



**CECODHAS**, the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing, is a non-profit making organisation. Formed in 1988, its key objectives are to:

- 1 Promote the work of social housing organisations in the European Union.
- 2 Foster the continuous exchange of ideas and experience among its members.
- 3 Provide an information service for its members
- 4 Promote good practice through conferences, seminars, reports and other activities.
- 5 Monitor developments in European Community Law.
- 6 Provide its members with improved access to European funding.

- 7 Campaign for the right to a decent home for all Europeans.

The 37 full members of CECODHAS are representative housing organisations from the 15 EU member states. There are ten associate members in the Czech Republic; Estonia; Hungary; Norway; Poland; Russia; Slovakia; and Switzerland.

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The **National Housing Federation** represents the independent social housing sector in England. It has around 1400 non-profit housing organisations in membership and is growing all the time. Its members own or manage around 1.8 million homes.

The Federation is funded by membership fees and commercial services, such as conferences, training and publications



**Nottingham Community Housing Association** is a non-profit charitable housing organisation that provides more than 7,000 homes meeting a wide range of needs, including those of disabled people. It works in the six counties that make up the East Midlands region of England.



**Habinteg Housing Association** was formed in 1970 to combat discrimination against physically disabled people in their housing needs. It has built more than 2000 homes on small estates where disabled and able-bodied people live side-by-side in homes that are accessible to all residents. It campaigns for universal, inclusive design and accessible housing.

# BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

Social housing for people  
with disabilities in Europe

A report by Bill Randall for CECODHAS



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Written by housing journalist Bill Randall seen here with Anette Bohm (see page 8)

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# BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS



Andrew Malone.  
Former President CECODHAS

‘Disabled people don’t have to be handicapped’, says Rita-Leena Karlsson Stockholm’s, Ombudsman for the Functionally Disabled. Social housing organisations in the European Union support this view by their actions, as this report shows.

Produced for CECODHAS, the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing, to mark the European Year of People with Disabilities (EYPD), the report catalogues the many and innovative ways in which housing associations, companies and co-ops are breaking down the barriers to liberate disabled people across the European Union.

While the solutions are diverse, the principles that underpin them are constant. All the projects featured seek to:

- Give greater independence to disabled people
- Empower disabled people by giving them a greater say in the design and management of their homes
- Help disabled people integrate into the wider community.

It is important work. About 10 per cent (37 million) of Europe’s 370 million adults and children are disabled and 10 per cent of them (3.7 million) have a serious disability. One in four Europeans has a family member affected by a disability\*.

Disability takes many forms. The 1,400 members of the English National Housing Federation, for instance, provide supported housing for more than 19,000 men and women with mental health problems or drug or alcohol related problems.

Significant trends in the causes of disability are increasing pressures on housing and other services. People with Multiple Sclerosis live longer. More people survive serious head injuries, the most common cause of physical disability in young people in many EU countries. Death rates from strokes have reduced significantly since the 1960s (by 80 per cent in the UK, for example).

An ageing population means that more people are afflicted by dementia. Of the 75 million EU

citizens aged 65 or more, about 5 million are affected by dementia, according to the UK-based Alzheimer’s Society. Almost 1 million people have dementia in Germany, 750,000 in France and 700,000 each in Italy and the UK.

At the other end of the age scale, the incidence of cerebral palsy has increased sharply as more babies with low or very low birth weights survive. Many families with disabled children face serious housing problems. Too often, they live in houses and flats that are too small and not designed to meet their needs.

Social housing organisations share the objectives of the Madrid Declaration (see page 3). This report shows they are able to meet the many challenges of providing suitable housing for disabled people. Yet they would all agree the scale of their response is not enough. Many disabled men and women are able to stay in their own homes, particularly if the homes are built to Lifetime Homes standards or are adapted to meet their needs. However, more financial help is needed from Governments to produce the purpose-built houses, flats and bungalows that can help severely disabled people make the most of their abilities in the mainstream of life.

This is the third special CECODHAS report looking at the work of its members for particular groups. The first dealt with social housing and the fight against racism and the second at housing for older people. CECODHAS recommends the work of the housing organisations described in this report and thanks the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the National Housing Federation, Nottingham Community Housing Association and Habinteg Housing Association for supporting its publication.

