

What's important to people with a learning disability.

Housing Report



A report of an event by Skills for People on behalf of Newcastle City Council and NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

For summary report, easy read version, more information, or to get involved, contact:
EngagementTeam@skillsforpeople.org.uk

For future updates: www.skillsforpeople.org.uk



**North East and
North Cumbria**

Newcastle
City Council 



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Introduction

Skills for People held the What's important to you - Housing Event on behalf of Newcastle City Council and NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board on 30th March 2026 at Newcastle Civic Centre. The event brought together people with a learning disability and autistic people, family carers, housing providers, health and social care staff, and professionals from across the city.

The aim of the event was to understand the barriers people face when trying to find the right home, explore what good housing support should look like, and work together to identify solutions that will help people live safely, independently, and in the communities they choose.

The event included opportunities for people to share lived experiences, raise concerns, and contribute ideas for improving ways to get housing. This report brings together the themes, concerns, and solutions shared at the event.

What we did

We invited people to an event to share their views on:

- What gets in the way of finding the right home?
- What support people need to live independently?
- What would make the housing system easier to understand and navigate?
- What good housing options and support should look like

People contributed through group discussions, themed tables, and activities focusing on **Barriers**, **Solutions**, and **Good things to keep**.

The event was held on 30th March 2026.

People who attended included:

- Adults with a learning disability and autistic people
- Family carers
- Housing providers
- Social workers and support staff
- Community organisations
- Health staff

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to everyone who attended the event and shared their experiences, ideas, and hopes for better housing in Newcastle. Thank you also to the organisations who supported the day, including:

- Newcastle City Council
- Skills for People team
- NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- Local housing providers and support teams
- Andy Stewart, Kate Winwood, Lucy Berry, and Daniel Robson

What matters to people about housing?

People shared what is most important to them when thinking about their home and future. Key themes included:

- Feeling safe, both inside and outside the home
- Having choice and control over where they live and who they live with
- Being close to family, friends, and support networks
- Having housing that meets their sensory, physical, and emotional needs
- Being able to build independence skills
- Having clear information about options
- Being supported to make decisions at their own pace
- Having a home that feels like theirs, not somewhere they are placed

People also emphasised the importance of stability, saying they were “sick of moving” or worried about being placed somewhere unsuitable.

Housing worries that people have

People shared a range of concerns about housing, including:

- Not being able to find a home that meets their needs.
- Long waiting lists and delays
- Being placed somewhere unsafe or far from family

- Not understanding the housing system
- Being pressured into options that don't feel right.
- Losing independence or privacy
- Not knowing their rights
- Being scammed or taken advantage of
- Not being able to afford rent or bills
- What will happen when parents can no longer support them?

Challenges people face when trying to get housing

The barriers people shared fell into several major themes:

1. Lack of suitable housing and long waiting lists

People repeatedly said there is not enough housing, especially housing that is safe, accessible, affordable, and close to family.

2. Information barriers and communication problems

People often do not know where to go, don't understand the language used, or receive too much information at once.

3. Delays, slow processes, and bureaucracy

Long waits for assessments, delays in being allocated a social worker, and rigid systems were common concerns.

4. Support needs not being met

People struggle to find the right support and to access it consistently. There is also a lack of tenancy preparation, including understanding how to maintain a tenancy and feel safe living independently.

5. Financial barriers

People raised concerns about affordability, benefits, and lack of financial advice.

6. Eligibility barriers

People described being blocked by diagnosis requirements, age rules, and local connection criteria.

7. Emotional impact and wellbeing

People described anxiety, stress, fear, and trauma linked to housing.

8. Cultural, language and accessibility barriers

People highlighted language barriers, cultural differences, and poor transport links.

9. Professional practice issues

People said staff do not always listen, training is inconsistent, and information isn't shared well.

