

Supported Housing: What Good Looks Like

*A guide for
Residents*

National Expert Influencing Forum

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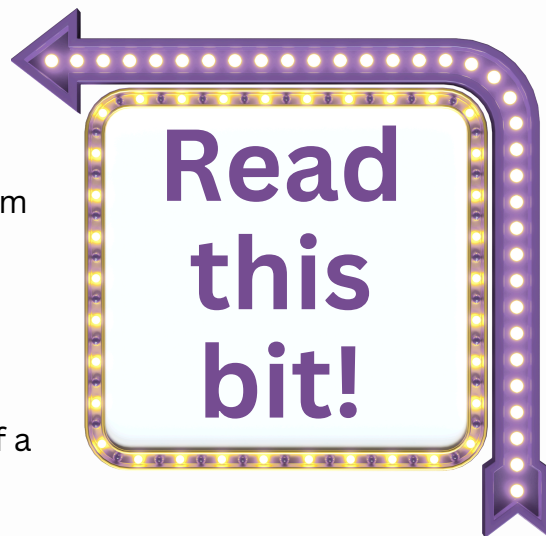
Top Tips to get Started

“People need to know simple tips for the first meetings, there are so many meetings and people involved, so getting this right from the start matters.”

If you only read one bit, read this.

In your first week, ask for these things in writing:

- Your key worker or main contact, and how to contact them
- Out of hours contact
- House rules and what happens if you break them
- Your licence or tenancy agreement (and a plain-English explanation)
- How support plans work, and how often you will meet
- How to complain, and how long it should take
- Safeguarding information, including what happens next if a concern is raised



Also ask for these two extra things:

1) A written record of important conversations

If you have a meeting about something important (support, warnings, move-on, safeguarding, complaints), ask for a short written summary you can agree.

2) What changes and how often

Ask your service what is likely to change over time (and roughly when), so you are not caught out.

“There’s no record... He said, she said type of thing is all you’ve got... We’ve taken some brief notes... These are the questions that were asked. These are the responses... a written record that both sides can agree on. That’s unbelievably helpful.”

“Inevitably, there are things that are going to change... and that is not always made clear... you can say, this is the sort of thing that changes once a year, this is the sort of thing that is more likely to change.”



Rights and responsibilities

This section focuses on the things people with lived experience of supported housing told us come up most often, and matter most. It sets out what residents think you should be able to expect, what you might be asked to do, and what helps when things are not working.

Respect

Respect should go both ways. You should be treated with dignity, and you should be supported to treat other residents and staff with dignity too.

Respect includes:

- being spoken to like an adult
- privacy
- being listened to
- being given information in a way you can understand, avoiding jargon and explaining acronyms
- staff being clear and honest about what they can and cannot do

Your agreement: tenancy or licence

Most supported housing will ask you to sign a tenancy or licence agreement. This sets out what you can expect from the service, and what the service expects from you.

This often includes:

- rent and service charges, and what they cover
- house rules (guests, noise, smoking, shared areas)
- room checks and safety checks
- behaviour expectations and what happens if there are incidents
- how you end your stay, and how move on works

What you should expect (plain and clear):

- A chance to ask questions before you sign
- A plain-English explanation, not just “it’s in the paperwork”
- A copy you can keep (paper or digital)
- A chance to go back over it later when your head is clearer

“It was all sort of in small print in a license agreement... that people were signing, I couldn’t even remember the workers name.”

To fill in (your provider can complete this with you)

Provider name:

Key worker or main contact details:

Out of hours contact:

Where to find house rules and policies:

How often checks happen (and what kind):

What support should look like

You should be able to understand what support is available, who makes decisions, and how those decisions are made.

Support can include:

- a needs assessment
- a support plan written with you
- regular support sessions (and a clear idea of how often)
- help to access health support, benefits, legal advice, training, and community support
- clear information about feedback, complaints, and safeguarding

Your support plan

A support plan should not be something done to you. It is for you.

