described having explicit permission to pause, reflect and think through the implications of emerging findings rather than rushing to produce a document. This space allowed engagement design and data interpretation to be treated as substantive strategic tasks rather than additional administrative steps.

In Cumberland, leadership commitment was similarly demonstrated through a willingness to adjust timelines in order to prioritise meaningful co-production and structured analysis. Across both authorities, the strategy work was treated as a core priority, with senior backing creating the conditions for it to be undertaken with depth and seriousness.

5. The role of SCIE: structured support and reflective challenge

Providing structure without taking control

Across both authorities, SCIE's role was described as enabling rather than directive. The value lay not simply in the toolkit itself, but in the way SCIE worked alongside local teams—adapting materials, co-developing outputs and refining approaches in partnership.

As one Cumberland colleague reflected:

“It helped us kind of frame, very much frame the approach and the thinking and how we should tackle the strategy.”

This framing function was significant. In complex strategy development, particularly across multiple cohorts and service areas, there is a risk that activity becomes fragmented or reactive. Through regular discussion, tailored session materials and shared review of drafts, SCIE’s support helped introduce sequencing and methodological clarity without prescribing local conclusions.

Importantly, local priorities, timelines and governance arrangements remained firmly within each authority’s control. The external input strengthened coherence and confidence, but ownership of the strategy process stayed with local leaders. That balance—structured support without substitution—was central to the partnership working effectively.

Specialist expertise and additional capacity

Alongside providing structure and reflective challenge, SCIE’s involvement also brought additional capacity and specialist expertise to support the work. Developing supported housing strategies requires time for modelling, engagement and coordination across service areas, which can be difficult to prioritise alongside operational pressures.

SCIE’s support helped sustain momentum by contributing analytical input, engagement design and experience of co-production approaches. This combination of external expertise and practical support helped strengthen the quality and credibility of the work while supporting local teams to move the strategy process forward.

Collaborative review and refinement

Regular touchpoints between SCIE and local teams created space to test reasoning, revisit assumptions and refine outputs before they were finalised. Rather than working in isolation and presenting finished products at the end, the approach involved iterative discussion and shared scrutiny.

One Norfolk colleague reflected on the balance within the partnership, noting that SCIE’s input did not create additional burden but instead supported progress:

“Sometimes these relationships cause the local authority more work, not less... But this has actually been the opposite.”

This balance mattered. The external perspective strengthened the clarity and robustness of the work without displacing local ownership. Assumptions could be explored, interpretations discussed and methodological choices adjusted in real time.

Across both authorities, this collaborative review process increased confidence in the outputs and reduced the risk of embedding unchecked assumptions into the strategy. The value lay not in external direction, but in structured refinement that improved quality while keeping accountability with the local authority.

Credibility and confidence

Working alongside SCIE strengthened confidence in the approach and added legitimacy when presenting the work internally. The partnership was seen as increasing the robustness and authenticity of the strategy rather than simply adding external endorsement.

As one Cumberland colleague reflected:

“I’m going to be using that collaboration (...) in all my presentations. (...) that gives a level of validation in terms of the approach.”

This sense of added value was important when engaging executive members and scrutiny functions. The credibility came not from branding, but from the structured methodology and visible commitment to co-production. The partnership reinforced that the strategy had been developed through a robust and thoughtful process.

Implications for the sector

Analytical rigour as a foundation for credibility

The pilot shows that transparent demand modelling is not a technical extra—it is central to strategy credibility. In Norfolk, moving from broad prevalence figures to clearer projected unit ranges improved the quality of internal conversations. Making assumptions explicit did not undermine confidence; it strengthened it by clarifying the logic behind projections and making uncertainty easier to manage.

For other authorities, the implication is clear. Modelling needs to move beyond describing demographic trends and set out how those trends translate into housing units over time. That means stating assumptions, testing scenarios and working closely across commissioning and analysis teams. The toolkit supports this by encouraging authorities to explain their logic rather than simply present headline figures.

In a context where supported housing plans are subject to financial and political scrutiny, transparent modelling becomes a source of credibility. Clear reasoning strengthens the ability to justify investment and respond to challenge.

Structured co-production as strategic input

The experience in Norfolk and Cumberland demonstrates that co-production is most effective when it is directly linked to strategic questions. Engagement that is structured and purposeful does more than gather feedback—it influences thinking.

