

Specialised and Supported Housing Policy

(To ensure provision of supported housing in supportive communities.)

April 2021



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction: Our Philosophy on Specialised and Supported Housing.....	5
Categories of Supported Housing	9
Supported Housing That Leads to Living Independently.....	10
Supported Housing for Particular Underserved or Key Affected Populations	11
Supported Housing for Independent Living with Long Term Support.....	12
Commission on Care and ‘Fair Deal’	13
Independent Supported Living for Disabled People	14
Community-Based Health Supports.....	15
Table 2. Substance Use Supported Services.....	16
Health Supports for People Needing Lifelong Care.....	18
Refugee and Migrant Health.....	19
Health Needs of Victims of Gender-based and Domestic Violence and Abuse	19
Wraparound Support to Live Independently, Training and Advocacy	20
The Importance of Involving Users in Supported Housing Design and Development of Services.....	22
Green and Universal Design-Thinking for Supported Housing.....	24
Safety & Security.....	24
Prosocial Spaces for family and community	27
Access to Green and/or Blue Space, and Horticultural and Animal-Assisted Therapy.....	30
Design that Enables Integration of Activity into Daily Routines.....	36
Other Green Design Enhancements of Supported Living Spaces.....	37

Executive Summary

A rights-based housing policy means not only that housing needs must be met by the State if a person cannot meet them from their own resources, but also that the housing provided must be adequate.¹ This means putting housing in place for people who require supported living services that provides integrated packages of a home, support, and care. The Green Party also believes rights based housing must be environmentally sustainable and look to public and individual health and wellbeing in order to fulfil Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11 (sustainable cities) and 3 (health).² The Green Party embraces the principles of Universal Design alongside the concept of 'support and infill'. This sees universal support as a social and political duty, and infill as human-rights assertion of agency, possession and privacy within the support system where the user is a participatory agent in the design of the housing and supports.^{3 4 5}

There are two categories of people that may need supported housing. The first category are those who may need supported housing that leads to living independently and the second are those who avail of supported housing for independent living with long term care. The first category of people may only need support short term, although it should be provided for as long as needed or be ready to start up again if, for example, a tenancy is at risk or fails. These may be young people leaving care, people who have lived through the trauma of homelessness; people who have suffered acute mental health problems; people living with or recovering from substance use; or they may be people from underserved or key affected populations, such as the migrant community, or the LGBTQI+ community. The second group is people who will need

¹ Simon Communities of Ireland: The Right to Housing - An Introduction
<http://www.simon.ie/Portals/1/Docs/policies/Position%20papers/The%20Right%20to%20Housing%20-%20An%20Introduction%20Discussion%20Document%2005.pdf>

² UN News (2018) Better housing means better health and well-being, stress new WHO guidelines
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1026811>

³ Habraken, J; (1999) Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing <https://www.habraken.com/>

⁴ <https://www.percurazorg.nl/>

⁵ <https://www.irbnet.de/daten/iconda/CIB4048.pdf>

long term support to assist them to live independently. This could be people ageing in place, or people living with disabilities. A person-centred approach to health support and wraparound services in supported housing would see each individual have a unique plan in place to give them everything they need to remain living independently, and within a supportive community.

Universal design-thinking, that integrates supported housing into neighbourhoods, and designs or regenerates neighbourhoods to bring in green and blue spaces and to be animal/biodiversity-supportive, can improve individual and community, physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, sustainability and contribute to mitigation of climate and biodiversity emergencies. This is a vital contribution to achieving many of the 17 SDGs, as ambitioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁶ Participation from tenants in the design, ensures individual, political, democratic, and community inclusion. Altogether, when a home is within a suitable social geography, residents gain self-esteem and pride in their surroundings. This contributes to cost-effectiveness as tenants care for their accommodation, and their wellbeing is sustained.^{7 8 9 10} This encompasses the three pillars of sustainability - the social, the environmental, and the economic, and therefore meets the needs of the present, without compromising the needs of future generations and without leaving anyone behind.

Summary of Policy Points

- In order to contribute to achieving the SDGs, the Green Party believes that we must:
- Meet the obligations of building a sustainable recovery post-COVID-19, that grows supported housing capacity concomitant with community healthcare;
- Develop this capacity within supportive communities and according to principles of support and infill;

⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁷ https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/40082/Involving_users_in_supported_housing.pdf

⁸ <http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/Building-for-Everyone/9-Planning.pdf>

⁹ Towards better integration of urban design and mental health promotion, Designing good mental health into cities: the next frontier for urban design, Design Council. <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/designing-good-mental-health-cities-next-frontier-urban-design>

¹⁰ Universal Design: Creating Inclusive Environments. Steinfeld, E; Maisel, J. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2012.

- Provide supports that are person-centred and designed around the needs of each individual. This includes low, medium and high community health support (through inclusion health), substance use supported services, and wraparound support to live independently.
- Develop housing using Universal Design, that is environmentally sustainable and looking to public and individual health and wellbeing;
- Be mindful of the social geography of supported housing and its neighbourhood because it matters. The spirit of place that increases feelings of safety and facilitates prosocial spaces and daily activity, contributes to a sense of belonging, and a feeling of self-worth and wellbeing.
- Nonhuman animal-friendly, biodiversity-supportive, and green and blue spaces should be part of the design or regeneration of supportive housing and its neighbourhoods, for individual and community wellbeing, sustainability and mitigation of climate and biodiversity emergencies.

Introduction: Our Philosophy on Specialised and Supported Housing

Housing options for people with support needs are moving from congregated institutional and residential care, to prioritising community living. However, Ireland has so far failed to meet its commitment to the 2011 report ‘Time to Move on from Congregated Settings’ and close all of these institutions for disabled people by 2018.¹¹ Much research, and NGOs including Age Action stress the need for the provision of permanent supported housing, and that this can break the institutional circuit of congregate emergency accommodation and congregate institutional care.^{12 13 14}

These settings can:

- Institutionalise residents;
- isolate and segregate from community life;
- take control away from people over day-to-day decisions;

¹¹ Inclusion Ireland (201) Deinstitutionalisation in Ireland; a failure to act <https://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/default/files/attach/basic-page/1655/deinstitutionalisation-ireland-failure-act.pdf>

¹² European Journal of Homelessness, Vol. 12.No.2. Daly, A; Craig, S; O’Sullivan, E (2018) The Institutional Circuit: Single Homelessness in Ireland https://www.feantsa.org/download/12-2_n1_researchnote_daly_v027107075640535215225.pdf

¹³ Age Action, Submission to the Oireachtas Special Committee on Covid-19 Response: Congregated Settings - Nursing Homes (2020) https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/special_committee_on_covid_19_response/submissions/2020/2020-07-27_submission-age-action-scc19r-r-0350-d_en.pdf

¹⁴ Disability Federation Ireland (2018) The Situation of younger people with disabilities living in nursing homes in Ireland - phase 1. https://www.disability-federation.ie/assets/files/pdf/dfi_r_2018_web.pdf

- take choice away from residents on who they live with;
- ignore personal will and preferences through rigid routines;
- use paternalistic approaches to service provision and supervision;
- breach human rights.¹⁵

People are disabled by their environment, and by systemic and attitudinal barriers, but deinstitutionalisation and independent living can be achieved through policy that acknowledges Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This sets out people's right to self-determination, so they can choose where they live, who to live with, and how to live one's own life. This requires that the built environment, transport and information are accessible, and personal assistance and community-based services are part of a supportive neighbourhood.¹⁶

Green and sustainable Universal Design principles can remove or delay the need for people with disabilities, the elderly and others being accommodated in congregate settings, and enable independent living. In order to build a sustainable recovery post-Covid-19, community healthcare and supported housing capacity need to grow together - health and housing being more intertwined than ever before, and these being the two most critical issues for Irish people in the 2020s. This can be more cost effective and achieve better outcomes than congregated care options, which have proved to be so costly in hardship, morbidity, and even mortality terms for people living in those settings, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, from older people, to people living in Direct Provision, for example.^{17 18}

The principles of supported housing are the provision of services designed around each individual, which may include primary healthcare, tenancy sustainment, supervision, training and other assistance, in affordable accommodation, that can help people with support needs to maintain stable housing and improve their health. It can enable people with disabilities to live independently. It can help to halt the downward spiral of homelessness, and concomitant increasing mental and physical health deficits, that often lead to chronic illness, and difficulty in ending substance abuse.