A support plan is basically an agreement that sets out:

- what you want help with
- what the service will do
- what you want to work on
- how you will both know if things are improving

It helps when staff explain the purpose of the plan upfront, so it does not feel like paperwork “because we have to”. It should feel like something that exists to support you.

Take time and go at your pace

The first time you go through a support plan, it should be done at a pace you can cope with. If you are tired, overwhelmed, unwell, or on medication, you might not take it in properly, even if someone technically “went through it”.

You can ask to pause, come back to it, or go through it again more slowly.

You can change it. It can be scary to ask for changes, especially if you feel like you do not have a voice. But you have a right for your support plan to work for you. It is not fixed in stone. Just like you and your situation can change, your support plan can change too.

Your support plan should be reviewed regularly, and it should work like a living document – something you can revisit and update, not something that gets written once and forgotten.

Good practice looks like

- clear goals (short and longer term)
- what the service will do, and what you will do
- what happens if you miss sessions (and what support is offered, not just consequences)
- how often it is reviewed (and how you can request a review sooner)
- what to do if it is not working



Safe and secure environment

You have a right to a safe environment. Providers should deal with hazards and repairs, and they should be clear about how safety processes work.

This includes:

- repairs (locks, doors, windows, heating, hot water)
- fire safety (alarms, evacuation info)
- safe shared spaces
- safe handling of sharps where relevant (sharps bins, safe disposal)
- boundaries and privacy during checks

Consent, data, and confidentiality

You should be told what information is recorded about you, who it is shared with, and why.

Consent means you have agreed to your information being shared in a particular way. Consent should be clear, and you should be able to change your mind. Sometimes consent is time-limited or needs checking again later (for example, if someone wants to use your words or image publicly).

Confidentiality means staff should not share your personal information without a good reason. But there are some situations where information may be shared without your permission (for example, if there is a serious safeguarding risk). People said it is important to explain this clearly, in plain language, so residents are not left guessing.

You have a right to know what's shared, with who and how

If you are unsure what gets shared, you can ask, and the service should explain it clearly (and ideally show you where it is written down).

Partnership working and not having to repeat yourself

Lots of people said repeating your story again and again can be exhausting, especially if it is traumatic. You can ask the service:

- Who will I have to repeat myself to?
- Who do I want this information shared with, so I don't have to keep retelling it?
- What information can you pass on internally (with my agreement) if my worker changes?

You can ask for your information (Subject Access Request)

Your information is yours. You can ask for a written copy of the data the service holds about you. This is sometimes called a Subject Access Request (SAR). This is a right you have under Data Protection law - they have a month to comply.

For example you can ask request:

- What information do you hold about me?
- Who do you share it with?
- What do you have to share, and what is optional?
- Can I see my support plan and my notes?

There are situations where safeguarding may take precedence, and information may need to be shared to keep you or someone else safe. Where possible (and safe), consent should still be sought. This is covered in more detail in the safeguarding section that follows.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is about keeping people safe from harm and abuse. In supported housing, safeguarding also links to dignity, privacy, choice, and power.

“That big S and little S in safeguarding is crucial for people to understand, it affects us all...”

Safeguarding is not just “big crisis”

This means:

- “big” safeguarding is the legal, formal safeguarding process
- “little” safeguarding is what a service does every day to notice risks early, respond properly, and stop things escalating

Types of safeguarding concerns

Safeguarding can include:

- physical abuse
- emotional or psychological abuse
- sexual abuse
- neglect (including self neglect)
- financial abuse or exploitation
- domestic abuse
- harassment, hate crime, discrimination
- exploitation by other residents, staff, or people outside the service

What should happen if a concern is raised?

You should be told what happens next, not left guessing.

