

Essex County Council

Supported Living Accommodation Standards



Purpose of the Supported Living Accommodation Standards:

This document sets out the requirements for the standard and quality of Supported Living accommodation for Adults who have a disability; this may be a Learning Disability and/or Autism, a Physical Impairment or a Sensory Impairment.

Supported Living is defined as housing for Adults with disabilities who want to live independently but may still need some help and support.

The Adult will have a tenancy with a landlord and will receive care and support from a CQC registered Support Provider. Essex County Council has an ambition that all the Supported Living Schemes in the county can provide good accommodation to Adults and support them with gaining independence, meeting their outcomes and living meaningful lives. The quality and type of accommodation will have an impact on the Adult's wellbeing and what they wish to achieve in life and therefore ECC wishes to ensure that accommodation which successfully goes through the onboarding process is of a good standard. ECC has engaged both internally and externally when developing the standards.

The below requirements are what Essex County Council will consider before on-boarding a property for Supported Living. This will apply to any new and existing schemes, the same standards will be applied, and any exceptions looked at on a case by case basis. Once onboarded the scheme is expected to be maintained and meet the standards on an on-going basis. ECC wants to ensure all Supported Living accommodation is of an acceptable standard or make recommended changes for the property to be On-Boarded at the ECC Accommodation Planning Board (APB).

The 'Supported Living On-Boarding' document has all background information about the processes ECC used with Supported Living and can be referred to for further guidance.

Factors	Essential	Rationale/Source
<p>Number of flats at a Supported Living Scheme*</p> <p><i>(* flats defined as self-contained accommodation in a block/cluster or in subdivided house. Own bedroom, kitchen, living area, bathroom, own entrance. Bedsits, i.e., with combined sleeping and living areas discouraged due to lack of demand)</i></p>	<p>No more than 14</p> <p>Set up of the property must meet needs of intended tenants.</p>	<p>From experience of existing schemes in Essex the model of fewer flats in a cluster promotes good practice and an economy of scale. Above that number the personalisation of care can become more challenging for Providers, running the risk of becoming residential or institutional in feel. Large groups of people with disabilities living on one site can create challenges to integration into the local community.</p>
<p>Flat</p>	<p>39 m² total size</p> <p>Size of property must meet needs of intended tenants. Larger space may be required for those with complex needs.</p>	<p>GOV.UK Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard</p>
<p>Multiple accommodation/properties on one plot</p>	<p>Single occupancy unit clusters, shared homes, residential homes situated together on a single site (campus style sites) pose the risk of creating an institutionalised setting.</p> <p>The matter of multiple care accommodation located on one site is complex and we would look at it on a case by case basis for existing properties as well as new developments but for the most part new builds of this type would be discouraged. For existing properties of this type, we would recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separate gates/driveways/fencing for separate accommodation units, 	<p>Campus style settings do not fit the model of Supported Living, the modern ethos of housing for adults with disabilities and can cause the accommodation provided to stand out from its neighbourhood which may lead to issues with community integration and a risk of stigmatisation of those adults living on the site. The individuals living on such sites may not be experiencing a meaningful life in a community</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naming of whole sites discouraged in favour of normal addresses for the properties, - Regular home address for tenants, - Avoiding large developments on existing sites turning existing accommodation into ones with a campus/institutional feel 	
Number of tenancies in shared house	No more than 4	From experience of existing schemes in Essex over 4 tenants in a shared Supported Living house can unintentionally become more residential in feel. Increased numbers of individuals in a shared environment can make it difficult to implement personalised support.
Shared houses with 2 tenancies	ECC reserves the right to decline new shared house schemes with only 2 tenancies.	<p>All 2-tenancy schemes will be reviewed on a case by case basis, and they may not be on-boarded if it is decided there is not sufficient demand for this type of scheme in a particular area of Essex.</p> <p>An issue with 2-tenancy schemes is they often, by their set up, have a higher level of core support than is required to meet an adult's Care Act Eligible needs.</p>
Minimum bedroom size (shared housing)	<p>Between 8 m² and 10 m² as minimum.</p> <p>12.5 m² for a wheelchair user</p> <p>2.2 – 2.3 m high from floor to ceiling</p> <p>Bedrooms should not open directly into communal spaces (living room, dining room, kitchen). This will give the adult more privacy at times when they may be undertaking personal care, in addition it will aim to reduce the risk of noise disturbance from others who are using communal spaces. The preferred option would be</p>	<p>We have chosen to apply the double bedroom standard for minimum bedroom sizes. The rationale for this is twofold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In shared Supported Living housing an individual's room is their only own personal space 2. Adults in Supported Living will be in receipt of support, some of this may need to be delivered by care staff in this room with the individual e.g., for personal care or support with domestic tasks <p>http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/68/section/326</p>