¹⁵ Inclusion Ireland (201) Deinstitutionalisation in Ireland; a failure to act <https://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/default/files/attach/basic-page/1655/deinstitutionalisation-ireland-failure-act.pdf>

¹⁶ European Network on Independent Living 2017. <https://enil.eu/independent-living/definitions/>

¹⁷ <https://icsh.ie/housing-plan-for-older-people-a-critical-challenge-for-new-minister/>

¹⁸ <https://www.masi.ie/2020/04/11/statement-on-the-governments-appalling-response-to-covid-19-in-direct-provision/>

Universal Design and Supported Housing can help people age in place in their communities, and can even help families stay together, when affordability coupled with support, design and planning help families with ageing or disabled members to cope.¹⁹

Research shows that supported living means less use of emergency health services, it can delay entrance into care and nursing homes, and lessens incarceration - all costly consequences to lack of investment in supportive care, that restrict autonomy and inclusion in communities:

‘... the surroundings, buildings, rooms and objects of supported housing are assembled in a broader social geography that could help tenants to express themselves as worth respecting citizens with their own identities.’²⁰

Ensuring the broad social geography around supported housing helps residents feel a sense of belonging and self-worth means looking to material surroundings and the design of neighbourhoods. Good amenities, well designed spaces, roads and transport, lighting and so on in a neighbourhood can make people feel safe and raise self-esteem, and influence how they are perceived by others. Our surroundings and feeling safe help to form our identity and give us the foundations to make meaningful connections. The design of our neighbourhoods and supported housing can facilitate safe interaction with family, friends, neighbours and wider community, and help to build social and community networks that are important for mental health and wellbeing. Neighbourhoods and integrated supported housing designed to incorporate access to green and blue space also help to optimise wellbeing. Being outside in the open air, having access to nature, being able to care for nonhuman animals and biodiversity, or even just having a garden like other neighbours’ gardens, rather than supported housing having the appearance of an institution with gravel driveway and no vegetation, all contribute to a spirit of place. It also facilitates opportunities for horticultural and animal-assisted therapy that can benefit those recovering from

¹⁹ Housing Agency (2018) Designing Housing to meet the needs of all: A Roadmap - Universal Design <https://housingforall.ie/universal-design/>

²⁰ Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems <https://uia.brage.unit.no/uia-x/mlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

trauma. Design that helps to integrate activity into people's daily routine contributes to better physical and mental health, and social inclusion. If design puts shops, healthcare and other amenities within walking distance it facilitates exercise and full engagement with the community.^{21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28}

Policy Points

- Meet the obligations of “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion” and research that calls for the closure of congregated institutional settings;
- Abide by Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to self-determination, and require that the built environment, and public amenities enable this within supportive neighbourhoods.
- Use the principles of green and sustainable Universal Design to create or regenerate neighbourhoods, where community healthcare and supported housing capacity grow together and remove or delay the need for people to be accommodated in congregate settings.
- Design supports around each individual - including inclusive healthcare, tenancy sustainment, training and other assistance - in affordable housing.
- Ensure investment in individualised supportive health and social care and community-based services.
- Design or regenerate neighbourhoods, paying attention to a broader social geography that supports wellbeing and self-worth by: providing safety; prosocial spaces; access to green and blue spaces that are nonhuman animal and

²¹ Feeling Safe and Subjective Well-being, Eduardo Wills, 2015

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290446281_Feeling_Safe_and_Subjective_Well-being

²² Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems <https://uia.brange.unit.no/uia-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

²³ Grey, T; Pierce, M; Cahill, S; Dyer, M; (2015) Universal Design Guidelines Dementia Friendly Dwellings for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers <http://universaldesign.ie/Web-Content-/UD-DFD-Guidelines-Intro-June-15.pdf>

²⁴ UniversalDesign.ie (2017) Homes for Smart Ageing Universal Design Challenge

<http://universaldesign.ie/Awards/Homes-for-Smart-Ageing-Universal-Design-Challenge/#3>

²⁵ World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe; Urban green spaces: a brief for action. https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/342289/Urban-Green-Spaces_EN_WHO_web3.pdf%3Fua=1

²⁶ Icp husa.org, Green Thumbs Up: Working with Nature Provides a Fresh Start for Homeless and Once-Homeless Families and Adults. Elder, LE. 2015 https://www.icphusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ICPH_UNCENSORED_3.2_Summer2012_GreenThumbsUp.pdf

²⁷ SLU; Horticultural Therapy for Homeless People, Niklasson, J. <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/SLU%20-%20Horticultural%20Therapy%20for%20Homeless%20People.pdf>

²⁸ Purdue University Press. Transforming Trauma: Resilience and Healing Through Our Connections With Animals, Tedeschi, P; Jenkins, MA.; 2019 https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=purduepress_ebooks

biodiversity friendly and give the opportunity for horticultural and animal-assisted therapy; and the integration of activity into daily routines.

Categories of Supported Housing

People that may need supported living housing can be divided into two categories. The first is those needing supports to develop the psychological, emotional and practical skills necessary to move on to living independently. They may include the following:

- Young people leaving State care (they may be entering Aftercare services);
- People suffering homelessness;
- People who engage in substance use and/or behavioural addictions (e.g. gambling);
- People who have suffered acute mental health problems, on discharge from hospital, and into step down or similar Model of Care;
- People with mild disabilities or other illness who, having reached adulthood, are transitioning to live independently of their families.
- People leaving prison, or at risk of offending.
- People from the Traveller and Roma Communities and other ethnic minority groups, who have suffered exclusion and homelessness and may require culture specific accommodation.
- People moving on from Direct Provision, and,
- asylum seekers in new own-door provision supplied by Local Authorities;
- People at risk of, or escaping domestic violence;
- People who have been trafficked for work, and women and girls who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation or exploitative marriage.

The second group is those people for whom assisted or supported housing is a condition of life-long care, where independent living is achieved through ongoing support. This group includes:

- People ageing in place;
- Those ageing with dementia or other age-related illnesses;
- People with learning disabilities;
- People with physical disabilities;
- People with mental health problems or disabilities who need long-term care;

- Families with dependent family members living with disabilities;
- People with long term substance use related health issues (e.g. alcohol dependence).

Supported Housing That Leads to Living Independently

The Green Party welcomes the Housing First implementation Plan 2018-2021 and supports the principles of Housing First alongside Universal Design.^{29 30 31} As UN Habitat points out, ‘housing is both prevention and cure - and a matter of life and death - in the face of COVID-19.’³² Buildings can be more protective than just as shelter, when they are also designed to support physical and mental wellbeing, and incorporate green technology. Designing supported housing with this in mind, and within supportive communities, alongside person-centred wrap-around supports provided through Case Management and inclusion health approaches all mean that a person or family is less likely to spiral down into cycles of homelessness and the need for more expensive emergency housing and care. People receiving this support can achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes and maintain meaningful work, social life, and housing.^{33 34}

- Accommodation must meet the special and specific requirements of individuals and provide person-centred support and health care.
- The physical design of accommodation must take account of research that shows access to green places and the ability to care for nonhuman animals in daily life is associated with improved mental and physical health and wellbeing, as is the integration of activity, and prosocial places, while ensuring security and safety.^{35 36}

²⁹ Housing First Europe Hub, Housing First Guide Europe (2020). Core Principles of Housing First <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/guide/core-principles-housing-first/>

³⁰ Gov.ie Rebuilding Ireland, Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021 (2018) <https://rebuildingireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Housing-First-Implementation-Plan-2018.pdf>

³¹ Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland <http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/Housing/>

³² UN HABITAT for a Better Urban Future: Housing is both a Prevention & Cure for COVID-19, May 2020. <https://unhabitat.org/housing-is-both-a-prevention-cure-for-covid-19>

³³ Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems <https://uia.brage.unit.no/uia-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

³⁴ Simon Community (2017) Homelessness and Health Opening Statement to the Oireachtas Committee on Health from the Simon Communities in Ireland https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_health/submissions/2017/2017-07-05_opening-statement-simon-community-on-homelessness-and-health_en.pdf

³⁵ UK Green Building Council, Health and Wellbeing in Homes, July 2016 - Health and wellbeing outcomes are measured quantitatively and qualitatively as two different measures. Wellbeing is a measure of quality of life and happiness. https://www.worldgbc.org/sites/default/files/160705_Healthy_Homes_UK_full_report.pdf.

³⁶ Designing Good Mental Health into Cities: the Next Frontier for Urban Design. <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/designing-good-mental-health-cities-next-frontier-urban-design>

- At the same time, design must be cognisant of the need for Green Buildings, and the new risks associated with Covid-19.

