



REBUILDING LIVES

Resident and Provider
Perspectives on Getting the
Supported Housing Act Right





About Emmaus in the UK

Emmaus is a nationwide movement of local charities that empowers people to overcome homelessness.

We provide the foundation of a home and a life-changing package of tailored support. We're here for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, supporting more than 1,000 people every year. We see the person and their strengths – and help them get their life back on track, based on the future they want to create.

We equip people with valuable skills, training and work experience to achieve their goals. No one's life should be defined by homelessness. In our caring communities, we build on each individual's abilities, increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

The people we support have a purpose and a chance to make a real contribution to their community. Our charity shops, cafes and food growing projects give people opportunities for work experience and social interaction.

Across the UK, Emmaus communities and social enterprises are a vital part of their local areas. Our charity shops are a place to find affordable furniture, household items, clothing, toys and more. We give new life to preloved items – reducing waste and promoting reuse. Emmaus UK is the nationwide homelessness charity that supports and connects local Emmaus charities. In everything we do, we bring people together, amplifying their voices and experiences to prevent homelessness for good.

We are also part of the global Emmaus movement for social change – operating in more than 40 countries across the world. Working together, and with your support, we're ending homelessness one person at a time.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express deep thanks to Lloyds Bank Foundation for providing funding to Emmaus UK, without which this project would not have been possible.



Working collaboratively with other organisations funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation has enabled us to learn from others and to explore how we can most effectively amplify the voices of those with lived experience in policymaking. We would also like to thank Mrs Mabel Oh for her generous legacy donation which supports Emmaus UK's research and evaluation work, including to contribute to this project.

We would also like to thank the participants who gave their time to take part in the research. This includes residents and staff in Emmaus supported housing, as well as those in several other small supported housing services. These include Tonic Housing, Arc, Handcrafted, The Grange Centre, Solo Housing, BHT Sussex, The Connection at St Martin's, and the Cardinal Hume Centre.

We are grateful to all the research participants for sharing so openly with us their experiences and opinions, which have shaped the findings and recommendations in this report.

Our research was co-delivered with five Emmaus resident peer researchers whose lived experience was central to the work and our aim of influencing implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act.

**We thank our volunteers
Peter Swords, Rosemary
Blazekovic, David McCarrick,
Emma Hall, and John Jarrett
for shaping and bringing
the research to life.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5-14**FULL RECOMMENDATIONS**

For national government 15-17

For local authorities 18-19

INTRODUCTION 20-21**BACKGROUND** 22-27**METHODOLOGY** 28-30**BUILDING ON THE NATIONAL STANDARDS**

Strengths of the government's standards 31-37

Strengthening the national standards 38-44

CREATING FAIR LICENSING AND HOUSING BENEFIT POLICY

Reducing the administrative and financial burden on providers 47

Ensuring consistency and clarity across the country 48

Avoiding cost-cutting decisions on licensing 48

Reducing the risk of homelessness 49

Embedding lived experience 50

GETTING THE WIDER POLICY CONTEXT RIGHT

Funding the supported housing sector properly 52-53

Expanding affordable housing options 54-55

Ensuring holistic support for supported housing residents 56-57

CONCLUSION 58



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 presents a rare and important opportunity to reset the supported housing system in England.

It has cross-party support, clear public backing, and a strong policy objective: to drive out rogue provision, raise standards, and ensure public funding delivers safe housing and meaningful support for people with a wide range of support needs.

The Act aims to achieve this through new national standards and a licensing regime for supported housing.

Implemented well, the Act offers a genuine chance to overhaul a supported housing sector that has long been under strain – driving out poor practice, restoring confidence in the system, and ensuring that supported housing plays a decisive role in preventing and ending homelessness. At a time when rough sleeping is at record levels and thousands of people are trapped in temporary accommodation, this role has never been more important.

However, without proportionate implementation and adequate resourcing, there is a real risk that the Act could destabilise high-quality provision, reduce the amount of support available, and push more people into the devastation of homelessness.

Drawing on Emmaus UK's expertise in supported housing provision, peer-led research with residents and staff, and engagement with supported housing providers and a wide range of housing and homelessness organisations, this report centres lived experience in shaping practical, deliverable recommendations for national and local government.

While much of the report focuses on the supported housing sector as a whole, our own role as a provider of supported accommodation for people who have experienced homelessness means there are some research insights and recommendations focused on homelessness specifically.

The central message of the report is clear. The Act's success will depend not only on regulation, but on how it is funded, administered and aligned with wider housing and homelessness policy.

This report sets out how that opportunity can be realised – and what risks must be mitigated to ensure it is.

1

Strengthen the National Supported Housing Standards and Principles to reflect what drives quality

There is strong support from residents and providers for the government's proposed national standards, particularly in relation to person-centred support, empowerment and collaboration with external services. These principles provide a credible foundation for reform.

Our research has, however, identified critical gaps that must be addressed in government guidance to ensure the standards reflect the essential elements of high-quality supported accommodation, as identified by residents.

A sense of purpose and meaningful activity



The big one for me was that the residents have a purpose. In other shelters I've been to, they're just shelters... The thing that makes this community really good, mentally, is the work side of things.

- Emmaus resident

Key Findings

Residents consistently linked structured activity, including learning, training and work experience, to improved mental health, reduced substance misuse, greater stability and successful move-on.

Recommendation

The current draft standards should more explicitly recognise purposeful activity as a core driver of recovery and independence. There needs to be government guidance clarifying how this can be delivered in practice and resources to help providers achieve this.

Community and social connection



It's a huge part of Emmaus, you're never lonely. Even if you're by yourself, you're not alone.

- Emmaus resident

Key Findings

Residents described community and peer support as protective factors against isolation and relapse. For many, supported accommodation is not simply a housing intervention, but a space of belonging and reintegration following homelessness.

Recommendation

The standards currently understate the importance of a sense of community and social connection. The guidance should expand the definition of 'support' to include community-building and social connection as features of quality provision.

Security and stability in accommodation

There're some places where you move in [and] you're at a two-year maximum. So, you're fighting against the system straightaway to get jobs, get this, get that within two years, and then you're out. What if you're not sorted [by then]?

- Emmaus resident

Key Findings

Residents emphasised that recovery requires time and stability. In some areas, the two-year intended duration for transitional accommodation is being interpreted as a fixed limit, undermining person-centred delivery and increasing repeat homelessness.

Recommendation

Rigid enforcement risks unintended outcomes, including cycling individuals back into homelessness and crisis services. Guidance should clarify nationally that two years is an intention, not a limit. Local flexibility should allow longer stays where appropriate for person-centred support or where there is no affordable move-on housing available.



Getting 'local need' right

“People coming out of recovery, for example, coming out of detox or rehab, you know it’s not beneficial for them to go back to where they have a local connection.”

-Staff member at a charity supporting people experiencing homelessness

Key Findings

The 'local need' requirement has the potential to support evidence-based planning. Without clear national parameters, however, it risks restrictive application through rigid local connection criteria.

Recommendation

To meet specific individual need or where specialist provision (eg LGBTQ+, disability-focused services) is not available in every area, local connection tests must not block access to support. Guidance on the Act should include pragmatic explanation of local connection.

2**Design a licensing regime that protects quality without reducing supply****Key Findings**

Linking licensing to compliance with national standards is appropriate and widely supported; however, implementation risks must be carefully managed. Supported housing providers, particularly smaller and non-commissioned organisations that do not receive public funding, are operating under severe financial strain. The additional administrative and staffing requirements associated with evidencing compliance put additional strain on sector capacity.

In a context where one in three supported housing providers reported housing site or scheme closures last year due to funding pressures, regulatory design cannot be divorced from funding reality. Without transitional support, providers may be forced to divert resources away from frontline support to meet compliance demands, undermining the very standards the Act seeks to strengthen.

Key recommendations

- Provide transition funding for supported housing providers, alongside the additional funding already being given to local authorities.
- Avoid duplicating regulatory requirements for providers already regulated by bodies including the Regulator of Social Housing and Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Ensure providers have access to government workforce development programmes to help meet the Act's staffing requirements.
- Provide proportionate improvement timeframes before licence refusal.
- Ensure clear implementation timelines, particularly for housing schemes involving complex landlord or managing agent arrangements.

3**Ensuring national consistency****Key Findings**

Although the supported housing standards are national, licensing will be locally administered. Without stronger national frameworks, there is a significant risk of inconsistency.

Providers have raised concerns about:

- discretionary licence conditions;
- variable licence fee levels;
- differing approaches and methodologies for local needs assessments;
- unclear appeals processes;
- inconsistent definitions of 'scheme', particularly for dispersed models.

Fragmentation would increase administrative burden, reduce confidence in the licensing regime, and undermine fairness.

Key recommendations

- Establish an independent, standardised appeals mechanism.
- Remove the ability of local authorities to set discretionary conditions and different licence fee rates.
- Set out a standardised, national methodology for local needs assessments.
- Provide clarity on the definition of 'scheme', including enabling group licences for providers operating similar dispersed schemes within a local authority area.
- Maintain clear communication channels between providers and national government during rollout.

Consistency will be critical to maintaining providers' stability and ensuring that homelessness does not increase.

4

Avoid cost-cutting incentives

Key Findings

Current Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements create disincentives for local authorities to work with non-registered providers, regardless of quality. Once national standards are in place, compliance, not provider registration status, should determine whether a scheme can operate.

Key recommendations:

Cross-departmental involvement in licensing decisions at local authority level will be essential to ensure decisions are based on quality and need rather than cost pressures.

5

Mitigate the risk of increased homelessness following the implementation of the Act

Key Findings

A persistent concern raised by residents and staff is what happens if schemes fail to secure a licence. Without clear national and local contingency arrangements, there is a real risk of residents being displaced from vital supported accommodation if a scheme's licence application were rejected. This risk is particularly acute for residents who have experienced homelessness, where local authorities may not owe a statutory rehousing duty.

Key recommendations:

- Introduce an improvement period of six months for minor breaches of the Act, during which residents continue to receive the Supported Exempt Accommodation rates of Housing Benefit.
- Require local supported housing strategies to include clear contingency and rehousing pathways.
- Clarify the responsibilities for local authorities to support residents whose supported accommodation closes due to licence refusal.