	<p>for bedrooms to have an en-suite.’ This will still be look at on a case by case basis to judge the impact on the privacy of a potential occupant.</p> <p>Any part of the floor area of a room in relation to which the height of the ceiling is less than 1.5 meters is not to be considered in determining of the floor area in that room</p> <p>Size of the room must meet needs of intended tenants. Larger space may be required for those with complex needs.</p>	<p>Wheelchair accessible: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/540330/BR_PDF_AD_M1_2015_with_2016_amendments_V3.pdf (section 3.35)</p>
<p>Minimum bathroom requirements (in shared housing)</p>	<p>2 tenants - 1 bathroom (including toilet)</p> <p>3 tenants – 1 bathroom (including toilet) and separate toilet</p> <p>4 tenants - 2 bathrooms (including 2 toilets)</p> <p>Wheelchair accessible minimum sizes for bathrooms*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet room (shower only) 5.4 m² • Bath only 6 m² • Bath and shower 7 m² <p><i>*Please refer to specific standards regarding turning circles laid out in standards.</i> Bathroom sizes must meet needs of intended tenants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratios any lower than this can result in personal care not being able to be delivered at times required by the tenants. • The requirement of support whilst using these facilities for tenants can take longer dependent on need. • Tenants may find it challenging if there is a substantial wait to access facilities • Care staff will also need to access facilities during their work, making the bathroom/toilet to individual ratio higher <p>Wheelchair accessible standards: *https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/540330/BR_PDF_AD_M1_2015_with_2016_amendments_V3.pdf (section 3.36)</p>
<p>Communal areas (in shared housing)</p>	<p>1–3 tenants – Kitchen/living/dining area: 20 m² Wheelchair accessible: 27 m²</p>	<p>Better Homes Greater Choice: https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/5</p>

	<p>4 tenants – Kitchen/living/ dining area: 28 m² Wheelchair accessible: 29 m²</p> <p>The kitchen, living room and dining room in both an open plan arrangement and in separate rooms must be able to accommodate the Adults living at the home.</p> <p>Where Adults might be preparing meals in the kitchen or developing skills around food preparation the kitchen must be of an appropriate size to enable them to do so. The kitchen must not be so small in size that it becomes limiting when more than 1 person wishes to use it.</p> <p>The size of the shared spaces also must consider staff being present or delivering support.</p> <p>No signs, staff notices etc should be present or displayed. The property should look like a domestic dwelling.</p> <p>The size of the shared areas must meet the needs of intended tenants.</p>	<p>2018/Learning-disability-supported-accommodation-design-principles.pdf</p> <p>Wheelchair accessible: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/540330/BR_PDF_AD_M1_2015_with_2016_amendments_V3.pdf (section 3.31)</p>
<p>Parking</p>	<p>Availability of parking spaces and ensuring that staff cars parked outside the property do not block the drives of other properties or restrict access for other residents or access for emergency vehicles. New Supported Living developments must demonstrate that considerations have been made for sufficient parking spaces and the potential impact on the local area.</p>	<p>For staff and visitors.</p>

<p>Garden/ outside areas</p>	<p>If a garden is present it needs to be maintained to a reasonable standard, free of overgrowing weeds or broken garden furniture etc.</p> <p>The landlord must give permission for new features to be put up in the outside/garden space of the property e.g.: decking, summer houses, pergolas, sheds etc.</p> <p>The landlord can agree with the tenant/tenants that sets up such features for them to maintain it or for the landlord to take up the maintenance responsibility.</p> <p>If maintenance is not provided and the feature falls into disrepair, then it will be the landlords responsibility to fix/replace if desired or remove it.</p> <p>The garden should be free of loose paving or slippery surfaces.</p> <p>Tenants may undertake gardening as a task in their free time if they wish. The garden should be accessible for tenants with mobility needs.</p>	
<p>Staff Sleep-in room(s)</p>	<p>Separate room for night awake or night asleep staff to sleep in.</p>	
<p>Rent levels</p>	<p>Eligible rent level met by local housing allowance benefit. No top ups. (private Landlord)</p> <p>Council tax in shared property must be in Landlord's name and part of core rent.</p>	