Andrew Malone

*\*Eurobarometer survey 54.2 and Eurostat report: Disability and social participation in Europe, 2001 edition*





# OVERWHELMING CASE FOR LIFETIME HOMES

Most EU countries are moving towards the wider introduction of barrier-free housing. Recent amendments to national Building Regulations in several countries specify, for example, wider doors for wheelchair access and level thresholds.

In the UK, many housing associations are adopting the Lifetime Homes standards that were developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) in the early 1990s. Lifetime Homes have 16 design features that ensure a new house or flat will meet the needs of most households and disabled people. In some circumstances, of course, purpose-built housing will be needed to meet the needs of severely disabled people.

Additional cost of achieving the standard is between 0.5 and 1 per cent to total building costs, according to JRF-commissioned research: which is much cheaper than the cost of making adaptations after a house or flat is completed.

As Habinteg Housing Association and others have shown, Lifetime Homes can make an enormous contribution to helping disabled men, women and children sustain their independence in mainstream housing integrated into the wider community. The standard can also be applied to housing improvement schemes. The reaction of residents to Lifetime Homes has been very positive. About 90 per cent of those interviewed for a JRF survey thought their homes would be sufficiently flexible to meet their needs at every turn and stage of their lives. Lifetime Homes really do break down the barriers for disabled people.

## The 16 features of Lifetime Homes are:

- 1 Sufficiently wide parking space for a wheelchair user.
- 2 Distance between the house and the car-parking space kept to a minimum.
- 3 Level or gently sloping approach to the house.
- 4 Accessible threshold that is covered and well lit.
- 5 Lifts should be fully wheelchair accessible in flats. Stairs in flats should provide easy access.
- 6 Width of door and hall should allow wheelchair access.
- 7 Turning circle for wheelchair in ground-floor living room.
- 8 Living room or family room at entrance level.
- 9 Identified space for temporary bed at entrance level
- 10 Accessible entrance-level WC, plus opportunity for the installation of a shower later.
- 11 Walls able to take adaptations.
- 12 Provision for a future stair lift.
- 13 Easy route for a hoist from bedroom to bathroom.
- 14 Bathroom planned to give side access to bath and WC.
- 15 Low window sills.
- 16 Sockets, controls etc at a convenient height.

## Madrid Declaration

The Madrid Declaration, a framework for action for the European Year, was proclaimed by more than 600 participants from 34 different countries during the European Congress of People with Disabilities held in Madrid in March 2002. The vision for EYPD in the Madrid Declaration urges the nations and citizens of the EU to move:

- Away from disabled people as objects of charity... and  
**Towards** disabled people as rights holders.
- Away from people with disabilities as patients... and  
**Towards** people with disabilities as independent citizens and consumers.
- Away from professionals taking decisions on behalf of disabled people ...and  
**Towards** independent decision making and taking responsibilities by disabled people and their organisations on issues which concern them.
- Away from a focus on merely individual impairments...and  
**Towards** removing barriers, revising social norms, policies, cultures and promoting a supportive and accessible environment.
- Away from labelling people as dependants or unemployable... and  
**Towards** an emphasis on ability and the provision of active support measures.
- Away from designing economic and social processes for the few... and  
**Towards** designing a flexible world for the many.
- Away from unnecessary segregation in education, employment and other spheres of life ...and  
**Towards** integration of disabled people into the mainstream.
- Away from disability policy as an issue that affects special ministries only...and  
**Towards** inclusion of disability policy as an overall government responsibility.







## DENMARK

DENMARK  
FINLAND  
SWEDEN

- Providing housing for families with disabled children offers a serious challenge to housing organisations across the EU where many disabled children live in unsuitable and unhealthy conditions. In the UK, for instance, research has revealed that 40 per cent of disabled children live in housing that is cold, damp and in poor repair.

One of the principal problems is a shortage of larger flats and houses that can be adapted for a family with a disabled child. The Danes have found a flexible answer in a demonstration project in the city of Naestved, about 80 kilometres south of Copenhagen. Architect for the scheme was Erik Rank Larsen, and if all housing for disabled people had the same quality of design and finish we would all be happier.



Annette Munkehos lives with her two sons, one of whom is severely disabled and uses a wheelchair, in a spacious flat that occupies a whole floor at the DVB scheme in Naestved. The internal lay-out is tailor-made to suit the family's needs. A similar arrangement produced another large ground-floor flat that is home for a 15-year old wheelchair user, Jens Jensen, and his family.



