



Housing solutions for disabled people

## 'Match Me' What works for adapted/accessible social housing lettings?

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BE THE DIFFERENCE

## **Presentation outline: Match Me – what works for adapted/accessible social housing lettings**

### **Aim of this session:**

- Present new research into the effectiveness of allocations and lettings practice in three case study areas
- Hearing the experiences of disabled applicants and tenants over an extended period
- Engaging housing providers in discussions about their practice and the experiences of applicants and tenants
- A co-production approach involving disabled people throughout
- Deliver key messages for housing sector

## Context

Research evidence and literature confirms:

**‘the continuing, often negative, impact of unsuitable housing on the lives of disabled people’.**

Implementation of Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

New SHR regulatory requirements in relation to equalities and human rights.

New SG guidance on increasing wheelchair accessible housing – and agenda setting for 2040

Impact of RSLs in this area to date and potential for the future.

## Research Questions

1. How can social landlords achieve more, better and faster routes to independent living for disabled people?
2. What improvements to allocations policies and practices will deliver equal housing opportunity for disabled people?
3. What support do disabled house seekers require in the social housing application and lettings processes?
4. How can adapted and adaptable housing better enhance independent living?

## Research Method – qualitative approach to compare home-seeker and provider experiences in three local authority areas

- Contextual research on local lettings policy and practice
- Semi-structured interviews tracking 28 disabled house seekers/new tenants over one year (first interview, interim reflective follow up, second interview)
- Observations of and discussions on lettings practice
- Feedback sessions in the three areas to triangulate findings and to develop conclusions and recommendations (60 participants)

## Action research – our co-production approach

Disabled-led Project Advisory Group – helped shape the research and dissemination

Disabled Peer Researchers

- two with mobility impairments and one with a visual impairment
- supportive approach enabling them to contribute significantly to data collection for the study

Engagement with housing and service providers throughout to recruit disabled participants and reflect on changing practice

**Enhanced knowledge on co-production**

# The housing application process

- Range of group/points based allocations systems and some choice based lettings
- Distinctive mechanisms for assessing health and housing need - none requested medical practitioners to assess health related housing need

**‘important shift towards the adoption of a social model of housing needs assessment, which better corresponds with disability rights frameworks than prior medical approaches’**

**but**

**‘allocations policies and choice based lettings schemes remain complex and often difficult for disabled people to understand’**

## The housing application process (2)

Rachel – seeking a more suitable home

Even with a stairlift installed, in order to use the upstairs toilet, Rachel has to make eight transfers between chair, wheelchair, stairlift and toilet – and back down again. This impacts negatively on her health and disability.

Practice improvements:

- Ideally a single named contact should support disabled people to navigate complex allocation and lettings systems
- Landlords to assess the overall need of the household, including all household members



## Lettings – matching up applicants and vacancies

Strategic audit of stock for adaptations and potential to better inform future planning of the pool of potentially accessible housing

Potential for new technologies to enhance data and matching

Search widely - flexibility in target letting times for adapted or accessibly designed vacancies could achieve more sustainable matches

Effectiveness of new build lettings

## Offers and viewings

**‘Most participant home seekers received inappropriate housing offers, or no offers at all, during the course of the tracking study.....led to negative and/or adverse emotional and mental distress’**

- Importance of maintaining up to date information – active management of housing applications
- Accessibility includes: internal design, external environment, garden, community
- New technologies – including virtual viewings
- Effective use of nominations and mutual exchanges

## Moving in and making a home

Sam – emotional and social benefits of moving into an adapted/accessible property

**‘I can do the dishes now, cook, move unaided around the house – and I’m rediscovering my relationship with my husband, whose stress is reduced by having fewer caring tasks’**

- Further adaptations may be needed
- Some applicants required support with moving and settling in

**Considerable consensus that construction of newly built accessible and adaptable properties provide significantly greater scope to meet individual housing needs, compared to adaptation of older housing stock**

## Conclusions

- Disabled people's extended lived experience of inappropriate housing, while waiting for a more accessible home, clearly causes considerable physical and mental harm
- Allocations policies and choice based lettings schemes remain complex and often difficult for disabled people to understand
- Adaptations can make some of our older housing stock more liveable for some disabled people, but newly built accessible housing offers much more potential to appropriately meet complex mobility and other impairment related housing needs
- Disabled people and their families should have equal housing opportunities and the right to an accessible home in the community that ensures and protects their human rights

## Recommendations for RSL and Local Authorities

- Establish co-production groups, ensuring they are inclusive of disabled people
- Canvassing widely – beyond own organisation – for effective matches
- Explore use of new technology to improve property intelligence enable remote viewing for applicants unable to visit in person
- Widen needs assessment for disabled people - access to a garden, public transport, community connections, such as GP
- Review tenancy sustainability practice to ensure it is inclusive for disabled people
- Review systems to ensure applicants who make some ‘liveability’ improvements to their homes while waiting for an accessible property are not further disadvantaged in lettings priority schemes

## Recommendation for Scottish Housing Regulator

- Recognise that void periods for accessible/adapted social housing may require additional time to allocate and carry out necessary adaptations before an applicant is able to move in – a specific classification could give them exemption from standard targets for re-let times

## Recommendations for Scottish Government

- Support flexible and effective lettings practice for accessible and adapted housing
- Continue to encourage local targets for new accessible/adapted housing that are proportional to requirements across tenures (use model in Still Minding the Step, Fitzpatrick et al, 2018)
- Develop minimum accessibility standards for new build social housing so that it is more economical and easier to adapt in the future
- Review support for the National Accessible Housing Register (rarely mentioned in this study)

**Read the Report – updated link**

[Match Me - Full Report](#)

[Match Me Executive Summary](#)



## Our Research Team

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Thank You

Questions, discussion and  
feedback welcome

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