Supported Housing for Particular Underserved or Key Affected Populations

Policy Points

- Gender Specific Accommodation

People who have suffered domestic abuse or violence, and women and girls who have been trafficked for sexual or marriage exploitation may be suffering from trauma, and need gender sensitive assistance and gender specific accommodation. According to Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, supports and protection of victims of crime, signed up to by Ireland, shelters or other accommodation need to provide safety from further victimisation, intimidation or retaliation, and also need to provide integrated and appropriate support based on the specific needs of victims of sexual, or gender-based violence, or violence or abuse in a close relationship, which should include appropriate trauma support and counselling.³⁷

LGBTQI+ people may have suffered exclusion, homophobia, transphobia, and any number of other challenges. Therefore, managers and staff of accommodation must have a policy of zero tolerance and take a person-centred approach to the care of people from the LGBTQI+ community. This should ensure that LGBTQI+ people are managers of their own service planning, and that rights enjoyed by all married couples extend to same-sex couples, according to the Equality Act 2010. All support should be LGBTQI+ aware and aware of the need for inclusivity, and able to link in with youth and other services offering advocacy to LGBTQI+ people. Gender neutral accommodation must be available for those who need it.³⁸

- Supported Asylum Seeker and Migrant Accommodation

Accommodation for people from the asylum seeker and migrant communities should be located where integration with local communities and access to transport links,

³⁷ <https://immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2019-11/2019SubmissiontoJOConVictimsofHumanTraffickinginDirectProvision.pdf>

³⁸ Housing Diversity Network. Delivering housing services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender customers. N.d. <https://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/delivering-housing-services-to-lgbt-customers.pdf>

amenities, services and employment opportunities can be maximised. Support workers in the current Direct Provision Centres, and future supported housing should receive specialised training in dealing with trauma, sexual abuse and domestic abuse and violence, and detection of mental health issues. Unaccompanied children must be looked after by specialist support workers under the responsibility of Tusla, including after they reach the age of 18, and until their application for asylum is concluded. Support should include access to training courses for those unable to access the labour market, and each individual should have an individualised integration and transition plan in preparation for being granted status. A multi-agency approach should be implemented in line with the care and case management approach.³⁹

- Travelling and Roma Communities

The Housing (Traveller) Accommodation Act, 1998 places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to consult with local Traveller communities to make four year plans on how to meet current and future housing needs. This should challenge the notion of assimilation and rather instigate a policy of inclusion in a way that ethnic minority communities can express their identity and culture.⁴⁰ Homelessness and chronic overcrowding within Traveller communities, as well as the inadequacies around housing and halting bay sites - often flooded, infested with rats, and lacking facilities - need to be addressed, and supported accommodation for people from travelling, Roma and other ethnic minority communities must follow the principles of inclusion, and self-expression.⁴¹

Supported Housing for Independent Living with Long Term Support

Green Universal Design can provide a future-proof flexible framework for housing, that with residents' participation in design, can be suitable and adaptable throughout the life course of those who live in them regardless of age, ability or disability.

Ageing in Place

³⁹<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/press-centre/press-releases/2019/12/12-joint-committee-on-justice-and-equality-report-finds-direct-provision-not-fit-for-purpose-and-calls-for-fundamental-reform-of-flawed-international-protection-application-process/>

⁴⁰ <https://itmtrav.ie/strategic-priorities/accommodation/>

⁴¹ <https://www.paveepoint.ie/traveller-accommodation-crisis/>

Most enduring societies, including Irish, have regarded the elders as repositories of learning, wisdom, and assistance, even if they eventually experience reduced physical and even intellectual capacity. Indeed, if we are lucky, many of us will reach a stage when supports become crucial if we are to remain at home, as most prefer.⁴² Latterly, western societies have tended to categorise cohorts of people who are then ‘managed’ into monocultures, from ‘tiny tots’ to elders. Housing policy de facto exacerbates this. Older people, and clichéd ‘empty nesters’ live sometimes lonely lives in houses that are often too big for them and difficult to heat efficiently, while growing young families struggle to find affordable living spaces. The Census 2016 shows an increase of 4.4% in adults and their parents co-living, reflecting a shortage of affordable housing.⁴³ Our planning codes militate against intergenerational living, resisting densification through creating new dwellings within the curtilage of an original dwelling.⁴⁴ A policy change to enable legally building separate accommodation within the curtilage can accommodate extended families, while good design can respect the need for privacy for young couples within their own existential domain - essential to their quality of life - and could include workspace to support those who can work from home. The synergies here are obvious with regard to mutual care - of grandchildren to enable working parents, or of the older generation by younger ones as time goes by.

Policy Points

- Permit densification allowing further units within curtilages of existing dwellings, subject to good planning and Building Control standards.
- Encourage and facilitate intergenerational living with generational privacy.
- Encourage and facilitate live/work environments, including the implementation of the National Broadband Plan to support the development of home working.

Commission on Care and ‘Fair Deal’

The Green Party supports the call from Age Action for the Department of Health to establish a Commission on Care. This Commission must address the need for reform

⁴² <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/aging-place-growing-older-home>

⁴³ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp4hf/cp4hf/fmls/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-planning/frequently-asked-questions-planning>

following the high level of deaths in some nursing homes among older people from Covid-19.⁴⁵

Policy Points

The Green Party proposes that the Commission on Care:

- Addresses over-reliance on institutional care, and;
- listens to the voices of older people who consistently state that they do not want nursing home care.
- Examine the need for integration of private nursing homes into the social care and health systems.
- Address and prioritise the need for access to adequate home supports and care that help older people remain integrated in their communities.⁴⁶

Independent Supported Living for Disabled People

All people can live independently with the right supports in place. According to Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, living independently and being included in the community is a right of all persons, regardless of their level of intellectual capacity, self-functioning or support requirement. Research shows that relocation to the community is associated with improved quality of life, including physical wellbeing, access to the community, self-determination, wellbeing and general life improvements including increased contact with family.⁴⁷ Independent living means ‘choice, control, freedom, equality’ and transition from ‘objects of care and charity to equal citizens and rights holders’.⁴⁸ This includes people with high support needs, and across age ranges, with the caveat that occasionally, loneliness and difficulty maintaining family contact were reported. The requirements to achieving this right for all persons with disabilities are the right supports and personal budgets. Support should include education and training, meaningful employment, and accessibility. Getting the right supports can be facilitated by a personal budget - which is a person-centred budget based on need. The person decides how to best spend their budget, but they are given support to manage this. This gives real choice and

⁴⁵ <https://www.ageaction.ie/news/2020/08/19/age-action-calls-minister-health-urgently-establish-commission-care-many-questions>

⁴⁶ <https://www.ageaction.ie/news>

⁴⁷ Inclusion Ireland (2019) Independent Supported Living <http://www.inclusionireland.ie/independent-supported-living>

⁴⁸ European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) Nothing About us Without Us. <https://enil.eu/independent-living/il-fact-sheet/>

control over what supports and services are wanted, and the ability to adapt them to changes in life circumstances.^{49 50}

Policy Points

- Ensure the right for all persons to live independently and be included in the community, according to Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Ensure the right supports to enable independent living are available and adequately resourced.
- Ensure that independence does not lead to loneliness or loss of contact with family and friends.
- Develop person-centred personal budgets based on needs.
- The budget must be under the control of the service user, who is to be supported to manage their budget if needed.
- The person must be able to choose what supports and services they wish to purchase with their budget, and be able to adapt supports and services to changes in life circumstances.

Community-Based Health Supports

The following is a tabulated account of health support needs within Supported Housing. It itemises the type of support needed, a description of what it should provide, and the level of support that is needed. Each table is followed by an assessment of what is currently provided, and recommendations for best policy practice. Health support is inconsistent in its provision. Improvements can vastly improve wellbeing and outcomes among those needing support.⁵¹

Table 1. Service and Level of Support

Name of Service	Description	Level of support
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⁴⁹ Inclusion Ireland (2019) Independent Supported Living <http://www.inclusionireland.ie/independent-supported-living>

⁵⁰ Inclusion Ireland (2018) Personalised Budgets Task Force Report Launch 17th July 2018.

<http://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/default/files/attach/book-page/1658/personal-budget-taskforce-launch.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://www.neic.ie/news/countrys-first-social-inclusion-hub-opens-in-neic>

Step up, step down	Specialised services for people with high health support needs when discharged into the community from hospital or as a pre-hospital support centre.	High
Respite centre	Specialised services for people with high health support needs.	High
Outreach/in reach	Outreach/in reach with specialised teams (primary care, mental health, harm reduction)	High
Service-level	Mobility-friendly, trauma informed environments	Medium
Staff-level supports	Mobility friendly services, support worker training (mental health, substance use, harm reduction, naloxone, midazolom)	Medium
Peer support	Support services operated by peers for peers. Peer witness programs (outlined below) are one example.	Medium

The provision of low and medium supports early on will prevent or reduce the need for higher supports later. However, high support services must be funded to respond to emergencies and to ensure that at least a minimum level of care is met (See: Inclusion Health in the Homelessness Policy). A two-pronged approach should be utilised whereby the necessary high supports are established and maintained whilst also funding lower support services which require relatively little investment such as training and can lead to quick returns through train the trainer programmes. Peers should be considered an excellent and yet largely untapped resource in this context.