Examples of good experiences

People shared fewer positive examples, but the ones they did share had common features:

- Staff who listened
- Clear communication
- Being able to visit homes beforehand
- Support that matched their needs
- Feeling safe
- Being involved in decisions
- Having a consistent worker

Good things to keep

People were clear that while there are challenges, there are also strengths within Newcastle's current housing support system that should not be lost as changes are made. Their message was simple: *"Keep what works and build on it."* Key strengths identified include:

- A variety of housing options, including existing models that work well for many people and a desire to see more of these available.
- Creative housing models that already support people who don't fit traditional ways of getting housing.
- Shared information between professionals, parents, and carers.
- Collaborative events that bring people together and provide opportunities for meeting professionals and building relationships.
- Multidisciplinary Teams and good connections between services.
- Being responsive to changing needs of young people.

- The Learning Disability and Autism supported housing process, including the panel, which some people felt works well.
- Support that can go into the family home.
- Liaison nurses who support people in hospital.
- Carers assessments that work well when GPs hold and act on this information.
- Community support that helps people feel safe.
- Benefits systems such as PIP, Universal Credit and housing benefit, which help people afford their homes.
- Videos of housing options online, which help people understand choices.
- Support in the community that helps people feel safe and reassured.

Making things better

This section summarises what people told us about how getting a house should work. The themes are presented in the order that reflects a typical journey through the system from first seeking information, to getting housing, to receiving support, building skills, and feeling part of a community.

1. Accessible Information, Communication & Reasonable Adjustments

People need clear, accessible information before they can even start the housing process.

People want:

- Information in one place (a centralised hub)
- Clear, simple language
- Easy read, audio, and visual formats
- Photos, videos, walkthroughs and step by step guides
- Clear explanations of processes
- Regular updates on actions taken
- Better communication between services and professionals
- Support for sensory needs and quiet spaces
- Accessible buildings, transport, and environments

- Flexibility in tenancy rules and expectations

2. Trying to get housing & Application Experience

Once people understand the system, they need a fair, simple and supportive way to get housing.

People said improvements should include:

- A simpler, clearer application process with one clear process from start to finish.
- Shorter waiting lists
- Clear information about rent, affordability, benefits, and financial support.
- Opportunities to view housing options and meet potential housemates.
- Consistent support: a named worker, more 1:1 time and better matching
- More flexible and sensory friendly housing options.
- More social housing, co living and creative models (including schemes like Allendale Court).
- Support after hospital discharge
- Provide clear information and advice about mortgages, buying and renting, and support for individuals or family carers who want to buy a home together with people they know.

3. Relationships, Support & Co production

Once in the system, people want to be listened to and supported by those around them.

People said:

- They want to be involved in decisions.
- People with lived experience should shape services.
- Families should be included, not dismissed.
- Avoid labelling families as interfering.
- Advocacy should be available.
- Carer friendly meeting formats.
- Professionals should work together.

- Stronger cross department collaboration.
- Staff need better training.

4. Early Support and Preparation

People need support that prevents crisis and builds long term stability.

People said housing support should also include:

- Independence skills
- Practical and theory-based learning
- Budgeting support courses or 1 1 support
- Access to benefits information
- Planning for the future
- Starting transition planning early and have clear goals and actions for transitions.
- Support with wellbeing.
- Support to understand tenancy agreements and how to maintain a tenancy.
- Understanding cultural needs
- Trauma informed practice

5. Community Support

People want to live in places where they can thrive, not just survive.

People want:

- Safe communities
- Good transport links
- Activities and social opportunities
- Therapeutic activities
- Support to reduce isolation.
- Housing close to family and friends

Important things to note

Throughout the event, people were clear that having access to suitable housing should be recognised as a right, not a privilege. People want to be supported to live in homes that meet their needs, help them stay connected to their communities, and enable them to live with independence, choice, and control. Many people also highlighted the

importance of planning ahead and having clear plans in place for the future, particularly as circumstances change or when family members are no longer able to provide support.

It is important to recognise that while this event provided valuable insight, the people who attended represent only a small part of Newcastle's learning disability and autistic community. The views shared are likely to reflect the experiences of many others, but there are voices that were not fully represented on the day, including people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, a wider range of family carers, people who do not use words to communicate, and people from minority ethnic communities. Continued engagement will be needed to ensure these perspectives are heard and reflected in future plans.