A co-operative housing company for disabled people, De Vanfores Boligselskab (DVB), has built four, three-storey blocks of flats, linked by common areas that also contain the lifts and stairs.

The basic scheme has two flats, each of about 85 square metres, on all floors. However, demountable steel-framed gypsum party walls make it possible to adjust the number and size of flats to meet changing needs. On any floor the co-op can fashion two flats from the space or one very large flat occupying a whole floor. Internal partition walls can also be rearranged to suit the tenants' needs. The layouts can be changed again and again to accommodate new tenants. At the time of writing, two very large ground floor flats have been created to accommodate families with disabled children.

The scheme is designed for wheelchair users who operate doors, lifts, windows, lighting and electrical appliances by remote controls. The height of sinks, work surfaces and cupboards are adjustable. Electric sockets are at wheelchair user height and non-slip wooden floors are provided throughout.

All flats have IT connections for people who want to work or study at home. Able-bodied people work or study on screens in their living rooms and bedrooms, argues DVB, why not disabled people too? The co-op also provides a work-space in a community centre where eight disabled people answer directory inquiries for TDC – the major phone company in Denmark.



The Danish Government funded construction costs. Private finance (about €500,000) paid for the extra disabled facilities. The local authority pays the care costs. However, problems have been experienced with other local authorities refusing to pay the costs of people wanting to move to the scheme.

Completed five years ago, the flats are in a regeneration area near shops and a health centre. Neighbouring developments include mainstream housing and a sheltered scheme whose residents share the community centre.

DVB is a specialist organisation that builds flats for disabled people all over Denmark. Its projects range in size to meet local needs. The Commune built in Copenhagen in 1959 contains 170 flats on ten floors. It was recently refurbished to accommodate passive solar energy panels and other improvements. On the remote island of Bornholm DVB has two small schemes, one a commune for people with mental health problems.

Under Danish building regulations all new housing in the public and private sectors must be built to Lifetime Homes standards. Grants are available for adaptations to older homes. All disabled people in Denmark are entitled to free assistance to help them maintain their independence through a health visitor scheme that obliges local authorities to employ nurses to care for people in their own homes.

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## FINLAND

### Empowerment to the people in Helsinki

- Ten years ago Tuomo Markelin's main priority was finding somewhere to live when he left university. With other disabled final-year students he approached Helsinki City Council for help.

Their housing needs were precise: wheelchair accessibility and a development near the city with flats for rent and for sale where they could live near to each other.

They were in luck. The new waterside neighbourhood of Ruoholahti was taking shape on the drawing boards of architects Pekka Helin and Ritva Mannersmo. Tuomo and his friends were allocated flats two years before completion, and invited to work with the architects to design nine flats – some for rent and some sale – for physically disabled people in two clusters in an L-shaped block.



**Award-winning Ruoholahti regeneration scheme in Helsinki, which includes housing for disabled people**

**Tuomo Markelin's quest for independent living was supported by Helsinki City Council**



'The architects were very helpful and understanding', says Tuomo, 'and made all the design changes we asked for'. The outcome is spacious, wheelchair-friendly flats, with power-assisted front doors, tailor-made bathrooms and balconies looking over a harbour and canals.

The flats do not embrace all the usual design-for-disability features 'Our aim was to make the flats as normal as possible, where possible', says Tuomo. 'I can't use the kitchen, for example, and it is designed for use by a carer rather than a disabled person'. Tuomo's flat, which he bought, is about 90 square metres and includes a sauna. The rented flats are 49 square metres. Care and support is provided to disabled residents by 10 full-time and one part-time staff funded by the council.

Tuomo is the Chairman of the Housing and Assistance Association of Ruoholahti (RASPY), which represents the eight disabled residents and manages their homes and the staff.

Vice Chairman of the elected board of four residents is Markus Sinkkonen who lives in one of the rented flats. 'We are very happy with the quality of our life, which depends directly on the design of our flats and the quality of the assistance we receive. Our homes cannot be distinguished from the other 121 in Ruoholahti, which increases our integration.

'Other disabled people should be able to design their homes. They know best their needs and their physical limitations. Our approach saves local authorities the expensive costs of adaptations after residents have moved in'.

The EU endorsed the RASPY approach with second place in the HELIOS

continued ▶ 5



awards for the social integration of disabled people in 1996. 'We believe our approach could be used in other European countries', says Markus.