Table 2. Substance Use Supported Services

Name of service	Type of Services	Core Features	Currently availability
Detoxification services	Substance use (alcohol, benzodiazepines, GHB/GBL)	Medical and other support.	Lack of availability
Residential drug treatment services	Substance use	Wraparound services	Several services available. High

		(counselling, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioural therapy)	threshold and low availability
Low threshold residential stabilisation services	Substance use	Alcohol use is managed as part of care plans. (Harm reduction model) Specialised medical support	Not currently available-house supported by a GP due to lack of official funded services supported by the Green Party Drug Policy
Managed Alcohol Program	Substance use-alcohol	Alcohol use is managed as part of care plans. Specialised medical support	One official example (Sundial House-Depaul). Many homeless services provide this service due to lack of official services.
Peer Witness Program	Substance use-opioids	People who use drugs manage drug use and prevent overdoses	Currently not available in Ireland.

A wide range of supported housing services are available for people who use drugs, internationally. Some of these supports are available in some locations in Ireland. However, they tend to be high threshold in terms of drug use treatment (e.g. people are excluded from services due to being on too high a dose of methadone), and mental health diagnosis (people are excluded or included for having a mental health diagnosis).⁵² Setting high thresholds for services reduces the likelihood of people engaging with support services and increases the likelihood that they will require higher - and more costly - support services in the long term. Some services like low threshold stabilisation services and peer witness programs, which are very low threshold, are not currently available in Ireland.

⁵² 'Sharing the Vision' P53 has removed the embargo on Dual Diagnosis-this will improve availability if facilities built / actually accessible <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2e46f-sharing-the-vision-a-mental-health-policy-for-everyone/>

Policy Points

- Ensure the availability of Inclusion Health programmes to meet the health needs of socially excluded individuals and communities.
- Provide low and medium community health supports early on, to reduce the need for high supports at a later stage.
- Ensure adequate funding for training and invest in train the trainer and peer-led programmes for lower support services with low thresholds.
- We will adequately resource high support services to enable the necessary support in response to emergencies.
- The Green Party supports the introduction of lower threshold substance use supported housing models as a method to engage people with services, increase their health and wellbeing and to reduce spending over the long term. We must make good the deficits in care-provision, as identified above.

Health Supports for People Needing Lifelong Care

It is a human rights obligation under the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that everyone should enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Access to the right support and personal choice are preconditions for living inclusively within supportive communities. Without adequate health support, that is easily accessed with appropriate supports there is a risk of neglect and institutionalisation.^{53 54}

Policy Points

- The fullest possible range and amount of support should be available for people with disabilities and chronic health problems, including dementia, living in supported accommodation.
- This support must be delivered also bearing in mind the needs of their carers and families, and the communities in which they are integrated, in order to maintain people's inclusion in their community for the longest possible time.

⁵³ Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. 2016. https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/34/58

⁵⁴ <https://www.housingagency.ie/sites/default/files/59.%20Review-of-the-Housing-and-Support-Options-for-Peop.pdf>

- This support must be accessible, as in, within geographical reach and affordable, and it should be delivered with a rights-based approach, of good quality, and be planned and directed with full participation of the person in order to maximise choice and control.

Refugee and Migrant Health

There may be immediate health needs to respond to when refugees and migrants initially arrive due to previous lack of healthcare and/or trauma, along with challenges to mental health in adapting to a new environment.⁵⁵

Policy Points

- Migrant-sensitive health care must emphasise human rights and non-discrimination, and be sensitive to specific health needs among the refugee and migrant community including awareness of gender, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversities.
- Integration into the health system should be instigated as quickly as possible, while the system itself needs to be assessed to make sure it can sufficiently meet the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.
- Healthcare must be integrated into housing supports provided through Direct Provision, or Local Authorities.

Health Needs of Victims of Gender-based and Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic violence and gender-based violence causes specific and serious impacts on women's health and wellbeing, including physical, psychological and psychiatric problems. Displacement from social and protective networks through warfare/conflict, trafficking or because of escaping domestic violence and abuse, renders women increasingly more vulnerable to further abuse. Symptoms of depression and psychiatric comorbidity and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are more likely, and likely to be more severe. Women who have been victims of gender-based and domestic violence and abuse are more inclined towards physical illnesses such as damage to sight, neurological problems, musculoskeletal injuries, and gynaecological problems, HIV, as well as unwanted pregnancies. They are also much more likely to suffer from

⁵⁵ WHO Stepping up action on refugee and migrant health. https://b139bc67-352b-4a52-91b8-a918d4b497e9.filesusr.com/ugd/b6d55d_4baed674890d43c7bc08f0264512a81e.pdf

alcohol or drug dependencies, self-harm, suicidal behaviour and sleep disturbances.⁵⁶

57

Policy Points

- Ensure there are adequate and fully resourced emergency domestic violence refuges, which must be able to provide the expert health services needed.
- Ensure there is independent, safe, gender-specific supported housing.

Wraparound Support to Live Independently, Training and Advocacy

Independent living supports should be included as key elements of a person-centred approach to support plans provided by services and housing bodies that provide accommodation that can lead to independent living. This should include information, referrals and support to enable active engagement in exercise, hobbies, civic participation, training and education.

The provision of independent living skills support can help individuals to prepare for independent living and to sustain future accommodation. Supports should enable people to develop or regain skills in areas such as shopping, budgeting, cooking. Support should also include assistance to access and use financial, social and community services, as well as budgeting skills and debt management. Options around engagement in education, training or employment should also form part of preparations for independent living. A package of support should also include exploration of issues that may have led to previous tenancy breakdown (where applicable), housing advocacy, general advocacy and referrals to address mental health and physical health issues, substance use issues and any other specialist supports relevant to the individual. Where available, an assessment in independent living skills capacity by an Occupational Therapist can help to provide a more focused range of supports. For those with more complex intellectual, cognitive or behavioural needs, a variety of formats and tools should be used to facilitate learning and engagement.

⁵⁶ In Focus: Behind Closed Doors, Bridget Arkins. 2006. https://www.inmo.ie/tempDocs/domestic_violence_sep06.pdf

⁵⁷ WHO Gender-based violence in health emergencies. <https://www.who.int/health-cluster/about/work/other-collaborations/gender-based-violence/en/>

Organisations providing accommodation that can lead to independent living can and should avail of support plan tools and approaches that are deemed to be suitable for the needs of the people using their services. Supports provided should conform to best practise standards as set out for the respective service. Most homeless services in Ireland provide support and support plans that are guided by the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for homeless services. Other services may be guided by standards set out by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). Most homeless service support plans are formulated using the PASS online system which provides a format and database for support planning to include independent living skills. Other organisations such as Triangle provide the Outcomes Star, an evidenced-based tool for supporting and measuring change with people across a range of services.⁵⁸

People residing in supported housing that can lead to independent living also require support to access suitable, stable, safe and affordable accommodation which meets their individual needs. Services achieve this by building close relationships with Local Authorities (LAs) and their social work departments and with approved housing bodies (AHBs) in the first instance. Due to the lack of public and social housing, services have also had to cultivate relationships with private landlords where necessary to encourage them to rent to this client group at affordable rates which will allow the tenant to qualify for a housing support payment.

Policy Points

- There must be a separation of housing and support services to ensure autonomy and security.
- Where the person accessing housing has complex needs, or where there is a history of accommodation breakdown, contact with local authorities can and should involve a care and case management approach. This approach involves all relevant organisations involved in supporting the person working together to

⁵⁸ <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/>

advocate for the provision of suitable housing to meet the person's needs and to agree a package of supports once the person is in a tenancy.