A strong message from people was that they have shared their views through many consultations over the years on housing and other related issues. People said they are becoming frustrated by being repeatedly asked what matters to them without seeing enough evidence of what happens next. People felt that the challenges and solutions are already well understood. They want Newcastle City Council and NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board to demonstrate how they have listened, what actions will be taken, and how progress will be measured and reported back. People want meaningful change, clear accountability, and visible improvements, not more consultation without action.

Challenge to Newcastle City Council and NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

People asked Collaborative Newcastle to consider:

- How will you make housing information clearer and more accessible?
- How will you reduce waiting lists and delays?
- How will you ensure people have real choice and control?
- How will you involve people with lived experience in designing access to housing?
- How will you ensure reasonable adjustments are consistently offered?
- How will you support people who do not use words to communicate?
- How will you ensure housing is safe, suitable, and close to support networks?
- How will you improve coordination between housing, social care, and health?

Conclusion

The housing event highlighted the significant challenges people face when trying to find the right home in Newcastle. People shared powerful experiences of delays, a lack of suitable housing, confusing processes, and not being listened to. However, they also shared clear and practical solutions, alongside examples of what is already working well and should be protected and built upon.

The message from people was consistent and compelling. They want better information, more suitable housing options, personalised support, and systems that are simpler, fairer, and easier to navigate. They want professionals who listen, involve them in decisions, and work together to provide coordinated support. Above all, people want homes that help them live safely, independently, and as part of their communities.

The challenge now is not identifying what needs to change but taking action. People want to see how their experiences and recommendations will shape future ways of getting housing and services. This report provides a clear call for partners across Newcastle to work together with people with lived experience, families, carers, and communities to turn these priorities into meaningful and lasting improvements.

Appendix

What's important to you?

An event to talk about housing

Who is it for? - People from Newcastle who have a learning disability, family carers and service providers.

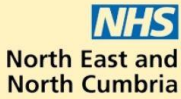
When: Monday 30th March 2026

Time: 10.00am to 1.00pm

Where: Banqueting Suite, Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, NE1 8QH.

To book a place please contact:
Phone: 0191 281 8737
Email: info@skillsforpeople.org.uk

