

# Statement of Principles

## Housing Benefit Reform – Supported Housing

We, the undersigned organisations have come together to voice our concerns regarding some of the changes proposed in the consultation 'Housing Benefit Reform – Supported Housing'. We believe that the changes that are proposed could have severe implications for some of the most vulnerable people in our society and on their ability to live an independent life in the community. Our key concerns are outlined below, as are the key principles that we believe the future system of supported accommodation must have at its heart.

### Key concerns

**People in need losing out:** There is an overarching concern that people with a disability may as a result of the changes face greater difficulties getting access to suitable accommodation, restricting their choice and control. It is feared that the changes would jeopardise the income streams of providers and therefore lead to fewer such accommodation becoming available in the future.

**Flat rates and a local pot:** There are great concerns that a move to flat rates and a local pot would mean that the system would move from one of entitlement to one of discretion. There would be concern that the local pot would be finite and unringfenced, leaving the pot open to be used for other purposes.

**Transition:** A move from one system to another is feared will put current living arrangements of individuals at risk. Existing tenancies and new tenancies in existing services must be protected.

**Cost-neutrality:** Cost-neutrality implies that there will be no additional cost to the DWP, and it is feared that this is an unrealistic assumption. A move away from the institutional model of residential care will lead to a change in the distribution of costs across different departments. This must be taken into account.

### Key principles

**Choice and control:** Any changes to the 'exempt accommodation' regulations need to support the move towards greater choice and control by disabled people.

**Entitlement:** The principle of entitlement and a right to higher Housing Benefit to meet needs for disabled people needs to form part of the future system.

**Meeting the real cost:** The real cost for providing a property for vulnerable people has to be met to ensure the long-term financial viability of providing this type of accommodation.

**Equality and the right to independent living:** An understanding that access to suitable accommodation is ultimately about equality and the right to live independently needs to be central to any changes.

**Protection of current tenants:** Tenants currently living in exempt accommodation arrangements must be protected from any changes, so as to ensure they are not at risk of losing their home.