- For people living in supported housing, advocacy is a vital component and requirement of support. This enables their voice, views and experiences to be heard and helps to ensure that their rights are being upheld in a housing and healthcare context. An advocate in housing and social care will provide practical assistance with accessing necessary housing, welfare, social and health services.
- Peer advocacy where provided is often an extremely effective advocacy approach. The Homeless Health Peer Advocacy set up by Groundswell states that people who have been homeless have a greatly reduced life expectancy and face multiple barriers to accessing mainstream services.⁵⁹
- Peer-advocacy can support people to navigate care pathways which aren't adequately adapting to accommodate needs.
- External advocacy agencies such as the National Advocacy Service and SAGE are recommended to provide information and services in matters such as personal finance and end of life planning.^{60 61}

The Importance of Involving Users in Supported Housing Design and Development of Services

A rights-based housing policy approach, according to the European Convention on Human Rights (signed and ratified by all EU Member States), aims to combat social exclusion and poverty, and provide a decent existence for all. EU anti-discrimination legislation ensures that rights-based housing policy does not exclude on the basis of 'racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'.⁶² A rights-based approach also identifies entitlements and corresponding obligations, ensures access to information, effective participation, and the provision of justice.⁶³ Crucial to the ability to fulfil obligations and perform effective participation, is capability, and

⁵⁹ <https://groundswell.org.uk/what-we-do/homeless-health-peer-advocacy/>

⁶⁰ National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities <https://advocacy.ie/>

⁶¹ <https://www.sageadvocacy.ie/>

⁶² Housing Rights Watch, EU Housing Rights, 2013. <http://www.housingrightswatch.org/page/eu-housing-rights>

⁶³ Social Protection Human Rights. Introduction to a Rights-based approach. 2015 <https://socialprotection-humanrights.org/introduction-to-a-rights-based-approach/>

according to Amartya Sen, poverty and social exclusion is deprivation of capability.⁶⁴ To ensure political, democratic, and community participation is to ensure social inclusion and so, capability. User participation in the design of supported housing and supports is a move away from passive recipient and towards active involvement and the objective of empowerment, well described according to the principles of support and infill.^{65 66 67}

The Green Party believes a need for support should not mean losing the rights that everyone else enjoys - inclusion in families, schools, transport, and neighbourhoods, and recognition of the right to make decisions and speak on one's own behalf. Independent living should be achieved within a social model of disability that does not limit choice through social and physical environments, but rather consults and supports.⁶⁸ According to research from Shelter (UK), the benefits of service user involvement are:

- Improved management, with ideas and feedback from service users creating a more effective service.
- Cost-effectiveness, as service user involvement creates a sense of ownership and reduces likelihood of damage.
- Improved relationship between providers and service users, as the flow of information creates greater understanding between them.
- Better service user satisfaction through greater input and ownership.
- An increase in a sense of community and solidarity as joint provider/service user schemes become a reality.
- Greater staff satisfaction as they know they are carrying out what their service users want.
- Skill development for both providers and users.
- Increased self-efficacy, confidence, competence and inclusion which contributes to gaining the skills for independence.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny, Amartya Sen, 2000
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29778/social-exclusion.pdf>

⁶⁵ <https://www.habraken.com/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.percurazorg.nl/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.irbnet.de/daten/iconda/CIB4048.pdf>

⁶⁸ European Network on Independent Living. Nothing about us without us! Empowerment independence options rights.
<https://enil.eu/independent-living/il-fact-sheet/>

⁶⁹ Shelter: Involving Users in Supported Housing - A Good Practice Guide. 2000.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/40082/Involving_users_in_supported_housing.pdf

There are, of course, challenges to service user involvement. Each service user is an individual with their own complex set of needs, experiences, and perceptions, and providers must take account of users' capacities, skills, experiences and interest in involvement. Therefore, there is no one model of involvement with a guarantee of success. Service users must therefore be given the support and information required to make decisions on what they need or would like from services, and users must be given the space to communicate their experiences and how they feel about involvement and outcomes.⁷⁰ However, research shows that service users have a preference for this person-centred approach, that can deliver choice, control, and autonomy.⁷¹

Policy Points

- Enable capability and inclusion through support to achieve political, democratic and community participation.
- Empower users of supported housing through consultation on the design of accommodation and support services.
- Ensure inclusion in families, schools, transport and neighbourhoods through consultation on the design of social and physical environments.
- Ensure that a person-centred approach to consultation is used that recognises capacity, skills and experience. Support providers must be conscious of the level of interest in involvement and the level of support and information required to make decisions.

Green and Universal Design-Thinking for Supported Housing

Safety & Security

Feeling unsafe has a positive relationship with anxiety, 'fight or flight response' of raised stress hormones, and other negative emotions. It is a relationship with the

⁷⁰ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Supporting People: A Guide to user involvement for organisations providing housing related support services, 2003. <http://www.housingcare.org/downloads/kbase/2577.pdf>

⁷¹ Service user experiences of specialist mental health supported accommodation: A systematic review of qualitative studies and narrative synthesis <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/hsc.12570>

environment, in that feeling unsafe implies a subjective feeling of a lack of autonomy and control in managing the environment a person finds themselves in, while an objective measure of lack of safety may well differ from subjective feelings of insecurity. Feeling unsafe is a fear of loss, which could be loss of control, property, relationships, or health/life. It can come from perceptions/real dangers from the environment such as a high presence of crime within the surrounding community, poverty, fear of losing housing, health and food insecurity, or a feeling of being unsafe because of belonging to a particular group that might be persecuted in a community, risks from traffic, or getting lost (a risk in the case of dementia or confusion). Feeling safe, therefore, is a critical measure of wellbeing, which enables opportunities for people to build on strengths and ambitions. Social and community connections, and attachments to supportive networks help to moderate the relationship with the environment and feelings of insecurity - a much needed facet of community for those who need additional support.^{72 73}

Neighbourhood qualities are, therefore, important in the social geography of supported housing, with daily lives and sense of self influenced by material surroundings and also influencing the perception of residents by others. Designing neighbourhoods well, with integrated supported housing, can positively enhance a neighbourhood for everybody, with the appropriate design of roads, street lighting, design features such as distinct landmarks, and the provision of good amenities. This can increase perceptions of safety in a community and improve an area in general. The social geography can impact the identity of people living in supported housing - as a potential victim to be persecuted, as one of a small community who is surveilled by a much larger, and suspicious community of neighbours, as someone deserving of run-down surroundings with few amenities, or conversely as someone who belongs, is valued, and is safe in an area with meaningful connections. Measures to ensure safety in congregate accommodation, such as security cameras, have been found to challenge feelings of security, as they tell tenants there may be danger, or that they themselves are seen as a danger, and are therefore being surveilled, so they should be used only

⁷² Feeling Safe and Subjective Well-being, Eduardo Wills, 2015

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290446281_Feeling_Safe_and_Subjective_Well-being

⁷³ Design Council Towards better integration of urban design and mental health promotion, Designing good mental health into cities: the next frontier for urban design, <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/designing-good-mental-health-cities-next-frontier-urban-design>

with caution and participation by tenants in their presence and places of presence. However, in independent settings, safety issues are focused around loneliness and intimacy, revealing a need for the consideration of balance between security and loneliness. Research shows tenants appreciate own-door independent settings - which are optimal post Covid-19. There is a sense of control and choice. Tenants enjoy having bedroom space separate from their other rooms, and from shared space, and research also shows the benefits of bedrooms that promote relaxation, peace and healthy sleep, despite the risk of loneliness.^{74 75}

Designing physical safety features into a home such as wider entrances and internal doorways, suitable storage that leaves hallways and rooms clear, and easy to understand technological home services and entertainment, future-proofs homes, meeting needs over time, makes them easily accessed, comprehended and fully used regardless of age, ability or disability, improving comfort and energy efficiency, enabling people to live independently for longer.⁷⁶ Design-thinking can provide safety and independent living, together with space made for positive social contact, alongside extending the suitability of a safe, energy-efficient home over time. The risk of loneliness that goes with a safe home can be mitigated by design to facilitate social interaction.

Policy Points

- Ensure that planning creates or regenerates neighbourhoods so that supported housing is integrated into cohesive communities.
- Neighbourhoods will be designed or regenerated for communities, so that roads, street lighting, landmarks and amenities keep people safe, and make people feel safe.
- Ensure the social geography of neighbourhoods makes people feel they belong, and that they are valued in the community. This is achieved through the materiality of a neighbourhood - good amenities, prosocial design, green

⁷⁴ Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems <https://uia.brage.unit.no/uia-x/mlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

⁷⁵ https://www.worldgbc.org/sites/default/files/160705_Healthy_Homes_UK_full_report.pdf

⁷⁶ Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland. 2015. <http://universaldesign.ie/Web-Content-/Introduction.pdf>

spaces, good lighting - that makes its residents feel and be perceived as worthwhile.