The implementation of the Act must not destabilise residents with clear support needs in pursuit of regulatory compliance.

“The worrying thing is if we don't meet the standards and then you get closed down, what are they going to do to then? What's going to happen to these guys that are still [here] or they're just going to be dispersed to manage. There you go, manage on your own now.”

- Supported accommodation staff member

6

Align the Act with the wider policy environment

Key Findings

The Act cannot succeed in isolation. The supported housing sector has experienced substantial long-term funding reductions, increasing demand, workforce shortages and a lack of affordable move-on housing. There is a wider set of structural policy challenges that exist, making it harder for the aims of the Act to be realised and, in particular, for residents to move on from supported housing successfully.

Residents' ability to move on depends on:

- access to genuinely affordable social housing;
- greater affordability in the private rented sector, including through the unfreezing of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that the cheapest 30% of properties in an area are affordable for those in receipt of welfare benefits;
- availability of a wide range of support services so residents can continue to rebuild their lives after supported housing, including mental health, addiction and employment support services.

Without action on these wider government policies, the impact of regulatory reform via the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act will be limited.

Key recommendations

- Ensure sustainable, ringfenced funding for supported housing.
- Provide emergency funding to prevent further scheme closures as the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act comes into force.
- Expand social housing provision across the country, working towards a target of building 90,000 homes per year, and give priority access to supported housing residents.
- Increase national investment in support services including mental health, addiction, and employment support, and create a local directory of support services in each area.

Having that consistency of income and finding an actual home to move into have been the biggest challenges. I've been on a housing waiting list for over a year and I'm looking at other options that will be affordable.

- Supported accommodation resident

Conclusion

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act offers a critical opportunity to strengthen provision for people with additional housing needs, but regulation alone will not deliver improved outcomes.

The Act will succeed if it is implemented with:

STRENGTHENED NATIONAL STANDARDS;

FAIR AND CONSISTENT LICENSING;

REMOVAL OF COST-CUTTING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES;

ALIGNMENT WITH WIDER HOUSING AND FUNDING POLICY.

SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT INCREASED HOMELESSNESS;

TRANSITIONAL FUNDING FOR PROVIDERS AS THE ACT COMES INTO FORCE;

If implemented without these additional measures, there is a risk that residents in supported housing will not get the support they desperately need because of reduced capacity and destabilisation across the sector. For residents who have experienced homelessness, this could mean a return to the devastation of homelessness.

The implementation of the Act offers an opportunity to ensure that reform not only raises standards on paper, but strengthens supported housing in practice – delivering safety, stability and long-term opportunity for the people who rely on it.



FULL RECOMMENDATIONS

For national government

1

Strengthen the National Supported Housing Standards and Principles

- Amend the 'person-centred support standard' to explicitly require purposeful activity, including learning, training and work opportunities, as a core component of high-quality supported housing. Guidance must give practical examples of delivery, with resources provided to support this delivery.
- Amend the 'empowerment standard' to explicitly link empowerment with purpose, participation and progression.
- Expand the definition of 'support' within national guidance to formally recognise a sense of community, peer-to-peer support and social connection as important elements of supported accommodation.
- Issue clear national clarification that the two-year recommendation for the length of stay in short-term transitional accommodation is an intention, not a cap, and amend relevant Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit guidance to prevent the introduction of de facto time limits.
- Publish a standardised national methodology for local authorities to use when assessing 'local need'. This would follow on from the initial framework for needs assessments included in the government's guidance to local authorities on developing local strategies.
- A pragmatic approach to local connection should be promoted so people can access the support they need regardless of local links.
- Set out explicitly how supported housing residents will access national employment and skills programmes, including Connect to Work and other initiatives under the National Plan to End Homelessness.

2

Protect residents and prevent repeat homelessness

- Require that residents are protected through:
 - continued benefit entitlement during improvement periods;
 - defined transition arrangements;
 - requiring local authorities to clearly set out how they will support residents of schemes that close down having lost their licence.
- Use the Lived Experience Forum under the National Plan to End Homelessness to review the impact of the Act on residents.

3

Deliver a fair, proportionate and consistent licensing regime

- Remove duplication in regulatory requirements by establishing tailored arrangements for providers already regulated by bodies such as the Regulator of Social Housing and CQC. Such arrangements have already been put in place for supported housing schemes regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted).
- Provide transitional funding for providers to meet licensing requirements, alongside the already confirmed funding being given to local authorities to help them with the new burdens of the Act.
- Integrate the National Workforce Programme with the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act. Ensure the Programme directly addresses staffing requirements created by the new standards and consider extending it to the supported housing sector as a whole, not only homelessness organisations.
- Establish a mandatory, transparent and standardised national appeals process that allows for independent review of licensing decisions.
- Remove local authorities’ power to apply discretionary licence conditions and set a national, standardised licence fee to prevent inconsistent or excessive local requirements.
- Amend the definition of ‘scheme’ to enable group licences for dispersed accommodation within a single local authority area.
- Create formal national communication channels between Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) and providers to monitor implementation and resolve inconsistency across local authorities.
- Reinstate supported accommodation subsidies for non-registered providers, ensuring licensing decisions are based on compliance and need rather than financial disincentives.
- Introduce a formal improvement period for minor breaches of the Act, during which residents continue to receive Supported Exempt Accommodation rates of Housing Benefit for six months while providers address compliance issues.

4

Secure the long-term sustainability of supported housing

- Establish a long-term funding settlement for supported housing within the forthcoming housing strategy. This needs to be a widespread funding package that addresses the long-term decimation of funding for the sector, building on the £124 million announced in the National Plan to End Homelessness.
- Provide emergency funding to prevent further scheme closures as the Act comes into force.
- Accelerate delivery of social and affordable housing, working toward building 90,000 social homes per year, to create affordable move-on options for supported housing residents.
- Restore Local Housing Allowance rates to cover at least the lowest 30% of market rents, preventing displacement into unaffordable private accommodation.



For local authorities

1

Embed quality in local strategy and commissioning

- Embed purposeful activity, progression and community connection as quality benchmarks within supported housing strategies and commissioning frameworks.
- Apply the two-year length of stay recommendation for short-term transitional housing flexibly in line with person-centred delivery and state this approach clearly in local strategies.
- Be transparent and share the methodology for local needs assessments with providers in the area.
- Ensure local connection policies do not exclude individuals who need support.
- Commission and recognise specialist provision, including services for LGBTQ+ people and other groups where unmet need is evidenced. Support access to services across local authority boundaries, when local connection is lacking.
- Develop supported housing strategies in genuine partnership with providers and residents, including accessible consultation forums.

You have to have a two-year connection to be able to register for local authority housing. We've just been told that they're changing it to a five-year connection. Out of 22 residents, there's probably three that have a five-year connection.

- Emmaus staff member

2

Implement licensing requirements proportionately and transparently

- Provide a six-month improvement period following any improvement notice, before refusing a licence, to recognise the challenges providers face in meeting the Act's requirements and reduce the risk of increased homelessness.
- Publish clear implementation timelines with sufficient notice for providers. These timeframes should take into account the complex arrangements between landlords and managing agents that apply in some schemes, and contract renegotiations that will need to take place.
- Deliver structured training, toolkits and provider forums to support provider compliance. Equip providers with an effective and high-quality self-assessment tool, such as the Emmaus Quality Standards (EQS) developed by Emmaus UK.
- Ensure cross-departmental involvement in licensing decisions, preventing cost-driven decisions by Housing Benefit teams.

3

Strengthen move-on pathways and prevent homelessness

- Include clear contingency planning in local strategies for schemes that fail to secure a licence.
- Set out defined move-on pathways from supported housing in local strategies, and support residents to access:
 - affordable housing;
 - transitional support as they move on from supported housing; and
 - links to a wide range of services, including health and employment.
- Review local allocation policies to prioritise supported housing residents who are ready to move on. This could be achieved through priority banding or direct lets.
- Publish and maintain a directory of local support services and encourage providers to engage with wider services to meet resident need.



FULL REPORT

The implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act represents the most significant reform of supported accommodation in a generation.

With the introduction of national standards, a licensing regime, and changes to Housing Benefit policy, the government now has a critical opportunity to strengthen quality and ensure public investment delivers meaningful outcomes for residents.

This report sets out evidence and recommendations to support effective implementation of the Act. Drawing on peer-led research with residents and engagement with staff across a range of supported housing settings, it reflects the lived experience of those most directly affected by the legislation. Their insights highlight both strong foundations within the proposed national framework and areas where further clarification, consistency and resourcing will be required.

The Act has the potential to drive out poor-quality provision and raise standards across the sector. Its success will depend, however, on proportionate regulation, fair and consistent local implementation,

and alignment with wider housing and funding policy. If implemented well, the Act will strengthen supported housing as a vital part of the national response to homelessness. If implemented poorly, it risks unintended consequences for providers and residents alike.

This report aims to ensure that the experiences of residents and smaller providers inform the next phase of policy development, both nationally and locally. This will help ensure that the Act delivers not only compliance, but, crucially, lasting improvements in quality, security and opportunity for the people it is intended to serve.

Background

The development of the supported housing sector

According to the Supported Housing Review 2023, the supported housing sector “aims to improve health, wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes for people who need support to live independently in the community”.¹

The primary funding source for this accommodation is Housing Benefit at the Supported Exempt Accommodation (SEA) rate, which covers higher rental costs for individuals with additional care, support, or supervision needs. The Centre for Homelessness Impact found that four out of five hostels were funded by Housing Benefit and/or Universal Credit.²

The supported housing sector provides homes to more than half a million people in Great Britain needing specialised support to live independently, with around

84%

of the 634,000 total units being in England.

About 20% of the sector is dedicated to short-term or transitional accommodation, and 9% to single people experiencing homelessness.³

Supported housing was formally recognised within the benefits system in 1996 when special rules were introduced for Housing Benefit to protect specialist supported housing from rent restrictions, establishing the ‘exempt accommodation’ definition.⁴ This was then formally organised under the Supporting People programme, introduced by the Labour Government in April 2003.⁵ The programme brought together different funding streams to provide housing-related support to people with additional support needs. Initially this was a £1.8 billion ringfenced grant to local authorities; at its height in 2009 it was estimated the net financial benefits of the programme were £3.41 billion.