Good practice looks like:

- staff listen, take it seriously, and do not dismiss you
- staff ask what you want to happen (where safe)
- staff explain what they have to do, and why
- you get updates, not silence
- you are supported after reporting, not just at the moment you report

Aftercare matters (not just the “reporting moment”

“How you then respond when there is an issue, to make sure that person is protected and supported... it’s essential aftercare.”

“Safeguarding is also about how a service responds and supports you afterwards.”

At the end of this guidance there is a resources section with links to trusted organisations where you can find more information about safeguarding and different types of harm or abuse, if and when you need it. We have kept this section link-based on purpose, so people are not faced with lots of detail that could feel overwhelming or re-traumatising. It also includes links to places you can get support, including helplines, advocacy, and specialist services.

Consent and choice

“Where possible, if it’s safe to do so, you should still gain consent... to make a safeguarding alert.”

“What do YOU want to happen is really, really important... lots of people lose control in that moment, the providers can and should give some of it back.”

Privacy, checks, and feeling like it is your home

Checks can be necessary, but they can also feel intrusive. It needs clarity and transparency.

“People want respect and privacy... The night checks were the worst, they worked with us to make sure the checks worked for us.”

What to ask for:

- What checks happen, how often, and why?
- What does staff entering a room look like, and what are the limits?
- Where is this written down?
- How do you raise concerns about checks safely?

“If... as an organisation, you need to check on someone... that needs to be really clear and transparent from the start.”

If the concern is about staff or the provider

It can feel much harder to speak up when the concern is inside the organisation.

“If you could complain in an independent or anonymous way... it would have definitely made me feel safer.”

When services miss things

If you feel your service is missing things:

- keep a record of dates and what happened (notes are fine)
- ask for things in writing where possible
- ask to speak to a manager, safeguarding lead, or an independent advocate

To fill in (your provider can complete this with you)

How to raise a safeguarding concern about staff:

Anonymous or independent reporting route (if available):

Local authority safeguarding contact details:

How you will be protected from unfair treatment after raising a concern:

Co-production, Complaints and Feedback

What is co-production?

Co-production means residents are involved in shaping services from start to finish, not just asked at the end, and not used as a tick box.

It should be:

- safe
- accessible
- honest about power
- clear about what influence residents will actually have

Ways residents can be involved

This might include:

- resident meetings or forums
- recruitment panels
- reviewing policies and house rules
- peer roles (if you want them)

How to create co-production opportunities as a resident

Practical ideas:

- ask for a resident meeting once a month
- ask for a resident rep system
- ask for a suggestion box that gets responses (not just collected)
- ask for “you said, we did” updates so residents can see change

Complaints: how to do it, and what to expect

Complaints can be hard for residents and for organisations, which is exactly why the process needs to be clear. A complaints process should include:

- how to complain (email, form, in person, advocacy support)
- how long it should take
- what happens at each stage
- how to appeal or escalate
- how to complain without it affecting your support unfairly

Feedback and suggestions: Not everything has to be a complaint. You should have a way to give feedback and suggestions safely.



To fill in: (your provider can complete this with you)

How to make a complaint:

Timeframes for response:

How to escalate:

Advocacy support available locally:

Move On

Move on can be exciting and frightening at the same time. Members with lived experience believe that move on support is about planning, communication, and not making it feel like a cliff edge.

Move on looks different in different areas. Your provider should explain how it works where you live.

To fill in (your provider can complete this with you)

How move on decisions are made:

Typical timescales:

Who to speak to about move on:

Local bidding or referral system details (if used):

Different types of housing

You might move on to:

- social housing (council or housing association)
- private rented
- supported move on flat
- living with family or friends (if safe and chosen)

Different types of housing

Ask staff to explain:

- your rights and responsibilities in that housing type
- what bills you will be responsible for
- what support will still be available

What this usually means in practice (generally, not legal advice)

Social housing (council or housing association):

- usually more stable and affordable long term
- you may have clearer repairs processes
- you might wait longer, and you might not get much choice

Private rented:

- can be faster, but can be less secure and more expensive
- you may need money upfront (deposit, rent in advance)
- landlords are not responsible for helping you sort benefits, bills, or support

Supported move on flat:

- a step between supported housing and fully independent living
- usually some support remains, but less intensive
- rules and expectations should still be clear and in writing

Living with family or friends:

- can work well if it is safe and genuinely your choice
- it still helps to have a plan and backup options

What to expect when you move

People often get surprised by practical stuff.

