

Media Release - For immediate release

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Learning Disability Coalition demands housing equality for people with a learning disability

The Learning Disability Coalition (LDC) today called on the government to make sure that its proposals for additional funding for housing take full account of the needs of people with a learning disability.

In a letter to Yvette Cooper MP, the Housing Minister, Dame Jo Williams, co-chair of the Learning Disability Coalition and chief executive of Mencap, said: "It is good news that the government is finally acknowledging the need for more social housing. However, we are concerned that there is no mention of how the housing needs of people with a learning disability fit into these plans. People with a learning disability should have the same opportunities to live a full and independent life as anyone else, including the chance to live in pleasant surroundings."

The government's Valuing People White Paper, published in 2001, recognised the importance of expanding the range and choice of housing, care and support services available to people with a learning disability. It also stated that people with a learning disability should be given more opportunities to own their own homes, in addition to gaining independence in other areas of their lives. The Learning Disability Coalition believes that the government must now act upon these promises by enabling people with a learning disability to have a real choice about where they live.

Victor Adebowale, chief executive of Turning Point and board member of the Coalition, said: "I hope that Ivan Lewis, the Social Care Minister, will use his personal knowledge of the sector to persuade his colleagues to address the gap between policy and delivery in this important area."

Su Sayer, of United Response, added: "It is time for a change. The Learning Disability Coalition is dedicated to improving the chances and choices of people with a learning disability and this is why we must ensure that they benefit from the extra funding for homes that has been announced today. "

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Notes to Editors

To arrange interviews please contact: Jaine Barry, Mencap Press Officer, on: 0207 696 5603 or jaine.barry@mencap.org.uk

- 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability.
- Learning disability affects someone's intellectual and social development all their life.
- People with learning disabilities face barriers every day of their lives.
- They want the information and services that affect them to be accessible so that they can make their own, informed choices.
- Learning disability is not mental illness. It is not dyslexia.
- People with a learning disability don't get an equal chance in life. That's why we are fighting to get sufficient public funding to meet their rights and needs.
- A report for the Valuing People Support team in 2003 indicated that of the 185,000 people with severe learning disabilities, 55 per cent live with their families for these people alone there was a shortfall of 25-29,000 homes.