- Ensure that the social geography gives neighbourhoods an identity through preservation of natural and cultural heritage.
- Measures to ensure safety must be designed with participation from residents.
- Safety and the perception of safety must be designed into neighbourhoods and accommodation so that there is balance between security and loneliness. This is achieved through the provision of private, quiet and relaxing space while also providing prosocial space.
- Use Universal Design to create or regenerate homes so that they are future-proofed and meeting needs over time regardless of age, ability or disability.
- Universal design for supported housing should include a plethora of 'floating' or 'wraparound' supports, and be:
 - Integrated into the community;
 - Easily accessible and moved around in;
 - Easy to understand and use;
 - Comfortable and energy efficient;
 - Safe, cost effective and adaptable over time, including for a greater degree of care if necessary.^{77 78}

Prosocial Spaces for family and community

Environments around and within supported housing must facilitate safe interactions with visiting family and friends, other residents, and the wider neighbourhood to build personal relationships, and social and community networks. There is a close association between mental health and strong social connections. As shown above, it enhances feelings of inclusion and safety, and in design, the two are closely related, meaning the safety of independent own door accommodation need not mean loneliness, and having access to social engagement need not compromise feelings of safety. The right design of neighbourhood spaces, and accommodation, can mean the best of both worlds and a greener world too.

⁷⁷ <http://universaldesign.ie/Web-Content-/UD-DFD-Guidelines-Intro-June-15.pdf>

⁷⁸ <http://universaldesign.ie/Awards/Homes-for-Smart-Ageing-Universal-Design-Challenge/#3>

Designing space for natural interactions is about the design of entire neighbourhoods and streets, as well as homes. Public spaces can be developed for collaborative and flexible use, with plenty of street furniture for resting, or sitting and interacting with others. Better mental health can be promoted through creating interest in surroundings by providing notable landscapes and making the facades of buildings diverse rather than unchanging and homogeneous. Cities, towns and villages should be designed for pedestrian connections, with safe, convenient options for pedestrians, cyclists, and users of public transport, avoiding the promotion of individual car use.⁷⁹ This design means higher density housing, which can avoid urban sprawl, protect green field and farm land, and avoid car dependence. Social geography, wellbeing, and biodiversity can be enhanced by assimilating developments with topography and retaining natural features such as hedgerows, trees, and old stone walls, only removing what is needed for site access, and focusing the gaze on views of historical structures and natural heritage.⁸⁰ This gives a distinct relationship between the housing and its surroundings - a 'spirit of a place' that conveys identity, and symbolises who is inside, how they view themselves, and how they are viewed from outside - for populations who have historically been stigmatized, the 'spirit of a place' situates them in a particular sociocultural context that makes a difference to their relationship with the neighbouring community.⁸¹ Creating prosocial spaces for supported housing tenants, therefore means creating prosocial neighbourhoods. Design principles need to minimise feelings of threat, and maximise opportunities for interaction, cooperation, helping, sharing, volunteering among people and whole neighbourhoods. These are prosocial communities, and they are essential for sustained wellbeing that reproduce social wellbeing into the future.⁸²

Examples of this type of design would be cohousing communities and Cluster Housing Schemes, which are constructed around common areas - a community house, shared kitchens, dining spaces, gardens or any other collaborative space - and common property. Collaborative decision-making to manage and maintain common spaces and

⁷⁹ <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/designing-good-mental-health-cities-next-frontier-urban-design>

⁸⁰ Tipperary County Council. Design and Best Practice Guidelines for Cluster Housing Schemes in Rural Villages. <https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/Publications/TCC%20Clusters%20Draft%202.pdf>

⁸¹ Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems <https://uia.brange.unit.no/uia-x/mlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

⁸² Urban Design Directory - 2015/17. Creating Pro-social Places, Graham Marshall and Rhiannon Corcoran, p.8. https://www.udg.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Urban_Design_Directory_2015-17.pdf

property entails forming meaningful community bonds and connectedness. The design and subsequent lifestyle increases community participation, sustainability, and reduces energy use, with architectural features promoting connectedness, living in relationships, and increasing social capital. These common collaborative spaces vary according to who is using the space.^{83 84} In the case of supported housing, cohousing or the Core and Cluster model of supported housing can be applied to particular populations with special needs, which can be accommodated with particular shared spaces and belongings, while also ensuring independence and own-door safe space. For example, there could be a common kitchen where young people leaving care can get together with support workers and learn how to prepare good healthy meals. Or for migrant communities, a core and cluster type-design could incorporate a space for shared religious worship. People preparing for independent living might avail of training rooms/classrooms where tenants could collaborate with shared learning experiences, with peer or tutor led IT or other workplace and living skills. Clustering residential units around hallways, courtyards, and areas for recreation, with the help of access points or barriers, create the restricted, safe areas where tenants can socialise with each other and personal visitors such as family and friends. Connecting pathways and common spaces can connect these more private social areas to other clustered communities, facilities, shops and neighbourhood areas.⁸⁵ As most housing that will be lived in for the next 50 years has already been built, this is about regeneration (not gentrification) of existing communities rather than just the development of new neighbourhoods. Green Design-thinking to regenerate existing neighbourhoods and incorporated supported housing creates prosocial spaces and lifts wellbeing for everyone, while also bringing benefits for biodiversity. Taking an active role in caring for biodiversity, pets, and gardens provides additional benefits for the wellbeing of tenants.

⁸³ Cohousing, <https://www.cohousing.org/what-cohousing/cohousing/>

⁸⁴ <https://www.tipperaryco.co.ie/sites/default/files/Publications/TCC%20Clusters%20Draft%202.pdf>

⁸⁵ Effective Physical Security. Marianna A Perry (2017). Defensible Space, An Overview. Influence of Physical Design. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/defensible-space>

Policy Points

- Ensure that neighbourhoods can enable the building of personal relationships and social and community networks in order to engender community and individual safety and wellbeing.
- Public space will be developed for collaborative and flexible use, with plenty of street furniture, and landscapes and buildings designed to be notable, and diverse to create interest in neighbourhood surroundings.
- Streets will be designed for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and avoid the promotion of individual car use. This design depends on higher density housing, and less urban sprawl.
- Design will assimilate built and natural heritage such as historical buildings and hedgerows to enhance the relationship between housing and its surroundings, for situation in a well perceived social geography, identity, wellbeing, and biodiversity.
- Supported housing, where appropriate for its residents, can be designed around a core and cluster model, where residential units are clustered around particular shared collaborative spaces used for cooking, education, or religious worship for example.
- Creating prosocial neighbourhoods will be, for the most part, carried out in existing communities. This is about regeneration, and not gentrification!

Access to Green and/or Blue Space, and Horticultural and Animal-Assisted Therapy

There is an abundance of research that links access to green and blue spaces and wellbeing. Spending time in the open air, having a view of green space, being able to care for biodiversity, be it flora or fauna, and even just knowing your home has a garden, like all your neighbours' homes and so does not resemble an institution, all contribute to feelings of wellbeing, recovery, empowerment, respite, belonging, resettlement, social capital, and inclusion. Vegetated land and water is associated with reductions in depression and anxiety, improvements in cognitive functioning, including conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and improved social

functioning.^{86 87 88} For the purposes of support services, integration and inclusion, 'socially curated' neighbourhood green space can provide these benefits, as well as giving opportunities for respite and building social connections for people who may experience exclusion, such as asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.⁸⁹ The WHO states that nature-based solutions including green spaces increase the quality of neighbourhoods, increase resilience, promote sustainable lifestyles, and improve health and wellbeing. Additionally, green spaces within neighbourhoods help to ensure exposure to nature, the protection of urban biodiversity, reduction of air pollution and noise, and help to mitigate the impact of extreme weather.⁹⁰ (There are many examples of green and blue infrastructure planning documents across Ireland, as well as projects in Europe, for example, see Green & Blue Infrastructure Masterplan Roadmap for Tipperary Waterways⁹¹ and Green Infrastructure Development Plan Strategy, 2016-2022 Wicklow County Draft Development Plan⁹² and the plentiful green and blue corridors throughout the residential care facilities of Percura Zorg in Zevenaar, Netherlands⁹³).