You might need support with:

- setting up utilities and broadband
- budgeting and bills, understanding service charges/deposits
- feeling safe in a new area
- furniture and household items
- making a plan for loneliness and isolation
- what happens if you have a pet and are moving on

The first 24 hours: what helps (practical, real-world)

- A basic set-up so you can eat, wash, and sleep (toilet roll, a bit of food, kettle, tea or coffee if you drink it)
- Knowing where the nearest food shop is and how to get there
- If you are moving out of area: how buses work there, and what transport costs

Transition, benefits, and avoiding gaps

Moving can trigger changes to benefits and housing costs. The risk is gaps, delays, or missed letters.

Practical steps (ask for help to do these early):

- update your address with DWP
- update your address with the council
- updating your address with NHS/Dentist/utility companies/phone bills etc
- understand whether you are moving from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit housing element
- check what evidence you need (tenancy agreement, rent statement, ID)
- ask who will support you if something goes wrong after you move

What support can I ask for?

Your provider might not offer everything, but you can still ask.

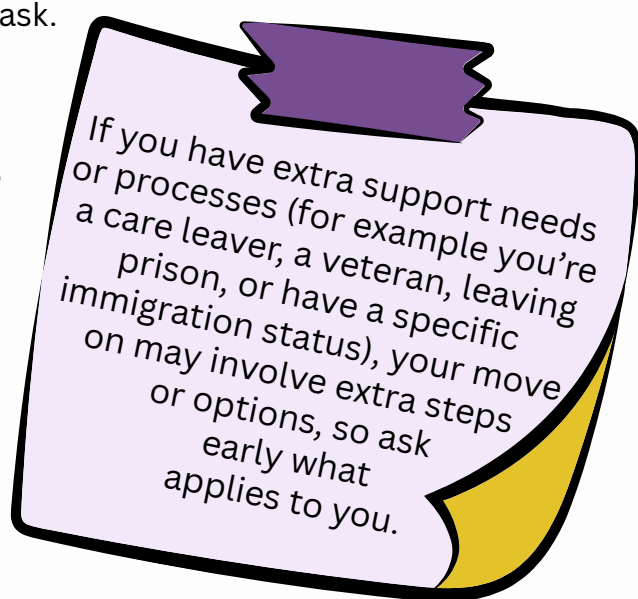
Ask questions like:

- Who is supporting me with move on?
- What happens after I move, do I get follow up support?
- If my benefits stop, who helps me fix it?
- If I feel unsafe or isolated, what support can I access?

Preparing for life after supported housing

This can include:

- training and education
- CVs and job applications
- cooking and shopping
- paying bills and direct debits
- registering with a GP and dentist
- finding community support that is not only homelessness services
- travel, internet, and local services in your new area
- budgeting, eg. if you are on Universal Credit, ask for support to set direct debits around your payment date, so bills do not hit you randomly mid-month.



Final Thoughts

Supported housing should help you build safety, stability, and a future. You deserve clarity, respect, and support that works for you, not support that leaves you confused, on edge, or constantly second guessing what you are allowed to do.

This guide is here because too many people have been expected to just “get on with it” while trying to settle into a new place, learn new rules, cope with stress, and manage everything else life is throwing at them.

This guide is also about fairness. That means knowing what is expected of you, knowing what you can expect from the service, and knowing what you can do if something does not feel right. It means being treated like an adult in your own home, having your privacy respected, and having things explained properly, not buried in small print. It also means that when there are difficult situations, like complaints, safeguarding concerns, or move on plans, you are not left guessing. You should be told what happens next and you should not have to fight for basic information.