The Ruoholahti neighbourhood scheme, which has carried off a hatful of awards, also includes a cluster of flats with a common kitchen for five people with learning difficulties, six dispersed flats for older people and a group scheme for four young people in care. It is remarkable for the high quality of planning and design and the empowerment of a group of remarkable disabled people.



'Our homes cannot be distinguished from the others in Ruoholahti', says Markus Sinkkonen

## 'Disabled people must be subjects, not objects'

'Disabled people must be subjects, not objects', says Mirja Höysniemi, who was deeply involved in the work at Ruoholahti that led to the setting up of RASPY. As Project Services Manager with Helsinki Social Services Department she has seen the number of disabled people seeking help from the city rise steadily in recent years. About 70 people are on the waiting list for supported housing. The needs of many more have not been identified. In common with other countries, Finland has moved away from care in large institutions.

Like the rest of Finland's 446 all-purpose local authorities, Helsinki is responsible for organising the care and housing of disabled people. Most of the services (81 per cent in 2001) are delivered to people living in mainstream housing. However, the city works in partnership with not-for-profit organisations to provide group homes for people with severe disabilities.

The National Association of Disabled People, for example, has built a scheme of 25 flats in the Vuossari area of the city. The 17 care staff provide 24-hour cover for residents and for two disabled people living in flats nearby. The scheme includes two training flats, used by residents who are moving on to more independent living. A restaurant is open to residents and local people.

Help is available at the request of residents who decide how much support they need. The National Association, which cares for about 500 people in 31 schemes nationwide, was the first organisation in Finland to produce a design guide for housing for disabled people and offers a more traditional solution to their needs.

The ASPA Foundation, formed through a federation of 13 smaller organisations in 1994, has 31 small schemes across the country and also provides services through

call centres to disabled people in the wider community as and when they need it.

### Funding

The Finnish government provides the capital funding for social housing built by local authorities. Each year Helsinki builds about 1000 new social homes, including housing for disabled people, through its municipal housing company and housing associations. Some social housing for disabled and older people is built as part of private developments in return for land release by the local authority.

Care costs are met by met by local taxes and central government funding. A national gambling tax supports social services and health services (both of which are local authority responsibilities) and work for homeless people. The restaurant and offices at the National Association of Disabled People scheme in Vuossari, for example, were funded by this tax.

Helsinki City Council is working on a long-term programme to improve housing built in the 1950s and 1960s. Lifts are being installed in all blocks of more than two storeys owned by the city or built on city-owned land.

About 500 flats have been improved and, in some cases, adapted for older and disabled people by the social services department.

On a broader front the council is working to make the city accessible to disabled people through its Helsinki for All project. Streets, parks, squares, buildings and transport are being designed or adapted to ensure safety and accessibility, in a partnership with residents, other organisations and businesses. A pilot scheme that covers Aleksanterinkatu, the city's main shopping street, was completed this year.

## Numbers receiving care rising

According to STAKES, Finland's National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, about 1.7 per cent of the national population of 5 million was entitled to disability services in 2001. Its figures show that numbers receiving care are rising. Among people with learning difficulties, for example, those receiving:

24-hour care rose from 2778 in 1997 to 3715 in 2001

Day care rose from 2279 to 2249

Light care rose from 1068 to 1174

A fall was recorded in the number of people with learning difficulties fostered by families from 1337 in 1997 to 1199 in 2001, a traditional Finnish practice confined mainly to country areas where local authorities find it hard to cater for small numbers of disabled people living in huge areas.

Total cost of support services in 2001 was €164 million.

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# SWEDEN

## Leading the way in breaking down barriers

Sweden has led Europe in breaking down the housing barriers for disabled people. Since 1977 builders and housing providers have been required to make all new homes accessible to disabled people through the introduction of adaptable homes standards.

The integration of housing for disabled people has long been a central feature of housing policy in Sweden where 850,000 people (10 per cent of the population) are disabled, about 85,000 of them severely.

The housing scheme at Minneberg in Stockholm is a fruit of these principles. Completed in 1987 on former industrial land, it was designed by the city's planners and built by HSB and three other housing co-ops. It is a series of handsome tower blocks and terraces surrounded by trees on a sloping site facing a large lake. The scheme also includes a community centre, a kindergarten, a youth centre and health centre. It has good public transport links with the rest of the city.

The needs of older and disabled people were a key consideration in the design of the housing. All 900 flats are wheelchair accessible with level thresholds and spacious rooms. Each flat is about 90 square metres.