Local parks are the most used community green spaces, usually visited on foot. When the quality of green space is thought to be good, people are more satisfied with their neighbourhood, and report better health. Consultation with communities on the design of green space is crucial. If the space is perceived to be unsafe, inaccessible, or bad quality, it is less likely to be used, and so its public health benefits missed. It has been found that some groups feel particularly vulnerable in public green spaces - migrant communities might avoid them because of fears of personal attack or racism, and other groups might avoid community green spaces if they are dominated by one particular

⁸⁶ Participation and wellbeing in urban greenspace: 'curating sociability' for refugees and asylum seekers. 2019 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016718519302246>

⁸⁷ Designing Good Mental Health into Cities. <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/designing-good-mental-health-cities-next-frontier-urban-design>

⁸⁸ Transforming Trauma: Resilience and Healing Through Our Connections With Animals, Tedeschi, P.; Jenkins M A. 2019, Purdue University press https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=purduepress_ebooks

⁸⁹ Geoforum, Rishbeth, C; Blacknicka-Ciacek, D; Darling, J. 2019. Participation and wellbeing in urban greenspace: 'curating sociability' for refugees and asylum seekers.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016718519302246>

⁹⁰ World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe; Urban Green Spaces: a brief for action.

https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/342289/Urban-Green-Spaces_EN_WHO_web3.pdf%3Fua=1

⁹¹ Green & Blue Infrastructure Masterplan Roadmap for Tipperary Waterways, Tipperary County Council https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/DRAFT_GB%20Infrastructure%20Masterplan%20Roadmap%20for%20Tipperary%20Waterways_v4_final.pdf

⁹² https://www.wicklow.ie/Portals/0/Documents/Planning/Development-Plans-Strategies/National-Regional-County-Plans/Wicklow%20County%20Development%20Plan/Documents-associated-with-the-adoption-of-the-plan/Appendix_8_Green_Infrastructure_Strategy.pdf

⁹³ <https://www.percurazorg.nl/>

group. Therefore, design must be inclusion focused, and amenities must be diverse to accommodate suitable use by all local residents. Varied community amenities and design such as cafes, play and sports areas, seating areas, good lighting and visibility, toilets, and so on, increase the diversity of use and users, and organised events and activities, especially sports events such as football, help to encourage feelings of community and inclusion. When the community is involved in the design of green spaces, they foster a sense of pride, safety, and increased use, which creates a cycle of improvement in safety, inclusion, increasing health benefits and care of the environment. Environmental justice means the rights of everybody to live in a clean and healthy environment. This right is most frequently denied to the most vulnerable with the least power, who are more exposed to air pollution, environmental risks from hazardous installations, bad urban planning, or lack of access. The more those who are worse off in a community are focused on in the design of green spaces, the more green spaces benefit those who have the most to gain, and therefore the more socially, environmentally and economically effective they are. What is more, they serve a symbolic value similar to the 'spirit of a place' for residents of buildings, which situates people psychologically in better neighbourhoods.^{94 95}

Additional interventions to improve access, quality and quantity of green spaces could include opportunities such as new residential developments, regeneration projects, development of brownfield sites and rehabilitation of industrial areas, along with community gardening, agricultural and enhancement of biodiversity projects. They could be vegetation along roadsides; greenways for walking and cycling and perhaps linking green and blue space, or access to woodlands and wildlife areas; small parks, meadows or playgrounds; community or private gardens; green roofs and green facades.⁹⁶

For the tenants of supported housing, the 'spirit of a place' comes into play for green spaces as it does for prosocial spaces. Attention should be paid to making supported

⁹⁴ The Design Council; Community Green: Using Local Spaces to tackle inequality and Improve Health.
<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/community-green-full-report.pdf>

⁹⁵ Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems
<https://uia.brage.unit.no/uia-x/mlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

⁹⁶ World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe; Urban green spaces: a brief for action.
https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/342289/Urban-Green-Spaces_EN_WHO_web3.pdf%3Fua=1

accommodation look like a home, with green gardens just like all the neighbouring homes, taking care not to present an institutional appearance that could increase stigmatisation.⁹⁷ A garden as a green space can also facilitate social and therapeutic horticulture.⁹⁸

There is evidence of horticulture being used as therapy from as early as the ancient Egyptian civilisation. In the West, horticulture has been used since the 1900s as a therapy for people with disabilities, at-risk youth, and war veterans. It became a recognised discipline affiliated with occupational therapy. It has been used to help people needing support, for example, after physical illness, as well as people with disabilities, autism, anxiety, depression, burn-out, people who are living with or at risk from homelessness, people who have experienced prison, and people living with dementia. Research tells us that tending a garden, and growing plants, especially flowering plants, as part of a programme of horticultural therapy, provides healing benefits, including: access to healthy food; a stronger sense of community connection and trust through shared work, conversation and meals with each other, with trainers, and with community volunteers; great pleasure and satisfaction; increased self-esteem through achievement, production, caring for something, and learning associated crafts; relaxation; a creative outlet; safe communication and confidence in learning through one to one training in the garden, or in a classroom; physical health benefits of movement and fitness, as well as the benefits of connecting with nature and being outdoors. Making green space available around supported housing for social and therapeutic horticulture therapy can bring a community together with those it is supporting, to practice and teach economic and environmental sustainability.⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² ¹⁰³ Merchants Quay Ireland practices therapeutic agriculture at its rehabilitation

⁹⁷ Friesinger, JG; (2020) Materialities Matter: An exploration of supported housing for people with mental health problems <https://uia.bragg.unit.no/uia-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2655383/Dissertation.pdf?sequence=4>

⁹⁸ SLU; Horticultural Therapy for Homeless People, Niklasson, J. <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/SLU%20-%20Horticultural%20Therapy%20for%20Homeless%20People.pdf>

⁹⁹ Icpusa.org, Green Thumbs Up: Working with Nature Provides a Fresh Start for Homeless and Once-Homeless Families and Adults. Elder, LE. 2015 https://www.icphusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ICPH_UNCENSORED_3.2_Summer2012_GreenThumbsUp.pdf

¹⁰⁰ American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias. Horticultural Therapy in Patients With Dementia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, Lu, LC; Lan, SH; Hsieh, YP; Yem, YY; Chen JC; Lan SJ. 2019. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1533317519883498>

¹⁰¹ Thrive. Using Gardening to change lives. <https://www.thrive.org.uk/how-we-help/what-we-do/who-we-help>

¹⁰² Journal of Offender Rehabilitation. Volume 58, 2019 - Issue 5. Growing connection beyond prison walls: How a prison garden fosters rehabilitation and healing for incarcerated men, Timler, K; Brown, H; Varcoe, C. 2019

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509674.2019.1615598?src=recsys&journalCode=wjor20>

¹⁰³ SLU; Horticultural Therapy for Homeless People, Niklasson, J. <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/SLU%20-%20Horticultural%20Therapy%20for%20Homeless%20People.pdf>

facility, St Francis Farm Residential rehabilitation. Animal care is also part of their programme, and research shows that bonds with and caring for animals also has therapeutic and community benefits.^{104 105}

Accounts of human-animal relationships are consistent across societies and throughout our discernible history. Studies show that pets can help with loneliness, reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, situate people into social settings and interaction, encourage exercise and play, and provide unconditional loving relationships. Activities with animals often create connections with other people. Walking a dog, for example, takes people out of private spaces, and into public areas, where interactions then take place with other dog walkers, or neighbours. Concern over the welfare of animals can also bring people and communities together as they strive to create rules and laws to protect them. In this way, human-animal relations can help with community building. The therapeutic nature of human-animal relations is quantifiable. It has been shown that human-animal interactions lower levels of cortisol and increase levels of serotonin, beta-endorphin, oxytocin, and dopamine in both human and non-human animals, so relieving stress. Generally, 'pet owners' have lower blood pressure and are less prone to cardiac disease, heart failure and strokes. Trained dogs can alert 'owners' if their blood sugar drops, and hospitals and nursing homes increasingly use trained animals to visit and improve the mood and anxiety levels of those they are caring for. It is well documented that the lives and treatment of children who have experienced trauma are enhanced by the companionship of therapy animals, and facility dogs help children cope with testifying in court. Caring for and playing with animals can draw attention away from a perceived threatening therapist-client relationship. Animals can become a 'third thing' that provides a common interest and natural and authentic medium for communication and a therapeutic alliance that can help people recovering from trauma. They also provide a consistent source of reduced feelings of isolation, comfort, affection, presence, and calming support, instantaneously, intuitively and without request or judgement.^{106 107}

¹⁰⁴ **St. Francis Farm Residential Rehabilitation** <https://mqi.ie/help/sff-rehab/>

¹⁰⁵ Transforming Trauma: Resilience and Healing through Our Connections With Animals, Tedeschi, P; Jenkins, MA, 2019. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=purduepress_ebooks

¹⁰⁶ Purdue University Press. Transforming Trauma: Resilience and Healing Through Our Connections With Animals, Tedeschi, P; Jenkins, MA; 2019 https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=purduepress_ebooks

¹⁰⁷ BMC Psychiatry. The power of support from companion animals for people living with mental health problems: a systematic review and narrative synthesis of the evidence. Brooks, HL; Rushton, K; Lovell, ; Bee, P; Walker, L; Grant, L; Rogers, A. 2018.