Despite these benefits, shortly afterwards the ringfence was removed from the grant, allowing local authorities to spend their Supporting People allocation as they deemed appropriate, including on non-housing related duties and priorities. Against a backdrop of austerity, the Supporting People programme effectively ceased as a distinct, nationally ringfenced funding stream in England in April 2011,⁶ becoming subsumed into the general Formula Grant for local authorities. This shift led to widespread cuts to housing-related support for people with additional support needs across various local authorities.

¹ Christina Beatty et al (2024). Supported Housing Review 2023, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-review-2023>

² Centre for Homelessness Impact (2025). What is a Hostel in 21st Century Britain? Available at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/what-is-a-hostel-in-21st-century-britain>

³ Christina Beatty et al (2024). Op. cit.

⁴ Department for Work and Pensions (2022). Housing Benefit guidance for supported housing claims. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-guidance-for-supported-housing-claims>

⁵ House of Commons Library (2012). The Supporting People programme. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/rp12-40/>

⁶ House of Commons Library (2012). Op. cit.

At the time, concerns were voiced that local authorities were using their Supporting People grant to fund other expenditure. A review in 2012 revealed that across 152 local authorities Supporting People funding had been withdrawn entirely from 305 services and reduced for a further 685 services.⁷

Rising costs alongside reduced funding have rendered many services unviable, forcing many to close despite increasing demand for supported housing.⁸

Providers of supported accommodation have been forced to consider how to fund vital service provision without this dedicated funding. The gap in funding was often filled by the Supported Exempt Accommodation rate of Housing Benefit.

While legitimate providers have struggled to deliver essential services for people with additional support needs, 'rogue' providers have entered the exempt accommodation market to exploit the Housing Benefit exemptions. These providers charge exorbitant rents for poor-quality housing, a lack of appropriate support and safeguarding, and a dangerous environment for residents. The lack of good-quality exempt accommodation exacerbated growth in the low-quality, unsafe end of the market.¹⁰

According to Crisis, growth of exempt provision "is associated with investors looking to maximise returns using the higher rents permitted by the exempt Housing Benefit provisions".¹¹ In a report published in 2022, the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (LUHC) described the system of exempt accommodation as "a complete mess".¹² It found good providers, but in the worst cases there was evidence of "exploitation of vulnerable people" and landlords who were making "excessive profits" from high rents paid for by Housing Benefit.

Since 2008,
there has been a

2,500%

increase in Housing Benefit

as the main funding source for homelessness accommodation providers. In the same period, there has been a 47% decrease in local authority commissioned contracts.⁹

⁷ Rhiannon Bury (2012). Services cut for 46,000 vulnerable people, Inside Housing.

Available at: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/services-cut-for-46000-vulnerable-people-31018>

⁸ National Housing Foundation (2025). Save our supported housing: Open letter. Available at:

<https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/supported-housing/save-our-supported-housing---letter-april-2025-2.pdf>

⁹ Homeless Link (2024). Supported to End Homelessness 2024.

Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Support_to_End_Homelessness_2024.pdf

¹⁰ London Assembly (2023). Unsafe and unregulated: London's rogue supported housing providers. Available at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/unsafe-and-unregulated-londons-rogue-supported-housing-providers>

¹¹ Crisis (2021). Crisis Policy Briefing: Tackling problems with non-commissioned exempt housing.

Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246160/crisis-policy-briefing-exempt-accommodation.pdf>

¹² Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2022) Exempt Accommodation: Third Report of Session 2022–23. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmcomloc/21/summary.html>

RHYS

Substandard supported housing made me homeless.

RHYS STORY ▶

Regulating supported housing

The rise in 'rogue' supported accommodation provision, offering poor-quality housing and support for residents, led to Crisis initiating their 'Regulate the Rogues' campaign and calls for the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act to regulate the sector. As part of the campaign, residents shared stories about a lack of support and bad living conditions, including pest infestations and unresolved repairs.¹³ At the end of 2024, Rhys, an Emmaus resident, shared his story, describing the poor-quality supported accommodation he had previously lived in and why the Act was such a necessity.¹⁴

In these calls for new regulation, particular attention was paid to areas of the country such as Birmingham, which had seen a proliferation of low-quality supported exempt accommodation.

Data disclosed at a local housing committee meeting in 2024 revealed that 45% of exempt accommodation in Birmingham fell below standards stipulated by the council.¹⁵

These problems persist today: supported housing residents from Birmingham spoke out at the end of 2025 about their poor living conditions.¹⁶

To tackle these challenges, the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act was passed through Parliament and received Royal Assent in June 2023.¹⁷ Introduced as a Private Member's Bill by Conservative MP Bob Blackman, the Act received cross-party support, highlighting the consensus around the urgent need for action. The Act aims to regulate supported exempt accommodation for individuals with additional support needs, by tackling rogue landlords, empowering the Secretary of State to set national standards, establishing licensing regimes, and mandating local authority reviews of supported housing.

¹³ Crisis (2023). Regulate the Rogues: Richard, Sam, and Hannah's stories. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/regulate-the-rogues/richard-sam-and-hannahs-stories/>

¹⁴ BBC News (2024). 'Worst placed I've lived': Vulnerable left in unsafe homes. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyv9mrvkd2o>

¹⁵ Inside Housing (2024). 'Alarming' amount of exempt accommodation in Birmingham falls below local council standards. Available at: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/alarming-amount-of-exempt-accommodation-in-birmingham-falls-below-local-council-standards-85898>

¹⁶ The Guardian (2025). Vulnerable people 'set up to fail' in Birmingham's streets of unregulated 'supported' housing. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/dec/28/vulnerable-people-set-up-to-fail-in-birmingham-streets-of-unregulated-supported-housing>

¹⁷ UK Government (2023). Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/26>

Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act

The key components of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act include:



SETTING NATIONAL SUPPORTED HOUSING STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES:

Providers will be expected to demonstrate that their accommodation and support offer meets the required standards. The standards initially set out by the government include: person-centred support; empowerment; environment; staff and safeguarding; local need; responsible person; and statement of purpose.



LICENSING REGIME:

The new licensing regime for supported accommodation will ensure that only providers who meet the new national standards will be granted a licence to operate. Local authorities will be responsible for running the licensing regime in their area to ensure the national standards are met and that supported accommodation meets local need.



HOUSING BENEFIT:

Only providers meeting the national standards and with a licence to operate will be able to claim for Supported Exempt Accommodation rates of Housing Benefit for their residents.

Together these components are designed to ensure that supported accommodation is high quality and meets the needs of residents.



Following the election in July 2024, the new Labour government promised to take forward the implementation of the legislation. It is the new government's responsibility to develop proposals for the National Supported Housing Standards and Principles, a licensing regime, and changes to Housing Benefit policy. The Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government's (MHCLG) own system-wide evaluation of homelessness and rough sleeping, which included a specific focus on supported accommodation, demonstrated just how important it is that the Act is implemented effectively with proper support to providers.¹⁸

The current context

More than half a million people live in supported housing in England, giving them a home, independence, and the support they need. There is a shortfall of 80,000 supported housing places for working age adults, and between 73,000 and 245,000 places for older people across England.¹⁹ The number of homelessness specific accommodation projects has been steadily declining since 2010, meanwhile homelessness and rough sleeping have continued to rise across England.²⁰

¹⁸ MHCLG (2025). Systems-wide evaluation of homelessness and rough sleeping: Supported housing. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/systems-wide-evaluation-of-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping/systems-wide-evaluation-of-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-supported-housing>

¹⁹ National Housing Foundation (2025). Op. cit.

²⁰ Homeless Link (2025a). Support to End Homelessness 2024: A review of services addressing single homelessness in England. Available at: <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/2024-review-of-services-addressing-single-homelessness-in-england/>

The National Housing Federation predicts that the number of people needing supported housing is only going to grow, with between

**309,900
& 541,900**

new supported housing places needed by 2040.²¹

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act has been largely welcomed by supported housing providers, but it comes at a time of significant challenges, including the dire financial situation facing the sector. More than half of respondents (56%, 71 housing associations) to the National Housing Federation member survey 2025 reported that, without an urgent commitment to long-term sustainable funding, some of their supported housing schemes were likely to close or be decommissioned.²²

The positive impact of supported housing is absolutely clear. It empowers people to rebuild their lives, fulfil their potential, and live with agency and dignity. Without it, people would be left at risk of homelessness or face long stays in more expensive residential or institutional care. It is estimated that the supported housing sector currently saves the £3.5 billion each year for the public purse by preventing and reducing homelessness and relieving pressure on health and social care services.²³

The intention of this research

Emmaus UK's research and engagement centres the voices of people with lived experience to influence how the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act is implemented, with the aim of achieving the best outcomes for those who live and work in supported housing.

Our research is informing national policy development around the Act. In May 2025, Emmaus UK submitted a detailed response to the first government consultation,²⁴ drawing on our findings to comment on the proposed national standards, licensing regime, and Housing Benefit changes.

This report is intended to support the next phase of development, including the second consultation, final national proposals, and local authority supported housing strategies. It will also inform the government's planned Supported Housing Toolkit for local authorities under the National Plan to End Homelessness.²⁵

Effective implementation of the Act nationally and locally will help the supported housing sector thrive and ensure residents receive the accommodation and support they need and deserve.

²¹ National Housing Federation (2024). How much supported housing will we need by 2040? Available at: <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/how-much-supported-housing-will-we-need-by-2040/>

²² National Housing Federation (2025). The risk of closure for supported housing providers: member survey 2025. Available at: <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/the-risk-of-closure-for-supported-housing-providers-member-survey-2025/>

²³ National Housing Federation (2024). The financial benefits of supported housing. Available at: <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/the-financial-benefits-of-supported-housing/>

²⁴ For Emmaus UK's full response to the first government consultation, see: <https://emmaus.org.uk/emmaus-uk-response-supported-housing-act-consultation/>

²⁵ MHCLG (2025a). A National Plan to End Homelessness. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness>

Methodology

This report shares learning and insights captured through a range of activities, including a peer-led research project and engagement with small supported housing providers, charities and organisations focused on supported housing policy, and national and local government partners.