	If registered social Landlords – eligible rent in line with housing benefit.	
Deposits	Deposits on tenancies will not be accepted due to it presenting an unnecessary financial burden to adults.	This would make the Scheme unaffordable for most adults looking to move into Supported Living,
Stability of property	If property owner is not the Landlord, a minimum 3-year lease. Total rental income meets property cost (mortgage or cost of lease).	
Tenancy Type	Assured Tenancy or Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Ensuring stability of accommodation for the tenants.
Choice of support Provider	Each Supported Living Scheme to have a core support Provider (or ability to introduce core). This Provider should not be linked to tenancy as there needs to be flexibility for the Provider to change. 1:1 support to be provided by support Provider of tenant's choice.	
Utilities	If in sole occupancy, individually metered flats – utilities to be in individual's name. If in shared accommodation or if there are shared bills across a block of flats – utilities to be in Landlords name and cost split between tenants. If a property is converted into flats and individual meters are not available, then utility bills would be in the landlord's name and then the payments due split between the tenants as it would happen in a house of multiple occupancy.	

	Separate bills such as TV subscriptions or sole use telephone or internet connection can also be in an individual's name if in shared accommodation	
Utility meters	Gas, electricity and/or any utility meters must not be housed within a room which is to be used as a tenanted bedroom.	
Decorative standard / state of accommodation	<p>Walls, ceilings and flooring in good condition (for example no peeling paint, peeling wallpaper, holes, lifting of flooring, trip hazards, no obvious damage).</p> <p>Adequate natural lighting, heating and ventilation.</p> <p>Shared spaces must be free of rubbish and waste. Waste bins provided.</p> <p>Property should be free of heavy wear and tear, staining, mould etc. Hygienic environment.</p> <p>Communal areas to be decorated in a neutral style.</p> <p>There should not be any unnecessary signage present.</p>	<p>Decent Homes Standard: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf</p>
Meeting the sensory needs of autistic people	<p>Consideration to the sensory needs of autistic people is given to the design of living environments.</p> <p>This may include things such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lighting - Smells/ventilation - Sound proofing - Temperature control 	<p>https://www.ndti.org.uk/assets/files/Housing-paper-final-formatted.pdf</p>

	<p>The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) have developed a report titled 'Supporting autistic flourishing at home and beyond: Considering and meeting the sensory needs of autistic people in housing' which offers advice and guidance on designing environments which consider the sensory needs of autistic people. The report also includes a helpful checklist to support improvements to the environment.</p> <p>Each autistic individual's sensory needs are different, and this should also be considered when designing environments, with the individual involved in the process as much as possible.</p>	
Repairs and Maintenance	<p>Any repairs and maintenance that are carried out at the property (to the property itself as well as appliances etc) must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carried out in a timely way • to a good standard • the organisation carrying out the maintenance or repairs has awareness of the needs of Adults with disabilities • considerations must be made for the needs of the Adults living at the property to avoid where possible causing any distress or major disruptions 	
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)	<p>When a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) application is made for an adaptation or installation of specialist equipment in shared supported housing, the landlord should consider ongoing maintenance and repair and ensure necessary agreement has been reached before approving the works.</p>	

<p>Energy Efficiency</p>	<p>Domestic private rented properties are legally required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) if the property is let on an assured tenancy, has been marketed for sale, let, or modified in the past 10 years.</p> <p>Since April 2020, landlords can no longer let properties if they have an EPC rating below E, unless they have a valid exemption in place. Landlords are required to make improvements to the property to better its rank if it is below E. A cost cap of £3,500 is in place and if that sum cannot improve the property rating an exemption can be obtained.</p> <p><u>Improvements to property that can increase its rank are:</u> room-in-roof insulation, internal or external wall insulation, solid floor insulation, increase hot water cylinder insulation, draught proofing, low energy lighting, high heat retention storage heaters/dual immersion cylinder, solar water heating, replacing single glazed windows with double glazed ones, solar photovoltaic panels.</p>	<p>Government guidance for private landlords in relation to minimum energy efficiency standards: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-private-rented-property-minimum-energy-efficiency-standard-landlord-guidance</p> <p>To request an EPC assessment please visit: https://www.gov.uk/get-new-energy-certificate</p>
<p>Safety / Fire Safety</p>	<p>Safety features such as fire alarms must be present.</p> <p>Doors both external and internal must be in working order, able to be closed or locked if needed (no broken locks, door handles or warped doors that will not close). The same criteria applies to windows at the property.</p> <p>No exposed or leaking piping or exposed, unsafe electrical wiring.</p> <p>Landlords are expected to have available all required safety certificates such as the annual Gas</p>	<p>Government health and safety guidance for Landlords: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-guidance-for-landlords-and-property-related-professionals</p> <p>National Fire Chiefs Council: Fire Safety in Specialised Housing Guidance</p>

	<p>Safety Certificate and 5 Year Fixed Wiring Test Certificate and to comply with the Housing Act 2004 and associated HHSRS guidance.</p> <p>Please refer to the NFCC Specialist Housing guidance for staff and tenant fire evacuation procedures to ensure adherence to best practice.</p> <p>If there is any doubt about the safety of the property, please contact the local District or Borough authority.</p>	<p>NFCC Specialised Housing Guidance</p>
<p>Furnishings</p>	<p>In shared accommodation the landlord is responsible for furnishing the communal areas (table and chairs for dining, sofa(s), window dressings/blinds) living room and kitchen this includes white goods (fridge-freezer, oven, stove, washing machine).</p> <p>White goods must be in working order and if any break they must be fixed or replaced by the landlord.</p> <p>No office spaces for support staff or landlord within the home.</p>	
<p>Digital and Technology</p>	<p>There must be the option to install a care line or introduce technology solutions if they would increase independence of Adults or improve their quality of life.</p> <p>Examples of this could be smart plug sockets, Amazon Alexas or Google Echos, a talking microwave or a smart kettle.</p>	

	Communal lounge and bedrooms should have tv aerial points. Suitable phone lines should be available if the tenants wish to have an internet connection installed (the tenant would cover the monthly cost of their internet provision).	
Planning Permission	<p>All new supported living developments need relevant planning permissions. Essex County Council might request to see the documents supporting this.</p> <p>Planning permission would be beneficial from Providers/Landlords wishing to receive a letter of support for development of a new Supported Living scheme.</p>	https://www.gov.uk/planning-permission-england-wales
Building Control	<p>Building Regulations cover the alteration and extension of buildings, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • install a bathroom that will involve plumbing • change electrics near a bath or shower • replace windows and doors • replace roof coverings on pitched and flat roofs • install or replace a heating system • structural alterations <p><u>This is not an exhaustive list.</u></p> <p>Supported Living schemes must conform to building regulations.</p> <p>Essex County Council may request to see the documents supporting this.</p>	https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval
Regulatory Judgements and Notices	Registered providers (RPs) are subject to Regulation by the Regulator of Social Housing	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-judgements-and-regulatory-notices

	<p>(RSH). The Regulator undertakes reviews of RPs from time to time.</p> <p>Large RPs (with 1000+ units) will receive a judgement based on viability and governance criteria, with a score from 1-4 for each. The RSH considers RPs who have a score of 1 or two against each criteria (e.g., V1, G2) to be competent. A score of 3 or 4 in either category suggests the RP is not a competent landlord. ECC will not support developments from large RPs with a judgement of V3/4 and/or G3/4.</p> <p>Small RPs (<1,000 units) are subject to a slightly different regime. Following a review, where the RSH has concerns about the RP they will issue a Regulatory Notice. ECC will not support developments from small RPs with a current Regulatory Notice.</p>	
<p>Required Licences</p>	<p>ECC will require evidence that if a property falls under House of Multiple Occupation licensing requirement, that the HMOs are licenced, and any inspections or Notices received in respect of licenced properties.</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/house-in-multiple-occupation-licence</p> <p>The law requires HMOs with at least 5 occupants forming at least 2 separate households to be licenced with the local housing authority. Local authorities are entitled to include additional licencing conditions locally, so developers are advised to check local policies for compliance.</p>
<p>Temporary Structures</p>	<p>Temporary structures must meet the accommodation requirements set out above and must have a predicted lifespan of at least 10 years for ECC to consider them as suitable homes.</p> <p>In line with the principles of supported living, these properties must have their own postal address, so that mail can be delivered directly to the adult; be registered for Council Tax and have</p>	

	a required planning and building control consents.	
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Changes and Updates to the document	
01/03/2021	Added sections on Planning Permission, Building Control, Regulatory Judgements and Notices, Required Licences, Temporary Structures
10/05/2021	Added more clarification around Parking
10/05/2021	Clarification and additional requirements around Communal Areas sizing in shared houses
10/05/2021	Clarification around Bedrooms in shared houses in relation to location and privacy
06/12/2021	Update to Communal Areas section, minimum size for kitchens removed. Flexibility with sizing while still being fit for purpose.
14/03/2022	Updated Safety and Fire Safety Section to new Specialist Housing National Fire Chiefs Council guidance
01/12/2023	Addition to Decorative Standard – no unnecessary signage
31/03/2023	Sensory needs of autistic people
22/08/2023	2 bed only properties guidelines
22/08/2023	Energy efficiency requirements
31/10/2023	Energy meters section
29/02/2024	Deposits section added