In one of the HSB blocks Stockholm City Council rents ten flats that have been specially designed to meet the needs of their occupiers – men and women who have been severely disabled by accidents or progressive Multiple Sclerosis in adult life.

A specialist Danish company provides a range of care and support from a service centre, one of two on the estate, in the same block. Seven assistants work in shifts to help residents with the daily tasks of getting up, washing,



Minneberg resident: 'Living here gives me a great sense of security'

Minneberg, a new community on Stockholm's fringes



going to the toilet, eating and going to bed. They are supported by a nurse, who is always on call should help be needed, a physiotherapist and an occupational therapist who spend part of their working day at the centre. Every resident has access to an alarm call system linked to a help centre in Malmö.

The scheme is unusual. Most care in Sweden is peripatetic and delivered at home to clients who have a right to personal assistance, if they are severely disabled.

Concern is mounting about the future of Swedish care services, which are funded by local authorities. Like disabled people in

the rest of Europe, most of the clients have low incomes and high needs. Services are expensive. National agreements determine hourly rates for carers, but the amount of care provided is discretionary. Rising costs have seen services cut back in some areas, and there are general fears about the future level of provision.

Funding is also a problem for small co-ops providing aids and adaptations to existing buildings. Local authorities, who pay the bill, are not always ready to fund all necessary work.

A shift in 1977 from detailed specifications in building regulations to functional

requirements interpreted by builders has caused alarm. Private sector builders do not always respect design agreements made with local authorities. Work is not always monitored and inspected and accessibility is sacrificed to keep building costs down.

### About HSB

HSB is a national federation of 35 housing co-ops. It has built communities, rather than houses, since it was set up in 1923 by the Labour movement. It owns about 6 per cent of the housing in Sweden and provides 'care, kindness and service' to its 360,000 tenant owners, not least those with disabilities.



## Fighting for disabled women's rights

Anette Bohm, disabled in a childhood accident, has lived in an HSB flat in the centre of Stockholm since 1997. The flat is spacious and adapted to meet her needs. A lift takes her down to the ground floor garage, the street and local services.

From this secure base she goes to the gym, attends a women's group and works as a freelance journalist for Kick, the magazine published by Rekryterings Gruppen – the Swedish association for active rehabilitation. In the summer she goes to a women's camp run by the organisation.

Anette's central concerns are the rights and needs of disabled women. 'The focus is always on disabled men', she says, 'but there are many serious issues for disabled women that are overlooked'. She speaks to women's groups across Sweden about many subjects, including confidence building, sex and relationships and the central issue of 'how do you feel as a woman in a wheelchair?'

The main issue for all disabled people remains accessibility, she argues. 'Take the clubs in Stockholm. The newer ones are OK, but many clubs are in older buildings with inaccessible stairs and toilets. It is unacceptable. All buildings should be open to disabled people'.



Anette Bohm: fighting for disabled women's rights

## Stockholm's 'wake-up woman'

'I am the wake-up woman for Stockholm', says Rita-Leena Karlsson. Sweden's only local authority ombudsman for disabled people, she monitors every municipal act that affects people with disabilities and works with every council department and board to ensure they embrace standards and enforce the law. 'I've been doing the job for a year', she says, 'and I am already seeing changes in the work of the city'.

She also has the task of changing attitudes to disability. 'We have to kill the myth that social services alone are responsible for disabled people. Every service has a part to play'.

Indeed, her number one priority is the housing and planning system. Local authorities must monitor and control building work much more closely, she says, to ensure the needs of disabled people are met. 'We need good controls at the beginning of the process, if we are to succeed'.

Ms Karlsson can make recommendations to the council and others about any service and any new building in the city.

However, she cannot supervise

specific cases, represent individual members of the community or review or alter decisions made by other public agencies. That remains the responsibility of the national ombudsman who monitors the rights and interests of people with disability with the objective of ensuring they can participate fully in the life of the community and live on the same terms as others.

The national service runs an accessibility centre gathering information about accessible buildings, information and activities. It identifies examples of good solutions and disseminates information.

Its advice is not always heeded. Sweden, argues Rita-Leena Karlsson, is a rich country but poor when it comes to supporting disabled people. 'We have very good laws, but we don't spend enough money to enforce them. We certainly do not have enough money for adequate group housing and care for disabled people'.