Peer-led research

The research included in this report was co-designed and co-delivered with people living and working in supported accommodation. Emmaus created a Supported Housing Act Advisory Group bringing together residents and staff from different Emmaus organisations to influence the design and direction of the project. We recruited and trained five volunteer peer researchers with lived experience of homelessness and supported accommodation. Together, we developed these core research questions:

1

Do the government's proposed National Supported Housing Standards and Principles, and associated licensing regulations and guidance, reflect relevant contributing factors to ensure the provision of high-quality supported accommodation and person-centred support?

2

What experiences do people have of living in supported accommodation, whether good experiences or bad experiences, and what needs to be improved?

3

What steps or interventions help people to overcome homelessness, to have good wellbeing in supported accommodation, and to be able to sustainably move on from supported accommodation?

4

How does the Emmaus model complement the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act and its aims to deliver high-quality supported exempt accommodation for residents?

5

What are the most common experiences and priorities for change among residents and other participants in the study?

A peer research approach was chosen to put the voices of residents at the heart of the design, delivery, analysis and dissemination of the research. We hoped that the shared experience of the peer researchers and participants would encourage openness and honesty, and lead to better research outcomes.

Research phases

The peer-led research was conducted in two phases.

Phase 1:

This phase focused on producing an evidence-based response to the first government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, which concluded in May 2025.

An online survey was co-designed and shared across the Emmaus federation with residents, staff, trustees and volunteers. It was completed by

161 people,
including 80 residents.

Five workshops, including both in-person and online, were co-facilitated and attended by

23 residents.

Phase 2:

The second phase explored the lived experience of people living and working in supported accommodation to better understand what contributes to high-quality provision, in order to influence the next phases of the Act's implementation by both national and local government.

Peer researchers conducted one-to-one in-person interviews with

17 Emmaus residents
across 5 Emmaus organisations.

A peer researcher and Emmaus UK staff member conducted one-to-one interviews with 11 staff from supported accommodation and organisations supporting people experiencing homelessness.

Five in-person workshops were co-facilitated and attended by 25 residents living in five different supported accommodation sites run by small providers. Three providers supported people experiencing homelessness, one provider supported young people, one provider supported adults with disabilities, and one provider offered an LGBTQ+ retirement community for older adults.

Wider engagement on the Act

In addition to our peer-led research, we have engaged widely with a variety of organisations on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act. Within Emmaus, this has included hosting a series of workshops for staff to help shape our response to the first government consultation and to provide updates and discuss key issues relating to the Act.

Beyond Emmaus, we formed a Small Provider Alliance of other small, supported housing providers that provide specialist support to a wide range of groups. As well as the peer-led research we conducted at these settings, we convened meetings with staff from the providers.

We have engaged closely with a wide range of housing and homelessness charities and organisations, to whom the Act is relevant. It has also been crucial to work with officials at MHCLG, who have provided helpful guidance on the government's next steps on the Act and how our research could be impactful.

Key terms in the research

Residents

People living in any supported accommodation, including local Emmaus organisations.

Staff

People working in supported accommodation (including someone working for a charity supporting people living in supported accommodation but that did not provide accommodation itself).

Participants

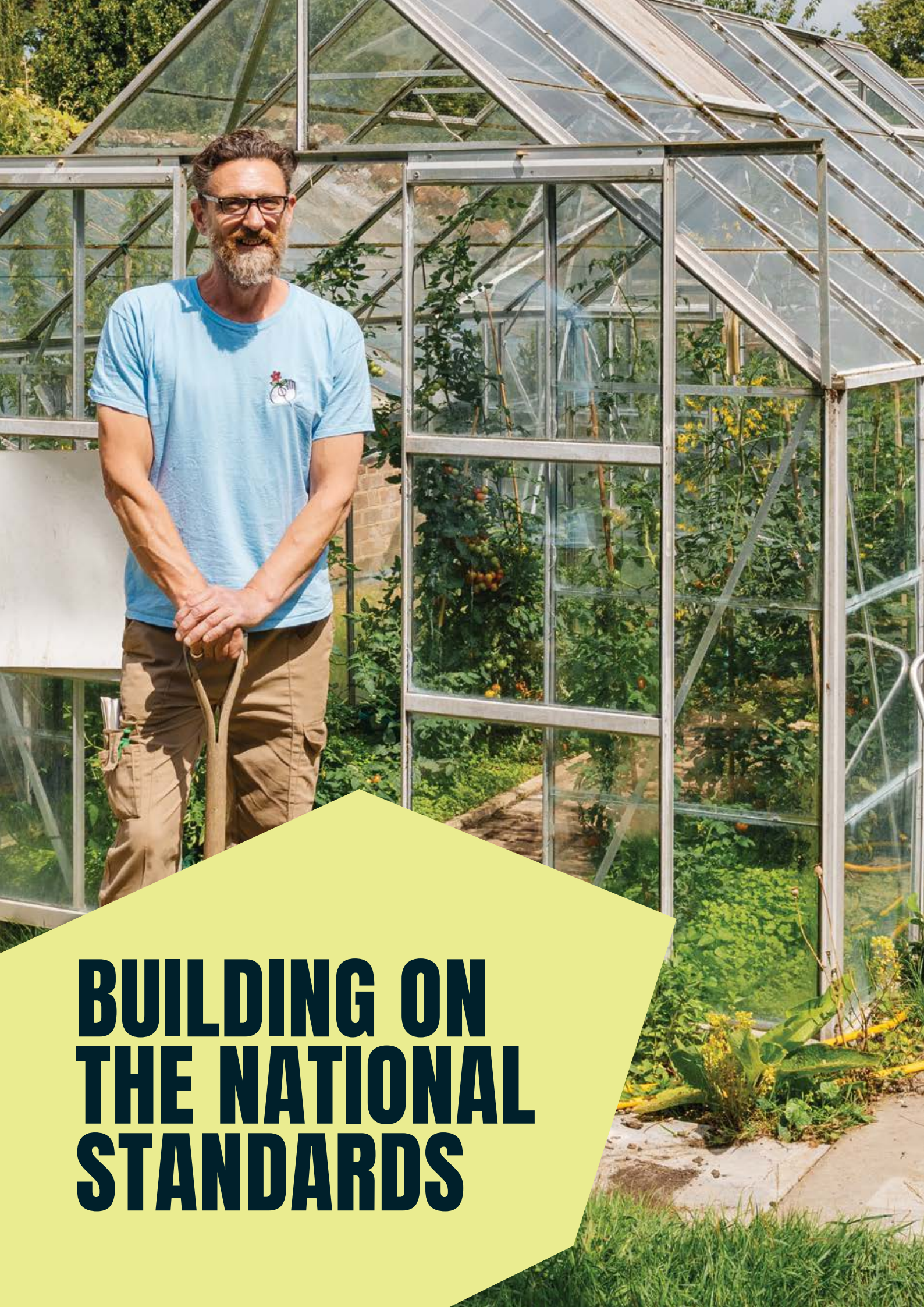
All the people involved in our research, all of whom were living or working in supported accommodation.

Supported accommodation

All accommodation where support is provided to residents; all supported accommodation is expected to meet the government's new national standards.

Supported exempt accommodation

Supported housing exempt from certain Housing Benefit provisions, including Local Housing Allowance (LHA) caps and shared accommodation rates, which enables this supported housing to charge higher rents. It is defined by government as a resettlement place, or accommodation provided by a county council, housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation providing care, support or supervision to its residents. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act is specifically targeted at this type of housing.



BUILDING ON THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

When the government published the first consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act in February 2025, it included draft National Supported Housing Standards and Principles.²⁶ In this section we illuminate the key themes that emerged from our research and how these relate to the government's proposed national standards.

We begin by highlighting elements of the government's proposed standards that received broad support from residents and staff. Our findings reinforce these proposals and demonstrate that they provide a strong foundation for improving quality and consistency across the sector.

To maximise impact, however, the standards and accompanying guidance must go further. Additional elements are required to address gaps, strengthen implementation, and ensure the framework fully reflects the potential of supported accommodation. We set out key areas where the standards and guidance should be expanded or clarified to deliver meaningful improvements, including to emphasise the importance of creating a sense of purpose, community and social connection, security and flexibility of stay, and getting 'local need' right.

Strengths of the government's standards

A person-centred approach

All participants welcomed the focus on person-centred support in the proposed national standards and principles. They felt strongly that person-centred support should be central to residents' experience in supported accommodation from the point of assessment and moving in, throughout their time living there, and as they prepare to move on. Person-centred support is about recognising that everyone has different needs and goals and will need different types of support help them progress towards their goals.

“One of the main supports I got when I first got here was the support to transition from being on the streets to being in accommodation. Having somebody there to sit with and talk to and be patient with me allowed me to slowly develop.”

- Emmaus resident

Person-centred support should be central not only to high-quality supported housing, but to the implementation of the Act as a whole. Support must enable residents to address challenges, including mental health, addiction and employment, and rebuild their lives.

Evidence from this project and other research demonstrates that person-centred support requires a holistic, flexible approach, delivered over timeframes tailored to the individual. It should not be narrowly defined, but encompass wider needs, including purpose, social connection, reduction of isolation, and opportunities for learning and development that support residents' aspirations.

²⁶ UK Government (2025). Supported Housing regulation: consultation. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supported-housing-regulation-consultation/supported-housing-regulation-consultation>



“ We currently have a client survey about the service - what it is and how it can be better. The voice of the resident is paramount; it’s so important. Because if not, we are just here doing what we want to do for us and it’s not about us, it’s about them... If there is any feedback they want to give, no matter what it is, they can. ”

- Staff member at external provider of supported accommodation for children and young people experiencing homelessness

Empowering residents

Both residents and staff identified meaningful involvement as central to person-centred support. This includes participation not only in individual support planning, but in the wider governance and day-to-day operation of the accommodation and, in the Emmaus context, social enterprises. The government’s proposed ‘empowerment standard’ received strong support among participants.