108 109 110 To make supported accommodation a home, like any other home, tenants must have the same rights to own and care for a pet, or to bring their pets with them from their previous circumstances, as other people in their neighbourhood. It is discriminatory to exclude certain members of any community from enjoying the company of companion animals, and denies them the emotional wellbeing that such companions provide. Denying people who need support the company of their companion animals, also limits or excludes many from accessing support. Justifications of the denial of pet companionship in supported accommodation often emerges as prejudiced and biased perceptions of the capabilities and attitudes of people needing support.¹¹¹ Therefore, we believe that communities and housing should be designed bearing in mind the needs of pets, other animals, and biodiversity, in order to optimise the benefits of human-animal relationships, protect rights and inclusion and mainstream action on the biodiversity emergency.

Design for buildings and green space that can also suitably accommodate animals can benefit from taking on the notion of 'becoming with', where human-animal relations recognise the intrinsic needs of animals in the design of neighbourhoods and accommodation, rather than being purely anthropocentric. In the same way that the optimum design for particular people is best achieved through the concept of infill, animal participation in the design process through playful exploration of the space with the designer can enhance the surroundings to meet the needs of the animals living within our neighbourhoods and homes.¹¹²

Policy Points

- The Green Party proposes to create more socially curated neighbourhood green and blue spaces in order to:
 - Increase the quality of neighbourhoods;

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5800290/>

¹⁰⁸ Heart Views. Animal Assisted Therapy. Hajar, R. 2015. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4485208/>

¹⁰⁹ Researchgate. Human-Animal Bonds I: The Relational Significance of Companion Animals. Walsh, F. 2009 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/40023863_Human-Animal_Bonds_I_The_Relational_Significance_of_Companion_Animals

¹¹⁰ The Conversation. When Pets are Family, the Benefits Extend into Society. Carver, LF. 2019. <https://theconversation.com/when-pets-are-family-the-benefits-extend-into-society-109179>

¹¹¹ Seattle University School of Law. No Pets Allowed: Discrimination, Homelessness, and Pet Ownership. Alimont, R; Rankin, S. 2016 <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=hrap>

¹¹² <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/132619857.pdf>

- Increase resilience, health and wellbeing;
- Ensure exposure to nature for its benefits for respite, building social connections and inclusion, and promoting a sustainable lifestyle;
- Protect and promote the care of biodiversity and so community and individual wellbeing;
- Reduce air pollution and noise for healthier, and more peaceful neighbourhoods;
- Help to mitigate impacts of extreme weather.
- Consult communities on the design of green space to ensure its design promotes feelings of safety, accessibility, inclusivity and pride.
- Ensure environmental justice through community access to nature, cleaner air, care for biodiversity, and better planning.
- Supported housing will be a home like other homes, with gardens to tend for pleasure, support of wellbeing, to learn horticultural skills, and to provide a space for socialising and integration with the community.
- The design of communities and housing must consider the needs of pets, other animals and biodiversity.
- Tenants of supported housing must have the same rights to own and care for a pet as others in their neighbourhood. The exclusion of people who need support from having companion animals is discriminatory.
- People in need of support should be able to avail of animal assisted therapies.

Design that Enables Integration of Activity into Daily Routines

Research shows that exercise is an excellent physical health intervention, for a healthy heart, and supple bones and joints among other benefits. It is also an effective antidepressant for mild and moderate depression, a relief for stress and anxiety, and has beneficial effects on mental wellbeing and can even alleviate conditions such as ADHD, dementia, and schizophrenia. In the form of sports, it facilitates social inclusion.^{113 114} The inclusion of services that people use frequently in their daily lives, such as supermarkets and other retail outlets, health services and pharmacies within easy access of supported housing and their neighbourhoods would help residents to

¹¹³ <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/designing-good-mental-health-cities-next-frontier-urban-design>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-using-exercise>

fully engage with their communities and amenities. Access can be optimised through care taken in the design of street/footpath connectivity between amenities, buildings, walkways, cycle paths and sustainable transport options. Streets should be designed to be inclusive of all users. The provision of wider, level footpaths, thoughtfully spaced pedestrian crossings, green infrastructure such as trees and hedgerows that guide users and act as landmarks, and adequate lighting and seating, all contribute to enabling and maximising the potential for daily activity, that is safe, suitable for pets, other animals, and biodiversity, and promotes social inclusion.^{115 116}

Policy Points

- The Green Party believes that services and amenities used frequently in daily lives, such as supermarkets and health services, should be within easy access of supported housing and neighbourhoods.
- The design of streets and footpath connectivity should facilitate easy connectivity to amenities using active forms of transportation.
- The Green Party believes that design that provides wider, level footpaths, well placed crossings, green infrastructure such as trees and hedgerows as landmarks, and adequate lighting and seating all contribute to opportunities for daily activity. This activity must include suitability for pets, other animals and biodiversity. This also promotes community interaction and social inclusion.

Other Green Design Enhancements of Supported Living Spaces

Policy Points

- Outdoor Air Quality can be improved through using green energy such as solar panels, or a green electricity supplier, as well as by oxygenating and fixing particulates and toxins using green and blue infrastructure.
- Indoor Air Quality can be improved through:

¹¹⁵ The Neglected Dimension of Community liveability: impact on social connectedness and active ageing in higher density accommodation. Vine, D. 2012. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/53388/>

¹¹⁶ The Conversation. When Pets are Family, the Benefits Extend into Society. Carver, LF. 2019. <https://theconversation.com/when-pets-are-family-the-benefits-extend-into-society-109179>

- Ventilation that increases air flow, taking in fresh air.
- Control collusion of air and water and pollutants in bathrooms and kitchens with the use of optimisation of ventilation and water seals.
- Controlling air conditioning systems through zones, and adding ultraviolet-C lights to reduce the transmission of airborne viruses including Covid-19 and bacteria, and the build-up of materials on units, reducing energy and maintenance costs.
- Systems' interfaces should be user-friendly.
- Certain indoor plants can help to purify the air.
- Using non-toxic, low volatile organic compound (VOC) building materials.^{117 118}
- Using 'therapeutic landscapes', including green and blue space, and also other colours, shapes and borders to enhance the interaction between people and space.^{120 121} Optimising natural light and views of and access to green and blue nature enhances health and wellbeing, is good for biodiversity, and reduces energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- Managing natural light Reduces overheating through the managed use of blinds or solar film at windows.
- Energy efficient bulbs such as LEDs can produce up to 80% energy savings.
- Heat and Sound Insulation can cut bills, create a comfortable and tranquil environment and contribute to mental, social and physical health and wellbeing.

Further green building enhancements for mental, social and physical health and wellbeing include:

- Ensuring comfort - especially in bedrooms that should promote sleep and relaxation.
- Storage, for space provision and stress-free living space.

¹¹⁷ Singapore Green Building Council; Towards Greener & Healthier Buildings: greening your homes for health and wellbeing https://www.sgbc.sg/images/SGBC_HGH2019.pdf

¹¹⁸ Eco-Business: Standing Tall: How Green Buildings are Adapting to the Post-Covid Era. <https://www.eco-business.com/news/standing-tall-how-green-buildings-are-adapting-to-the-post-covid-era/>

¹¹⁹ World Green Building Council: The Contribution of Green Buildings in the Fight Against COVID-19 <https://www.worldgbc.org/news-media/contribution-green-buildings-fight-against-covid-19>

¹²⁰ Messer, E R; 1996. The Primary Colors of Nature: The Essentials of Therapeutic Landscapes. Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture, Vol. 8, pp 26-31. American Horticultural Therapy Association. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44025350?seq=1>

¹²¹ Ytterjärna Cultural Centre <https://ytterjarna.se/about-the-site/?lang=en>

- Resilience, for adaptability/flexibility in response to changing occupant needs, and future climate change.^{122 123 124}

¹²² Singapore Green Building Council; Towards Greener & Healthier Buildings: greening your homes for health and wellbeing https://www.sgbc.sg/images/SGBC_HGH2019.pdf

¹²³ EPA Research; Green and Blue Spaces and Health: A Health-led Approach, Ronan Foley, Michael Brennan, Oludunsin Arodudu, Gerald Mills, Tine Ningal and Malachy Bradley, 2018. http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/health/Research_Report_264.pdf

¹²⁴ The effects of colours, shapes and boundaries of landscapes on perception, emotion and mentalising processes promoting health and well-being. Charis Lengen. 2015. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1353829215000829>