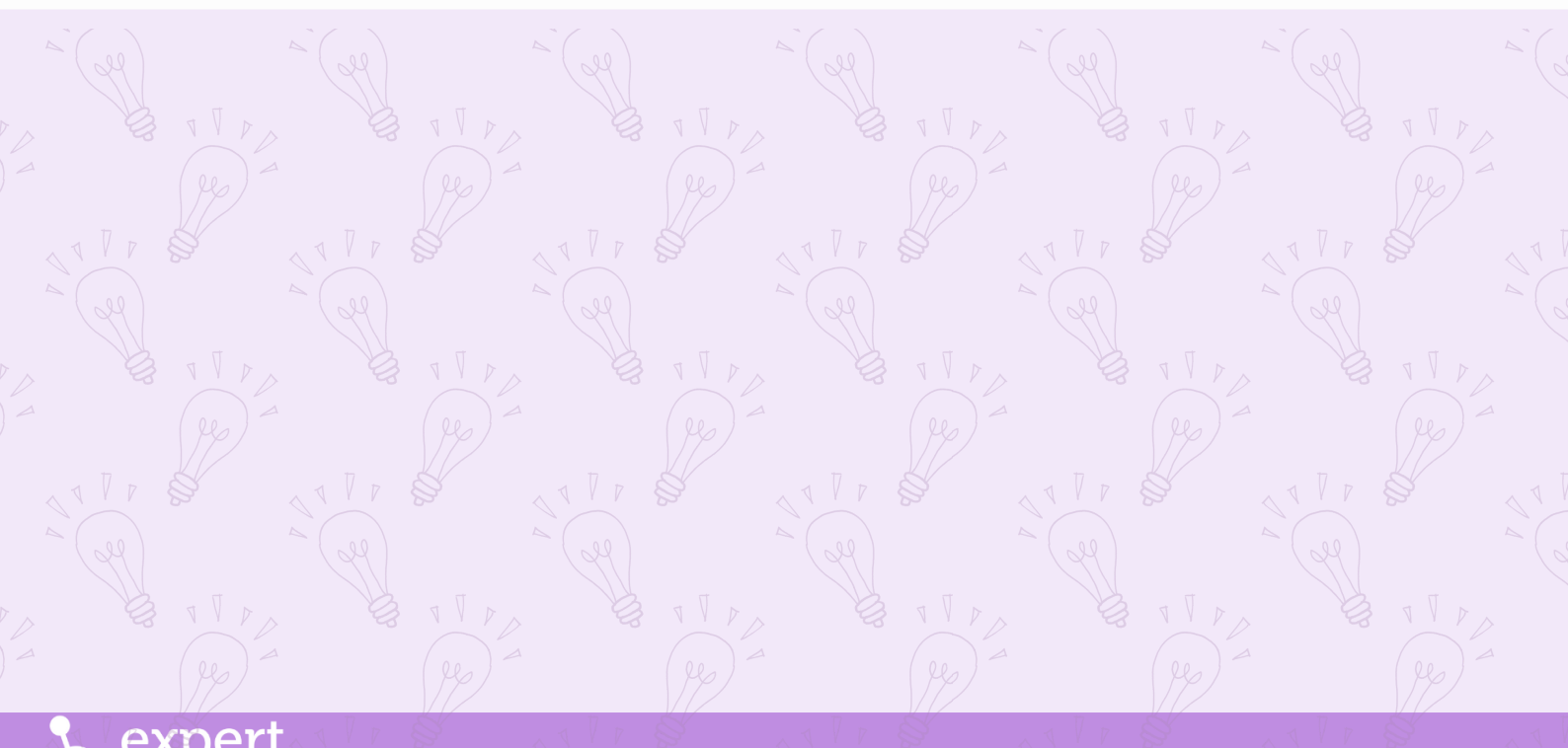
Just as important, you should not have to rely on “he said, she said” when something serious happens. You have the right to ask for things in writing and for a shared record of key conversations, so you can feel steadier and so everyone is clear on what was agreed.