Residents emphasised the importance of being informed about and involved in decisions affecting their living environment, including new developments, projects, and maintenance works. Shared decision-making was seen as a strengthening accountability and engagement with support. Support workers play a critical role in enabling residents to take ownership of their support plans, using collaborative and flexible approaches to co-produce them.

Residents highlighted the value of employing staff with lived experience, noting that this strengthens engagement with support and helps bring about positive change. Shared experience, such as homelessness, was seen to enhance understanding of residents’ challenges and provide credible role models. Embedding lived experience within staffing supports resident empowerment, enabling meaningful connection and encouraging residents to take ownership of rebuilding their lives.

“ Having people that have actually done real life situations of homelessness, they can have a lot more insight. ”

- Emmaus resident

Ensuring quality and safety

Residents felt reassured by the government's 'safe and responsive' principle and the inclusion of safety in the 'environment standard'. They stressed that being and feeling safe is essential for residents to effectively engage with the support available. This is often simply about having basic needs met, including having somewhere safe, warm and dry to sleep, wash and eat. The quality of buildings and rooms is important; residents want to live somewhere free from mould and leaks, and where issues are resolved quickly.

Especially when you've been living on the street, if you've been on the streets for however long, especially through winter, it's just nice to get somewhere where you can, you know, be safe, have a good wash, get your head down.

- Emmaus resident

While these measures may appear fundamental, residents reported experiencing supported accommodation that failed to meet basic needs and where they did not feel safe or supported. Ensuring that residents' essential needs are consistently met is a prerequisite for delivering high-quality, person-centred support and for the effective implementation of the National Supported Housing Standards as a whole.

Collaboration with external services

In addition to on-site provision, many supported accommodation providers maintain strong partnerships with external services to enable access to specialist and ongoing support. Residents emphasised that these connections often continue beyond move-on, helping to prevent repeat homelessness and sustain social networks.

So, if residents do require additional support after however long they've been with us, then we look to get that in place, either from social services in some cases or [the] local authority, and other areas as well.

- Staff member at Solo Housing

The government's 'person-centred support standard' references signposting to specialist services; in practice, providers connect residents to a broad range of external support to meet diverse and evolving needs.

Quite often there will be mental health issues, more often than not undiagnosed. We have access to a place not far from here which is a counselling provider.

- Emmaus staff member



Preparing for the future

Supporting residents with move-on and having a specific move-on policy are key features of the 'person-centred support standard'. Many residents participating in our research expressed aspirations to move on to independent living, but identified personal challenges and structural issues such as the shortage of affordable housing as barriers to move-on. Staff emphasised the importance of building resilience and developing practical life skills, such as budgeting and cooking, to support long-term independence.

Providers also offer tailored move-on support, including assistance with housing applications, financial support and provision of furniture for new accommodation.

Throughout my time in the move-on process so far, I have had regular meetings with [staff name] to plan and investigate housing options after Emmaus. We have also looked into the realistic cost of living to ensure that my plans are practical and I avoid any steps backwards once I move on.

- Emmaus resident

In response to the pressures of housing affordability, several Emmaus supported housing sites have developed dedicated move-on accommodation. This enables residents in employment to live at reduced rent for a fixed period, helping them to saving for a deposit and transition costs. Residents reported that access to move-on accommodation facilitates both financial stability and a gradual transition to independent living.



Learning and personal development

Residents and staff identified learning, training, and personal development as central to effective person-centred support, equipping individuals with the skills and qualifications required for sustainable move-on. While the 'person-centred support standard' references preparing for the future, our evidence suggests this ambition should be strengthened. Residents should leave temporary supported housing with enhanced skills, qualifications and employability.

I am consistently encouraged to live independently and gain social skills while staying at Emmaus, which has greatly benefited me and allowed me to develop so that I can add even more value to the community than before.

- Emmaus resident

The National Centre for Social Research sets out an evidence-based pathway to employment for disadvantaged groups, including people who have experienced homelessness.²⁷ Following housing stability, key interventions include improving health and wellbeing, access to education and training, development of work-related skills, and strengthening core life skills such as financial management. These are critical to securing and sustaining long-term employment.

In practice, Emmaus supported housing embeds this approach through social enterprises such as retail, household clearance, furniture upcycling and cafés, providing residents with structured work experience and opportunities to develop transferable skills aligned with their future aspirations.²⁸ Residents can access accredited and practical training, including portable appliance testing (PAT), white goods repair, woodwork, barista skills, horticulture and banksman training.

Being able to contribute within the enterprise, [...] picking up the phone, booking up the vans, or booking of deliveries and collections, that's really just enhanced my administrative skills.

- Emmaus resident

The Centre for Homelessness Impact highlights that combining housing with employment support is a key step towards long-term paid employment and sustainable move-on from homelessness. Many residents in supported housing such as Emmaus aspire to secure paid employment and move on from homelessness.²⁹ To do so, however, they face multiple barriers such as a lack of stable housing, complex support needs including mental health, low educational attainment and limited or no work experience. For some residents, especially those with limited prior work experience,³⁰ the social enterprise helped them develop a work ethic and basic work-related skills that they could transfer into paid employment.

Beyond the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, it is important the government connects programmes that offer employment and training opportunities specifically for supported housing residents. In the National Plan to End Homelessness, the government announced a new five-year Connect to Work programme, which aims to strengthen specialist employment support for those furthest from the labour market, including people with disabilities, health conditions and complex barriers, such as homelessness.³¹ The government should set out clearly how the Connect to Work programme will be accessible to residents in supported housing, both while they are living there and as they prepare to move on.

²⁷ DWP (2025). What works to support disadvantaged groups towards employment? Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-works-to-support-disadvantaged-groups-towards-employment/what-works-to-support-disadvantaged-groups-towards-employment-research-report>

²⁸ Emmaus, Social enterprise. Available at: <https://emmaus.org.uk/what-we-do/social-enterprise/>

²⁹ Centre for Homelessness Impact (2022). What Works Evidence Notes: Employment. Available at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/what-works-evidence-notes-employment>

³⁰ Rebecca Tunstall et al (2013). The links between housing and poverty: An evidence review, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/housing/the-links-between-housing-and-poverty>

³¹ MHCLG (2025). Op. cit.

Strengthening the national standards

A sense of purpose and meaningful activity

Residents across supported housing settings consistently identified purpose and access to meaningful activity as essential to good quality provision. While the government's 'person-centred support standard' references learning and volunteering opportunities, our research indicates that purpose and meaningful activity should be given greater priority in the national standards and accompanying guidance.

Residents linked routine and purposeful activity to improved independence, wellbeing, and tenancy sustainment. Where this was absent, some reported isolation, declining mental health, and increased exposure to drug and alcohol use. Similar risks were identified among residents who moved on without adequate structure or social networks, contributing to failed move-on and returns to supported accommodation. For some residents, purpose is derived from contributing to the day-to-day running of their accommodation, such as cooking, gardening, maintenance and cleaning, demonstrating the link between empowerment and high-quality provision.

Residents and staff consistently identified learning, personal development, work experience and access to meaningful activity as central to achieving independence and progressing towards individual goals. Our evidence indicates that these opportunities also play a critical role in fostering a sense of purpose. At Emmaus, social enterprises are a key delivery mechanism. They provide structured work experience, skills development and routine, while generating income to sustain support services.

It gives you a sense of self-worth because you've got something to do and you get in the routine of working.

- Emmaus resident

Emmaus residents reported improved confidence, mental wellbeing and self-worth as a result of participation in social enterprises. Customer-facing roles were seen to strengthen social skills and build connections with the wider community. Several residents referred to positive relationships they had developed with returning customers.

The big one for me was that the residents have a purpose. In other shelters I've been to, they're just shelters... The thing that makes this community really good, mentally, is the work side of things, the fact that you've actually got a purpose, a reason to get out of bed. It builds relationships - it really does.

- Emmaus resident



Although the government's draft 'person-centred support standard' references encouraging participation in learning, volunteering, training and employment, it does not frame these activities within the broader objective of fostering purpose and meaning.

There is a clear opportunity to strengthen both the 'person-centred support standard' and its accompanying guidance to recognise the crucial role of purposeful activity in recovery and independence. The 'empowerment standard' should also be amended to explicitly promote activities that build purpose, confidence and long-term resilience.



Community and social connection

A strong sense of community and social connection is essential for residents to feel supported. Supportive connections in accommodation and the wider local community help people to develop social skills and reduces social isolation. At present, the government’s proposed ‘person-centred support standard’ does not adequately recognise the role of community and connection in supporting residents.

Residents across supported accommodation settings highlighted loneliness as a key challenge and stressed the importance of social connection. At a specialist LGBTQ+ service for older people, residents described the accommodation as safe, supportive and inclusive, in contrast to prior experiences of exclusion and discrimination.

At Emmaus and other supported accommodation services we visited, community is a core component. Residents consistently reported that it fosters social connection, friendship, and peer support. Homelessness is a lonely and isolating experience;³² finding a sense of belonging after homelessness can be challenging due to the shift in identity and need to build new social connections.³³

It’s a huge part of Emmaus, you’re never lonely. Even if you’re by yourself, you’re not alone.

- Emmaus resident

³² Ben Sanders and Brianna Brow (2026). ‘I was all on my own’: experiences of loneliness and isolation amongst homeless people, Crisis. Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis_i_was_all_on_my_own_2016.pdf

³³ Patti Plett et al (2024). Experiences of belonging following homelessness: a systematic review and meta-aggregation, Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness, 33:2, 551-569. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10530789.2023.2262186>

Some residents found it a significant adjustment living somewhere so focused on building a strong sense of connection, particularly those who had experienced street homelessness. In the long term, however, it enabled reintegration into community life, development of social skills and improved confidence. Community also underpins peer support. Residents regularly check in on one another, especially those experiencing physical or mental health challenges.