In both areas, structured engagement prompted reflection on assumptions about independence, progression and housing pathways. Priorities were not always aligned with professional expectations. That shift in perspective helped refine how issues were framed and reinforced the need for diverse provision.

For the wider sector, the message is that co-production should sit within the core of strategy development rather than alongside it. The toolkit supports this by connecting engagement themes directly to planning decisions. When people can see how their input influences direction, legitimacy and trust increase.

Organisational alignment supporting delivery

The pilot also highlighted how organisational context shapes effectiveness. In Cumberland, bringing housing and adult social care together within one directorate reduced fragmentation and supported clearer links between engagement and commissioning. In Norfolk, strong cross-team relationships and clear roles enabled steady progress.

Supported housing strategies cannot be developed in isolation from organisational structures. Where housing and adult social care operate separately, coherence becomes harder to achieve. Integration is not the only answer, but deliberate alignment and shared accountability are essential.

The toolkit cannot create alignment on its own, but it provides a shared framework that helps teams work to a common structure and sequence.

Leadership commitment and protected capacity

Across both authorities, the depth of the work depended on leadership backing and protected time. Demand modelling and structured engagement require sustained focus. They cannot be delivered effectively as residual tasks.

This highlights a wider tension for the sector. Expectations around supported housing strategies are rising, while capacity remains constrained. Structure alone is not enough—quality depends on the time and attention given to each stage.

Leadership commitment does more than enable progress; it determines how thorough the work can be.

Thinking about implementation early

An important learning point from the pilot was the value of considering implementation and governance during drafting rather than after publication. Early discussion of accountability, oversight and delivery strengthened clarity about ownership.

Strategies are more likely to shape outcomes when they are designed with implementation in mind. Governance and delivery pathways should be built in from the outset. The toolkit's structure encourages authorities to think ahead rather than treat strategy as a standalone document.

National–local partnership strengthening capability

The pilot also provides insight into how national support can strengthen local capability without replacing it. Across both authorities, SCIE's role was described as structured and enabling rather than directive. The toolkit provided a framework; regular discussion supported reflection; decisions remained local.

For other authorities, this suggests that improvement models based on collaboration and constructive challenge can enhance quality while building internal capability. The longer-term impact lies not only in stronger strategies, but in strengthened approaches to modelling and engagement.

Bringing evidence, lived experience and delivery together

Overall, the learning from Norfolk and Cumberland suggests that supported housing strategy development is strengthened when three elements are brought together: clear evidence, structured lived experience input and consideration of delivery from the outset.

Where modelling is transparent, engagement is purposeful and organisational alignment supports implementation thinking, the strategy development process becomes more focused and grounded in practical realities.

The toolkit offers a structured way to bring these elements together. The pilot indicates that, when applied thoughtfully and supported through partnership, it can strengthen both the process of developing strategies and the confidence of the teams undertaking this work.

Conclusion

The piloting of SCIE's Housing Toolkit in Norfolk and Cumberland demonstrates that structured methodology, reflective partnership and meaningful co-production can materially strengthen supported housing strategy development. The toolkit did not replace local expertise; it organised and sharpened it. By clarifying assumptions, aligning engagement to strategy and encouraging early implementation thinking, the process increased both confidence and coherence.

In Norfolk, strengthened demand modelling provided a clearer foundation for development planning and commissioning discussions. In Cumberland, structured engagement supported strategic alignment during a period of organisational transition. In both authorities, the process strengthened internal capability and embedded approaches that will continue to shape future work.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the pilot is that its impact extends beyond the strategy documents themselves. Modelling frameworks, structured engagement approaches and cross-directorate collaboration are now embedded locally. The process also supported capacity building and knowledge transfer within local teams, strengthening confidence in demand modelling and co-production approaches. Engagement activity helped build leadership awareness and community input into emerging supported housing strategies. The toolkit acted not simply as a guide to producing a strategy, but as a mechanism for strengthening how strategies are developed.

For the wider sector, the learning is clear. High-quality supported housing strategies require analytical rigour, meaningful co-production and organisational alignment. These elements do not emerge automatically; they require structure, clarity and leadership. The toolkit provides a practical framework for achieving that alignment. The pilot also confirmed its utility in supporting strategy development and demonstrated how the approach can be adapted to different local circumstances.

As one interviewee reflected during the pilot, "It's not that we couldn't have done it — but we wouldn't have done it this well". That reflection captures the central learning of this work: structured support does not substitute for local ownership; it strengthens it.



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