This guide is co-produced. That is not a buzzword. It means people with lived experience of supported housing shaped what is in here, based on what helps in real life and what they wish they had been told at the point of moving in.

Right now, this is guidance written for residents, by residents. It cannot replace local policies, your agreement, or legal advice, and different services will do things differently.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act is also expected to strengthen standards and improve quality and accountability across the sector, so this guide may need updating over time to reflect any new rules and requirements that come in.

“All of this, this guidance is yours, it’s co-produced by people just like you.”



Resource Section

We have kept this section link-based on purpose, so people can choose what they want to read, when they feel ready, without lots of detail in the main guidance.

Safeguarding, abuse and staying safe (information + support)

- [NHS](#) – help if you're being abused (domestic abuse and other support routes)
- [Refuge](#) – National Domestic Abuse Helpline (for women)
- [Men's Advice Line](#) (domestic abuse support for men)
- [Galop](#) (LGBT+ anti-violence and abuse support)
- [SurvivorsUK](#) (support for male and non-binary survivors of sexual violence)
- [Rape Crisis England & Wales](#) (support for women and girls)
- [NAPAC](#) (support for adult survivors of childhood abuse)
- [Modern Slavery Helpline](#) (exploitation/trafficking advice and reporting)
- [Victim Support](#) (support after crime, including harassment and hate crime)
- [Stop Hate UK](#) (hate crime support)

Mental health and emotional support

- [Samaritans](#) (24/7 listening support)
- [Mind](#) (mental health information and local support)
- [Shout 85258](#) (free text support)
- [NHS – urgent mental health help](#) (how to access crisis support in your area)

Housing and homelessness advice

- [Shelter](#) (housing rights, homelessness, eviction, repairs)
- [Homelessness Best Practice](#) (housing, homelessness, rights and law advocacy, youtube)
- [Citizens Advice](#) (housing, debt, benefits, consumer issues)
- [Homeless Link](#) – directory of services (find local support)
- [Gov.uk](#) – homelessness and housing advice (local authority routes and legal basics)

Benefits, money and debt

- [Citizens Advice](#) – benefits and budgeting help
- [Turn2us](#) (benefits calculator, grants search, support)
- [StepChange](#) (debt advice and plans)
- [National Debtline](#) (debt advice)
- [MoneyHelper](#) (budgeting, bills, debt info)

Drugs, alcohol and addiction support

- [NHS](#) – drug addiction support
- [NHS](#) – alcohol support
- [FRANK](#) (drug advice)
- [Adfam](#) (support for families affected by substance use)

Complaints, advocacy and your rights

- [Citizens Advice](#) (complaints help and advocacy)
- Local authority adult safeguarding team (ask your provider for the local link/contact)
- [Housing Ombudsman](#) (if your landlord/provider is covered)
- [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) (council services, including some housing-related complaints)
- [ICO](#) – Information Commissioner's Office (data protection and Subject Access Requests)

Move on and settling in

- [GOV.UK](#) – Universal Credit (changes when you move)
- [GOV.UK](#) – Housing Benefit (where relevant)
- [GOV.UK](#) – Council Tax (discounts/exemptions and changes of address)

Everything in one place:

Provider name:

Key worker or main contact details:

Out of hours contact:

Where to find house rules and policies:

How often checks happen (and what kind):

How to raise a safeguarding concern about staff:

Anonymous or independent reporting route (if available):

Local authority safeguarding contact details:

How you will be protected from unfair treatment after raising a concern:

How move on decisions are made:

Typical timescales:

Who to speak to about move on:

Local bidding or referral system details:

Local authority housing options:

Local advocacy service:

Local welfare assistance scheme:

Nearest foodbank/community pantry: