



200 Lives – Findings from the family survey

Aim

To understand how the **quality** and **costs** of services for working age adults with learning disabilities in England vary between supported living and residential care.

Who took part

16 service providers took part in the research. This included 8 supported living providers, 2 residential care providers and 6 organisations who provide both supported living and residential care. From those 16 providers, **107 people with learning disabilities** took part, 42 of whom gave consent for a researcher to contact a family member. **24 family members** (57%) responded and went on to complete the family survey. 6 family members had a relative in supported living and 18 had a relative in residential care.

What we did

Family members were asked to complete a survey either online, via telephone, or by post. The survey focused on understanding family members' perspectives on the quality of their relatives' housing, the support they provide to their relative and the impact this can have.

What family members told us



Supporting their relative to move

- Most family members said they were involved in helping their relative to find and move into their current home. Most felt that their level of involvement in the process had been about right.
- Family members were divided in their experiences of how easy the moving process was. People who had a positive experience reported feeling well-supported by others, including professionals, with the housing and support provider playing a pivotal role in supporting families through the transition process. Other people found the process extremely challenging, complicated, and long-winded. This was due to a lack of suitable options, limited support from professionals and finding local authorities unhelpful and, at times, obstructive.



Views on their relative's housing and support

- Most family members who responded to the survey felt that their relative's current home was better than their previous home. There was no statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction between supported living and residential care. However, people whose relative lived in supported living were significantly more satisfied with how near their relative lives to them, compared to people whose relative lived in residential care.

What was important to families?

- Families valued properties that were a good size, well-kept and homely, in safe locations with easy access to local facilities. It was important to many that their relative stayed living locally to them. Relationships with housemates and staff were also important, as well as opportunities that the housing set-up provided their relative to live the life they wanted.

What could be improved?

- Communication and constancy of staff was thought to be something that could be improved, for example by the manager being more accessible, staff turnover reducing, and families being kept updated about changes in the staff team. There were also physical improvements to their relative's property that families wished were made that would have an impact on their relative's wellbeing. These included improving accessibility and improvements to the general upkeep of the home with repairs being fixed in a timely manner.



Ongoing family involvement

- 29% of people whose relative lived in supported living felt that their relative's support arrangements worked well without their input. However, 100% of people whose relative lived in residential care and 52% of people whose relative lived in supported living felt that they kept an eye on their relative's support arrangements, but generally things worked well without their input. A small proportion of people whose relative lived in supported living felt that they needed to coordinate their relative's support arrangements in order for them to work, or that their relative's support arrangements would fall apart without their input.
- In arrangements that worked well, family members described feeling as though they were part of a team supporting their relative. Whilst the extent of their input was different for each family, this generally meant remaining involved in decisions whilst having confidence in the support provider to handle everyday issues.

Key Recommendations:

- Organisations and professionals working with people with learning disabilities and their families can improve the process and empower families by being transparent and providing them with more information and opportunities to exchange experiences and knowledge with other local families.
- The level of involvement families wish to have with their relative's housing and support arrangements, and any changes to this, differs between families and should be checked by professionals on an individual basis. Professionals should be aware that this may change for families over time.
- Housing and support providers play an important role in supporting families when their relative moves out of home or into a new home, and should be involved as early as possible.
- Support providers need to pay attention to communication with families and consistency of staff within support teams. Ensuring that families are involved in decisions and kept updated of any changes on a level which suits both the family and their relative.
- Both support providers and housing providers need to ensure repairs are made in a timely manner and homes are well maintained.

We would like to thank the participants, families, support staff and providers who took part in the research.

You can read the full report on our website:

<https://www.ndti.org.uk/projects/evaluating-supported-living-and-residential-care-for-adults-with-learning-d>

If you would like more information about the research, please contact Professor Chris Hatton: c.hatton@mmu.ac.uk