Evidence from other research further emphasises the importance of a sense of community within supported accommodation. Providers are increasingly adopting co-living and congregate housing models, which are associated with improved community integration, enhanced quality of life, and access to on-site support. For example, the Congregate Permanent Supportive Housing model, delivering integrated, on-site services within a single building, is an evidence-based approach that reduces chronic homelessness and improves housing stability, particularly for individuals with high support needs, including serious mental illness.³⁴ More broadly, peer support is increasingly recognised as an important tool for supporting people experiencing homelessness.³⁵

Residents who had moved on and later returned cited social isolation and limited community-based support as factors in their relapse and unhealthy coping strategies. Staff and residents emphasised the importance of supporting individuals to build sustainable social networks and engage in activities beyond the accommodation to enable successful move-on.

When you move on from a community, you don't have that [social connection]. You need the tools that can help you and guidelines as to where to go to find those kinds of communities outside.

- Emmaus resident

Security and stability in accommodation

The 'person-centred support standard' must recognise that recovery and progression depend on security and stability. There is growing emphasis on embedding trauma-informed approaches across support services, especially homelessness services, including supported accommodation. Taking this approach helps provide the right support to people experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage.³⁶

Residents consistently emphasised that security and stability are undermined by arbitrary or rigid time limits in short-term supported accommodation. Feeling secure includes knowing that they can remain in the accommodation for as long as necessary to address support needs and prepare for sustainable move-on. Recovery and progression take time: to settle into safe accommodation, particularly following street homelessness or other traumatic events, meet basic needs, and build trust with staff and peers. Furthermore, support needs may emerge gradually and evolve over time.

³⁴ Tim Aubry et al (2017). Community-based support in the context of housing: A review of models and evidence, in John Sylvestre et al (eds), Housing for people with serious mental illness: Theory, research, and practice, Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190265601.003.0003>; Tim Aubry, Jennifer Rae and Jonathan Jetté, (2017). Economic analysis of housing interventions for people with serious mental illness who are homeless: A review of the literature, in John Sylvestre et al (eds), Housing for people with serious mental illness: Theory, research, and practice, Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190265601.003.0004>

³⁵ Centre for Homelessness Impact (2021). Improving access to health and social care services for individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness: A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Available at: www.homelessnessimpact.org/publication/improving-access-to-health-and-social-care-services-for-individuals-experiencing-or-at-risk-of-experiencing-homelessness

³⁶ CFE Research and University of Sheffield (2022). The Fulfilling Lives programme: Supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Available at: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/Summary-of-programme-achievements-evaluation-findings-learning-and-resources-2022.pdf>

We get some people here that have come from really bad places. And actually, some people that come here, they've got some horror stories really and they're a bit fragile mentally. Staff will make an effort to not throw them in at the deep end. You can have a few weeks to settle in or even more if you need to.

- Emmaus resident

Residents stressed that feeling secure in accommodation was strongly associated with not having a fixed duration on the length of stay. Some expressed concern that the Act could lead to rigid enforcement of time limits by local authorities, undermining person-centred support. Evidence from residents demonstrates that time-limited stays can result in unresolved support needs, repeat homelessness, and returns to supported accommodation.


There're some places where you move in, you're at a two-year maximum, so you're fighting against the system straightaway to get jobs, get this, get that, within two years and then you're out. What if you're not sorted? You're back to square one, you're back in that system.

- Emmaus resident

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) guidance from 2022 describes transitional housing such as supported accommodation as "intended to be transitional, with residents moving onto settled accommodation within two years".³⁷ The guidance does not itself impose an enforceable two-year cap on Housing Benefit claims for supported housing, rather it uses the two-year timeframe to describe typical transitional supported housing arrangements. Providers reported that some local authorities have been interpreting and enforcing this expectation as a strict time limit.

To align with the principles of person-centred support, the government should strengthen the national standards to promote stability and avoid the use of inflexible time limits that risk disrupting recovery. The government should issue clear national clarification that the two-year length of stay in short-term transitional accommodation is an intention, not a time limit. The forthcoming guidance on the national standards should explicitly require local authorities to exercise flexibility in applying the two-year duration of stay in the interests of the 'person-centred support' principle. The DWP should also amend the Housing Benefit guidance to prevent the implementation of de facto time limits.

³⁷ DWP (2022). Housing Benefit guidance for supported housing claims. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-benefit-guidance-for-supported-housing-claims/housing-benefit-guidance-for-supported-housing-claims>



People coming out of recovery, for example, coming out of detox or rehab, you know, it's not beneficial for them to go back to where they have a local connection.

- Staff member at a charity supporting people experiencing homelessness

Getting 'local need' right

The proposed national standards include a 'local need standard'. This requires providers to demonstrate that their supported housing schemes align with the local authority's supported housing strategy and address an identified local need, underpinned by a comprehensive needs assessment. This assessment should measure current provision and forecast demand across different types of supported housing for at least the next five years.

The government guidance for local authorities on developing their supported housing strategies sets out a national framework for authorities assessing local need.³⁸ This includes four key steps:

- map the current supply of supported housing;
- understand the potential user population of supported housing;
- identify supported housing need within the potential wider housing with care and support population;
- estimate net additional supported housing need.

³⁸ MHCLG (2026). Statutory guidance: Local Supported Housing Strategies. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-supported-housing-strategies/local-supported-housing-strategies>

³⁹ MHCLG (2018). Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-10-local-connection-and-referrals-to-another-housing-authority>

The 'local need standard' has the potential to support evidence-based decision-making, ensuring supported housing provision reflects identified need. A person-centred approach to the 'local need standard' must be fair, transparent and inclusive. Local need assessments should recognise the diversity of groups requiring supported housing and ensure decisions are based on identified need rather than restrictive criteria.

Residents and staff have raised concerns about the risks of a rigid application of local connection criteria, including restricting access to supported housing and undermining its role in meeting local need. The statutory code of guidance to local authorities on homelessness decision-making suggests authorities consider each case individually.³⁹ For some individuals, remaining in or returning to an area of local connection may not be possible or in their best interests. This includes people who have experienced trauma, exploitation or homelessness in that area, those with nomadic histories, or where appropriate support is unavailable locally. Overreliance on local connection risks excluding individuals from essential support and undermining the principle of meeting individual need.

The research revealed instances where residents were ready to move on and wanted to stay in the local area where they had formed social connections and were engaging with ongoing support. The local authority, however, required a local connection of several years to be considered for social housing. Without viable alternative housing options, residents were unable to move on from supported housing.

You have to have a two-year connection to be able to register for local authority housing. We've just been told that they're changing it to a five-year connection. Out of 22 residents, there's probably three that have a five-year connection.

- Staff member at Emmaus

As part of promoting a pragmatic approach to local connection, the government should also clarify which definition of 'local connection' applies to ensure consistency. The Localism Act 2011 enables local authorities to set their own timeframes for how long somebody needs to have lived in an area to receive social housing, but the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 emphasises immediate help for those in need and says local connection criteria should not stand in the way.

Local authorities should also recognise that specialist supported accommodation – for example, for LGBTQ+ people, women or neurodiverse individuals – may not be available in every area. Where suitable provision does not exist locally, local connection criteria should not prevent access to support.

We are an LGBTQ+ retirement community, the first in the country... The barriers are the lack of services. Opening Doors [another LGBTQ+ service] closed due to lack of funding. It was a tremendous charity that did loads of work with older people. When they closed, that was a huge impact on our community. So that's why we've started something here [a befriending service] for residents and people living outside across London.

- Staff member at LGBTQ+ supported housing provider

To ensure confidence in the system, local supported housing strategies and needs assessments must be developed transparently and in partnership with providers. The government guidance for local authorities sets out a more standardised national framework for assessing need, which brings welcome clarity. However, despite setting out a universal four-step process that authorities should follow, the government guidance does not contain a standardised methodology for local authorities assessing need. The guidance also does not actively promote a pragmatic and flexible approach to local connection.

The government, therefore, needs to take further steps to strengthen consistency in how 'local need' is assessed. On a local level, authorities should be fully transparent about the methodologies they will use for conducting needs assessments, sharing this information with providers.



**CREATING FAIR
LICENSING AND
HOUSING
BENEFIT POLICY**



Our research demonstrates broad support for the proposed National Supported Housing Standards and Principles. Their impact, however, will depend on effective implementation through a fair, consistent, and proportionate licensing and Housing Benefit framework.

We support linking licensing eligibility, including access to the Supported Exempt Accommodation rates of Housing Benefit, to compliance with the new standards. The licensing regime must, however, be designed and administered in a way that is transparent, proportionate, and operationally workable for providers.

Reducing the administrative and financial burden on providers

Staff across Emmaus supported housing sites and other supported housing providers have raised concerns about the additional administrative burdens arising from the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act. Concerns relate not only to meeting the new standards, which may require changes in policy, practice and resources, but to the process required to evidence compliance. There is a risk that disproportionate regulatory burdens could reduce sector capacity at a time when demand for supported housing is increasing.

Smaller providers, in particular, are concerned that the time and resources required to prepare documentation, strengthen data,⁴⁰ and evidence compliance across all standards will divert capacity from delivering person-centred support. Some providers revealed that they might need to reallocate resources from support delivery to increase staffing to manage compliance. Providers are calling for a licensing regime that is streamlined, proportionate and supported by clear guidance. This should include tailored arrangements to avoid duplication for providers already regulated by bodies such as the Regulator of Social Housing or Care Quality Commission (CQC), as has already been set out for those regulated by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

Where substantial evidence is required, the government should provide comprehensive written guidance, practical toolkits and training to support implementation. We suggest the toolkit could include a version of the Emmaus Quality Standards, a self-assessment tool developed by Emmaus to promote high quality throughout local Emmaus organisations.⁴¹

Given the anticipated additional strain on providers in terms of staff and resources, we have heard a consistent call for extra funding for providers to help them transition to the new system.

The government has recognised the need for 'new burdens funding' for local authorities to support the roll-out of a local licensing regime, but there has been so such recognition for providers. The financial implications of the Act's requirements could be severe, particularly for non-commissioned providers not in receipt of any public funding to help them provide support.

Furthermore, the government should provide sufficient support to providers for training and capacity-building to meet the new staffing requirements, which specify the comprehensive training that staff should receive.