Snacks and drinks provided





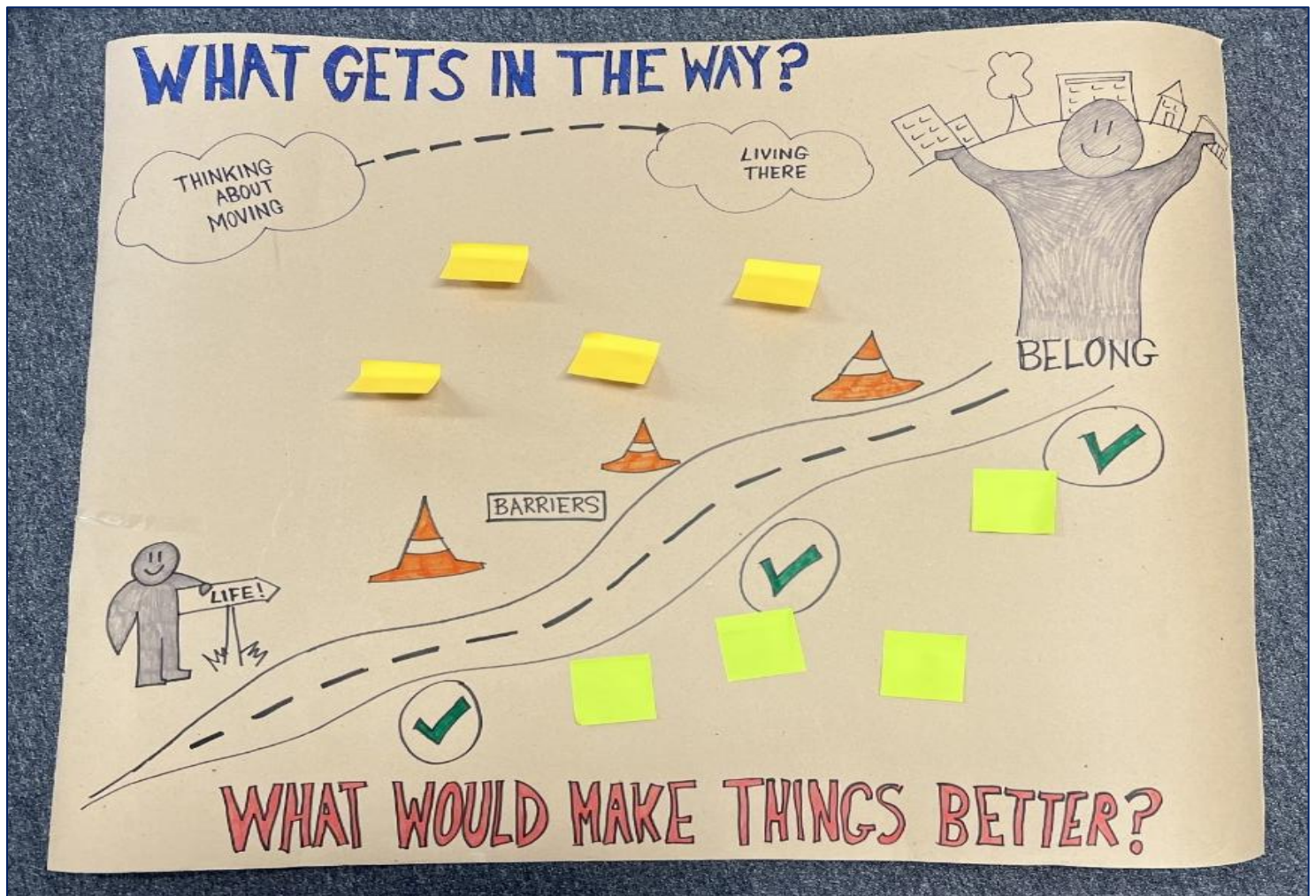
Craig

I was in my mid 20's when I got my first flat. I have moved 4 times since then, the last time I moved was because I wanted to live closer to Mam and Dad.

...people don't know how to bid online. Its not set out properly. If the council are helping people to get a flat, they could help them use the website.

My home means independence, I can come and go as I please, no restraints on going out when want. I have my own rules!





Ally

How did I get my home?
My link worker helped me apply, there was a long waiting list.

I wanted my independence.

When I was finally approved, I got a phone call to go and view my flat. I was able to decorate it, and I'm now getting ready to change the colour scheme!



I was very nervous when I first moved in, but I have got better support and I am very happy with that.



What is important about having my own home? Being more independent and doing things for myself. Makes me happy!

Joanne

What made me want to move?
Because I had a baby. I was living with in laws and we wanted to live independently.



The council office helped me to apply and to bid. I stayed in touch with a worker until I got my flat. I had a worker from council help me to fill in my forms for my benefits and helped me to get carpets.

My home gives me independence, and I can do what I want. I can do the style I want my walls to be like.



James

Kids call me names...my social worker has told the local school's headmaster to tell the kids 'pack it in now'. It hasn't happened for a while.



Skills for People got me a social worker and they helped me - I am on a waiting list for supported housing now.

What is important about having my own home? I can go in and out whenever I want, I don't have a set time to come home.

Too much red tape - not enough people helping people.



Chris

I lost my step-dad, I lived with him. and wanted to stay in area as lots of people know me well. I lived there since 1998...



I was offered a supported living flat but the cost was far too big for me...I was going to have to pay as I work. I decided to fight to keep step-dad's house on.



I had good support from social workers, they understood that I was grieving and done what needed done on the list.

I have made my house my own, I have decorated the sitting room how I want it. I got a cat who I love so much. I live close to a club that I visit every other day and have lots of friends there.