The new £12 million National Workforce Programme announced by the government to support the homelessness sector is an example of how capacity and capability can be strengthened, with MHCLG to provide training and advice to organisations.⁴²

Providers have emphasised the need for clear implementation timeframes to enable them to prepare effectively for the new licensing regime. Although this applies sector-wide, some providers operate under more complex arrangements that require additional lead time. For example, schemes involving separate landlords and managing agents may require contractual renegotiation to clarify responsibility for meeting the new accommodation and support standards. Clear transitional arrangements will be essential to ensure compliance without unintended service disruption.

⁴⁰ The need for providers to strengthen their data was further demonstrated by the government's guidance for local authorities on developing local supported housing strategies, which included a specific section on data sharing. Providers are to be involved in sharing data around referrals, reporting, monitoring, and strategic oversight. See: MHCLG (2026). Op. cit.

⁴¹ For more on the Emmaus Quality Standards, see: <https://emmaus.org.uk/emmas-quality-standards-mark-new-era-supported-housing/>

⁴² MHCLG (2025). National Workforce Programme: prospectus. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-workforce-programme-prospectus/national-workforce-programme-prospectus>

Ensuring consistency and clarity across the country

While the proposed supported housing standards will apply nationally, responsibility for enforcement and licensing will sit with local authorities.

As part of local supported housing strategies, local authorities will set out how they will operate their licensing regime.

This localised model creates opportunities for engagement with providers and residents, but also risks inconsistency. Since publication of the government's initial proposals in February 2025, providers have raised concerns about differences between authorities' approaches, creating uncertainty and administrative burden. This has not only been clear in Emmaus UK's own research, but also through our engagement with other organisations, including Homeless Link, whose response to the first government consultation highlighted the "postcode lottery" that could be created by the government's initial proposals.⁴³

In particular, concerns relate to the power for local authorities to impose discretionary licence conditions in addition to national requirements. For providers operating across multiple authority areas, this could result in different compliance requirements between authorities. Similar concerns arise from the proposal to allow authorities to set their own licence fees, with the potential for significant variation in costs.

Further uncertainty relates to who must apply for a licence and how a 'scheme' is defined. Initial proposals indicated that each separate postal address would require a licence, which could disproportionately affect providers operating dispersed or small-scale models, such as Housing First. The government should consider enabling 'group licences' within a single local authority area for such models, to ensure proportionality and viability.

Avoiding cost-cutting decisions on licensing

A further concern is that local authority licensing decisions may be influenced by cost pressures rather than assessed local need. Providers have emphasised the importance of cross-departmental involvement in licensing decisions, rather than reliance solely on Housing Benefit teams, which may face stronger financial constraints. Teams that should be involved include planning, commissioning, housing options, and environment.

Government guidance requires local supported housing strategies to include an assessment of need across different types of provision, plans to meet that need, and clear arrangements for enforcing the National Supported Housing Standards through licensing. Licensing decisions should therefore be based on compliance with the national standards and evidence of local need, not on cost-saving objectives.

The government's guidance for local authorities on developing local supported housing strategies⁴⁴ helpfully sets out the range of internal council stakeholders who should be involved in the development of strategies. In addition, it outlines which external partners should be included, such as supported housing providers, public health, Integrated Care Boards, health and care providers, probation services, and current and future supported housing residents. Despite this, the government's guidance focuses on the development of strategies rather than on licensing decisions, so further clarity is required to ensure the same cross-department approach is taken for licensing decisions, following the finalisation of local strategies.

⁴³ Homeless Link (2025). Homeless Link's response to the supported accommodation regulations consultation. Available at: <https://homeless.org.uk/news/homeless-links-response-to-the-supported-accommodation-regulations-consultation/>

⁴⁴ MHCLG (2026). Op. cit.



Local authorities should also avoid using licensing as a mechanism to reduce the presence of non-Registered Providers of Social Housing. Current subsidy arrangements, including supported accommodation subsidy loss when reclaiming Housing Benefit from the DWP, risk creating financial incentives that distort decision-making. These risks were outlined by the Local Government Association (LGA) in its response to the first government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act.⁴⁵

Once implemented, compliance with national standards, rather than provider registration status, should be the primary determinant of whether a provider is permitted to operate, removing any differential treatment between registered and non-registered providers. As the LGA said, "Housing Benefit subsidy must be fully recoverable for licensed schemes regardless of whether the provider is a registered provider or a charity".⁴⁶

Reducing the risk of homelessness

It is appropriate that providers who fail to meet the National Supported Housing Standards, and do not demonstrate progress toward compliance, are not granted a licence. Clear transition arrangements must, however, be in place to protect residents where a scheme is required to close or cease operating as supported housing. Staff and residents repeatedly raised concerns about the absence of clarity in such circumstances.

Where a licence is refused, there must be defined processes to ensure residents continue to receive appropriate support and are assisted to secure alternative accommodation that meets their needs.

The worrying thing is if we don't meet the standards and then you get closed down, what are they going to do to then? What's going to happen to these guys that are still [here] or they're just going to be dispersed to manage. There you go, manage on your own now.

- Emmaus staff member

These considerations apply across the supported housing sector, but particular concern has been raised in relation to services supporting people who have experienced homelessness. In these settings, scheme closure without clear transition arrangements presents a tangible risk of increased homelessness. This risk is heightened where local authorities do not owe a statutory rehousing duty to affected residents, underscoring the need for robust contingency planning and clear pathways into alternative provision.

⁴⁵ Local Government Association (2025). Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023: LGA consultation response. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/supported-housing-regulatory-oversight-act-2023-lga-consultation>

⁴⁶ *ibid*



Embedding lived experience

Emmaus UK's research underscores the value of embedding lived experience in policy development. Engagement with residents and staff has provided detailed insight into what underpins high-quality supported housing, including safety, person-centred support, and opportunities for purpose and belonging. This evidence has helped identify both the strengths of the proposed national standards and areas requiring further development, as well as key concerns within the sector regarding implementation of the Act.

Residents and staff consistently expressed a desire to work in meaningful partnership with national and local government to ensure the implantation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act reflects operational realities. There is a clear expectation that reform should be shaped collaboratively, rather than imposed. It is therefore welcome that national government has engaged residents and providers in developing its proposals, including through resident workshops on standards and principles, and the establishment of a Supported Housing Advisory Panel lived experience.

The government has also incorporating committed to establishing the Lived Experience Forum as part of the National Plan to End Homelessness. This provides a further opportunity to strengthen the role of lived experience during the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act.

Residents should have the opportunity to influence the implementation of the Act at the local as well as national level, and the development of local supported housing strategies present a key opportunity for local authorities to engage residents across their local area.

The government guidance on local supported housing strategies helpfully advises local authorities to closely involve residents in the development and review of their strategies and authorities should be held to account to this.



**GETTING THE
WIDER POLICY
CONTEXT RIGHT**



While it is essential to get the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act right, its effectiveness will also depend on the wider policy environment in which it operates. The Act cannot succeed in isolation. In particular, three related policy areas will be critical to its success: the long-term funding of supported housing, the availability of affordable move-on accommodation, and access to appropriate support services following move-on.

Funding the supported housing sector properly

As set out earlier in this report, providers have raised significant concerns about the administrative and financial implications of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act. For small providers, which are often operating with limited staff and resources, these additional requirements risk diverting capacity away from frontline support and, potentially, threatening organisational viability.

The sector's ability to meet the Act's requirements will depend not only on regulatory design, but also on the adequacy and stability of wider funding arrangements for supported housing.

The National Audit Office calculates that funding for supported housing was cut by

75%

between 2010 and 2020.⁴⁷

According to research by the National Housing Federation, one in three supported housing providers had to close schemes last year because of funding pressures, while 60% say they may be forced to close schemes in future.⁴⁸

The introduction of additional burdens on supported housing providers in the already challenging financial context presents a very real risk that supply of supported accommodation may decrease at a time of heightened need. This could mean increased homelessness and a loss of support for those who need it most. There is also a strong economic argument for investing in supported housing: it brings significant savings for the state through homelessness prevention and reduced pressure on health and social care services.

Emmaus UK supports the National Housing Federation's 'Save our Supported Housing' campaign to turn the financial situation of supported housing around. The government has made positive funding commitments for supported housing in the last year.

Since the June 2025 Spending Review commitment of

£39 billion funding

for affordable housing over the next ten years,⁴⁹ the government confirmed that this funding could be used for the creation of new supported housing.

In December 2025, the National Plan to End Homelessness included a new £124 million scheme for supported housing in targeted local areas to support 2,500 residents.⁵⁰

Although welcome, these announcements do not amount to a long-term funding settlement for the supported housing sector as a whole.

In the absence of a long-term funding settlement, clarity is needed on what a sustainable model would entail. A recent systems-wide evaluation of rough sleeping and homelessness published by MHCLG recommends the establishment of "a dedicated supported housing fund, protected from competing crisis pressures".⁵¹ This approach, which could be announced as part of the forthcoming housing strategy, would provide greater stability for the sector and is urgently needed.

A ringfenced funding mechanism would help ensure resources intended for supported housing are not diverted to other priorities. There is clear precedent for this approach in Wales, where Supporting People funding remains protected. The desperate need for this ringfenced, long-term settlement, should not distract from the immediate need for shorter-term funding to prevent a further escalation in scheme closures throughout the supported housing sector.

⁴⁷ The Guardian (2025). Supported housing in England on brink of financial crisis, charities warn. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/25/supported-housing-in-england-on-brink-of-financial-crisis-charities-warn>

⁴⁸ National Housing Federation (2025). Save our Supported Housing. Available at: <https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/supported-housing/save-our-supported-housing/> UK Parliament (2025).

⁴⁹ UK Parliament (2025). Social and Affordable Housing Renewal. Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-07-02/hcws771>

⁵⁰ MHCLG (2025a). Op. cit.

⁵¹ MHCLG (2025). Systems-wide evaluation of homelessness and rough sleeping: supported housing. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/systems-wide-evaluation-of-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping/systems-wide-evaluation-of-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-supported-housing>

Expanding affordable housing options

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is essential. A significant proportion of new provision must be delivered at genuinely affordable social rent levels. The evidence demonstrates that social housing improves health and wellbeing, provides stability and affordability, and supports long-term community integration.⁵² An inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness concluded that a step-change in social housing delivery is critical to reducing homelessness and enabling approaches such as rapid rehousing and Housing First to succeed.⁵³

Beyond the general case for expanding social housing, there are specific implications for supported housing and the effective implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act. Increasing the supply of social homes would help prevent homelessness in the first place by giving more people an affordable place to live, and by doing this would reduce the number of people requiring supported accommodation. The availability of social housing is critical to successful move-on. Residents rebuilding their lives in supported accommodation require access to genuinely affordable housing to sustain independence and avoid repeat homelessness.

Evidence from Homeless Link demonstrates that

39%

 of people

currently being housed in accommodation for people experiencing homelessness are waiting to move on from their current provision into more secure, sustainable housing, with lack of available social housing being the main barrier to their moving on.⁵⁴

Our research similarly identified a shortage of affordable housing as a primary barrier to move-on, particularly for residents with experience of homelessness. Many described prolonged housing instability linked to limited availability and high costs, especially in the private rented sector, where deposits and upfront payments present significant obstacles.

Having that consistency of income and finding an actual home to move into have been the biggest challenges. I've been on a housing waiting list for over a year and I'm looking at other options that will be affordable.

- Emmaus resident

Residents and staff called for increased delivery of social housing and improved affordability in the private rented sector. Providers also reported challenges in securing appropriate priority within local allocation systems, with some residents in supported accommodation not recognised as a housing priority. Some Emmaus supported housing sites have secured positive local arrangements, but access to suitable move-on accommodation remains a systemic challenge for supported housing providers.

⁵² Shelter (2025): More than bricks: Interim report: The Human and Economic Impact of Social Homes. Available at: https://assets.ctfassets.net/6sxvmdn0n0s/724Q0FE0agaJ4Qkdq5Nusk/1ab14097dc8454d046899240a1b8eae2/More_than_Bricks_Interim_Report.pdf

⁵³ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness (2025). Homes, Support, Prevention – Our Foundations for Ending Homelessness. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/u12jh3kb/homes-support-prevention-our-foundations-for-ending-homelessness-final-2.pdf>

⁵⁴ Homeless Link (2025a). Op. cit.



Emmaus UK has been campaigning strongly alongside other organisations for a target of 90,000 social homes to be built per year. This builds on the existing commitments made by the government in the 2025 Spending Review for 180,000 social homes to be delivered over 10 years, via £39 billion of funding.⁵⁵

Alongside action on social housing, the government has introduced measures to improve affordability and security in the private rented sector through the Renters' Rights Act due to come into force in May 2026.⁵⁶ The Act abolishes Section 21 'no-fault' evictions, limits advance rent requirements, and strengthens tenants' ability to challenge excessive rent increases. There is concern, however, that these reforms may affect the supply of private rented homes in the short term. The 2024 English Private Landlord Survey found that 31% of landlords planned to reduce the number of properties they let, including 16% who planned to sell all their properties and leave the sector entirely.⁵⁷

I'd love to get everybody who needed it on the housing register. For that to speed up. But obviously we are not going to get that until more places become available... The fact is that places are not being built in the areas that people want the support.

- Staff member at Solo Housing

⁵⁵ Emmaus UK (2025). Emmaus UK Welcomes Major Boost for Affordable Housing in Spending Review. Available at: <https://emmaus.org.uk/emmaus-uk-welcomes-major-boost-for-affordable-housing-in-spending-review/>

⁵⁶ UK Government (2025). Guide to the Renters' Rights Act. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-renters-rights-act/guide-to-the-renters-rights-act>

⁵⁷ MHCLG (2025). Main Report – English Private Landlord Survey: Segmenting the business models of private landlords. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-private-landlord-survey-segmenting-the-business-models-of-private-landlords/main-report-english-private-landlord-survey-segmenting-the-business-models-of-private-landlords>

The unaffordability of housing has been amplified by the government's continuation of the freeze in LHA rates. Prior to the November 2025 Budget, Emmaus UK joined forces with other housing and homelessness charities to push for this policy to be reversed and for the cheapest 30% of rents in a local area to be covered by LHA. This would lift 75,000 children and 125,000 adults out of poverty across the UK and help prevent homelessness.⁵⁸

Unfreezing LHA and ensuring rates rise annually is therefore an important part of creating a private rented sector that is more affordable for residents who are moving on from supported housing. The government's initial proposals for the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act appropriately emphasise supporting residents to move on.

The proposed 'person-centred support standard' requires a plan to build resilience and skills for independent living; providers will need to evidence a clear move-on policy to demonstrate compliance. So too is it welcome that the government's guidance for local authorities on developing local supported housing strategies, includes a specific section on authorities playing an active role to develop move-on pathways, including through access to local housing, and providing dedicated support to address common barriers to move on.

For the 'person-centred support standard' to operate effectively, residents must have access to suitable, affordable move-on accommodation locally, alongside structured support to enable transition. The evidence indicates that this enabling housing supply and support infrastructure is not yet consistently in place.

Ensuring holistic support for supported housing residents

Effective implementation of the Act also depends on strong collaboration with external services to provide holistic support. These services must be adequately funded, resourced, and accessible to residents, both during their stay in supported accommodation and following move-on.

Our research highlighted the importance of access to specialist provision, particularly for residents with complex or long-term needs. Priority areas include mental health services, adult social care, substance misuse support, education and employment pathways, and opportunities that promote social connection and community integration. There is strong evidence that partnership working with external agencies and the integration of specialist services into supported accommodation are essential to meeting a broad range of needs.⁵⁹ Access to such provision remains inconsistent and often inadequate.

Homeless Link's Annual Review 2024 identified access to mental health services as the most significant barrier facing accommodation providers in England, with all providers reporting difficulties.⁶⁰

Barriers to drug and alcohol services were also widely reported. Since the publication of that review, providers have reported that access has deteriorated further, reflecting sustained funding pressures.

⁵⁸ Crisis (2025). Policy Briefing on the Local Housing Allowance Freeze. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/mj0jciaq/crisis-lha-policy-briefing-autumn-budget-2025.pdf>

⁵⁹ Homeless Link (2018). The Future Hostel: The role of hostels in helping to end homelessness, Available at: <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/supported-housing-and-hostels/>

⁶⁰ Homeless Link (2025a). Op cit.

The negative societal impact of this reduced access to mental health services is clear, not only making it more challenging for individuals to rebuild their lives, but leading to an estimated

£300

billion per year in economic and social costs.⁶¹

Our engagement with providers highlighted significant regional variation in the availability of support services. Staff also described challenges in securing appropriate support for residents with complex needs, including mental health and addiction, particularly where it proves difficult to evidence residents' eligibility for statutory services.

“We are not really able to support people with their mental health because it's complicated... Services are quite binary sometimes. You can access support for a particular reason or therapeutic intervention, but rarely does someone need just one.”

- Emmaus staff member

Many residents who were preparing to move on expressed concern about the limited availability of ongoing support after leaving supported accommodation. Several who had previously moved on reported that insufficient follow-up support contributed to tenancy breakdown and a return to supported housing.

The government's National Plan to End Homelessness sets out a cross-departmental approach spanning health, substance use, social care, and criminal justice⁶² The plan aims to strengthen support for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. One example is the £55.8 million Multiple Disadvantages Fund, established to improve how local systems respond to individuals facing complex needs. The programme seeks to coordinate services, funding and data across partners, providing intensive and peer-led support to prevent homelessness and reduce repeat rough sleeping.

Looking further ahead, another key government milestone will be the conclusion of the Casey Commission, an independent review into adult social care that has the potential to include recommendations on improving access to social care for supported housing residents. Currently, many providers say they find it challenging to secure access to social care for their residents. This means that either the housing provider has to fill the gap in support or, if this is not possible, residents are left without essential care.⁶³

Clarity is required on how residents in supported housing, and those who have moved on, will consistently access the holistic, cross-system support outlined in the National Plan to End Homelessness, programmes such as the Multiple Disadvantages Fund, and adult social care services that the Casey Commission will address.

⁶¹ Centre for Mental Health (2024). Mental ill health costs society £300 billion every year, according to new Centre for Mental Health economic analysis. Available at: <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/news/item/mental-ill-health-costs-society-300-billion-every-year-according-to-new-centre-for-mental-health-economic-analysis/>

⁶² MHCLG (2025a). Op. cit.

⁶³ Homeless Link (2026). Is it time for change in social care and homelessness? Available at: <https://homeless.org.uk/news/is-it-time-for-change-in-social-care-and-homelessness-our-response-to-the-casey-commission/>



The peer researchers involved in Emmaus UK's research project, alongside Emmaus staff and sector partners, at the Emmaus National Assembly 2025

Conclusion

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act represents a significant opportunity to strengthen standards and improve the quality of accommodation and support available to residents in supported housing. It is welcome that successive governments have prioritised its progression toward implementation.

Legislation of this magnitude must, however, be implemented carefully, informed by lived experience. Emmaus UK's research has sought to ensure that the perspectives of residents and frontline staff shape the development of the Act.

While there is broad support for the proposed National Supported Housing Standards, this report has clearly identified areas requiring further development. These include a stronger emphasis on community and social connection, meaningful activity and purpose, flexibility around stay duration limits, and genuine provider partnership in delivering the local need standard.

Providers have also raised substantive concerns regarding the design and operation of the licensing and Housing Benefit framework. This report sets out recommendations to reduce administrative

and financial burdens, ensure national consistency, guard against cost-driven decision-making, and mitigate the risk of exacerbated homelessness.

The Act's success will depend not only on its regulatory provisions, but also on the wider policy context, including sustainable sector funding, increased supply of affordable housing, and guaranteed access to ongoing support following move-on. Without parallel progress in these areas, the Act will be unlikely to fulfil its potential impact on the sector.

Meaningful progress has been made. The priority now is to secure effective implementation, enabling high-quality providers to thrive, eliminating poor practice, and delivering safe, stable and supportive housing for those most in need.



Emmaus UK Apex House, 3 Embassy Drive,
Calthorpe Road, Birmingham, B15 1TR

t: 0300 303 7555

e: contact@emmaus.org.uk

EMMAUS.ORG.UK