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## BELGIUM LUXEMBOURG NETHERLANDS

# BELGIUM

## Inclusion key aim in renewal programme

● Housing for disabled people is a key element of a neighbourhood renewal programme that has pumped new life into the heart of Leuven. Local housing co-op Dijledal, which has 3270 homes in the historic Flemish city, has converted a handsome 19th century school, the school principal's home and the gymnasium into 28 spacious and well-designed flats. Public open space, private gardens and car parking have been created from the school playgrounds.

Five of the flats have been specially designed around the needs of their disabled tenants, who include an accident victim with severe disabilities and another suffering from Multiple Sclerosis. Special features in the wheel-chair accessible flats include power assisted doors, hoists in the bathrooms, alarm systems and layouts designed to meet the needs of each resident.

Disabled tenants receive a guaranteed income from the national government that covers

both their housing and care costs.

The Dijledal Co-op raised private finance to fund the conversion of the school. In return the Flemish Regional Government paid a building subsidy of €6500 for each flat and a rental subsidy for each flat of a maximum of €125 Euros for 27 years at a maximum rent of €300. The flats are let to low income households.

Next door is a block of flats fashioned from a former sock factory, a community centre, a charity shop and walled allotments The refurbishment of nearby modern flats by the co-op has yielded another 15 homes for people with disabilities.

All the flats are within 500 metres of shops, public transport routes and a medical centre, and offer the disabled tenants integration and independence in the wider community.

The award-winning school conversion has been visited by architects and housing professionals from all over



Europe. It also includes a ground-floor kindergarten that serves the neighbourhood, a meeting hall and local offices for a non-profit organisation – IZWG (Integratie Zelfstandig Wonen voor Gehandicapten or Integration and Independent Living for Handicapped People), who work in partnership with the housing co-op to manage the flats for disabled people. IZWG provide 24-hour Activities of Daily Life (ADL) support, helping residents get up, wash, dress, prepare meals and get ready for bed.

The Leuven scheme has been produced under the umbrella of an Independent Living policy introduced by the Flemish regional government in 1993 to promote the integration of housing for disabled people in mainstream housing developments as an alternative to institutional care

The Order defines the design requirements for flats for disabled people and makes capital subsidies for new homes available to housing organisations to meet them. The standards include wide doors, low thresholds, low windows, wheelchair-accessible rooms and switches and power points at wheelchair height.

Other aids provided include automatic door-openers, hands-free telephones, hoists, remote control units and alarm call systems. Housing organisations must also meet the design for disabled construction requirements of the regional building regulations to qualify for subsidy.

Spacious living in Leuven







Kindergarten in the Leuven regeneration area, where old and young, able-bodied and disabled people live side by side



## LUXEMBOURG

### Many roads to independence

- Luxembourg, like its European neighbours, has moved rapidly away from hiding away people with disabilities in large institutions or leaving them with little support in the care of their families and isolated from the rest of society.

More and more people with disabilities are taking greater control of their lives, living in small housing schemes in the community where they are helped to develop their independence. Those with mild disabilities are encouraged to move into mainstream housing where they are provided with floating support. Severely disabled men and women requiring 24-hour care are cared for in small residential centres that have strong links with the surrounding communities.

Since 1995 the Ministère de la Famille has provided 410 places for disabled people in small housing schemes with support that caters for different types of disability. Eight private organisations manage the schemes. Among the largest of these is la Fondation APEMH, which houses 125 people in 8 schemes and employs 81 staff who care for clients with learning difficulties and multiple disabilities. Smallest of the organisations is the Association pour la Création de Foyers pour Jeunes, which has one scheme where 6 staff support 17 people with mild learning difficulties.

The Fondation Kraizbiert has three foyer projects that are home to 46 men and women with physical disabilities. The projects have a very high ratio of carers to residents, employing 56 people between them.

The Foyer Brill at Dudelange was opened in 1982 and is situated

in the heart of a residential area. A total of 11 people aged between 18 and 35 live in the foyer where the accent is on developing the independence and integration of the clients as far as their capabilities will allow. The foyer was modernised in 2002 to give each resident his or her own room.

A large number of disabled people in Luxembourg (population 435,700) live with their families, and the Government makes grants available to adapt their homes to suit their needs and, where necessary, make them wheelchair accessible. Grants cover 60 per cent of the cost of the work. Maximum amount payable is €15,000.

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## NETHERLANDS

### Being disabled need not be a moving experience

- About 1.8 million people (11.25 per cent) of the Dutch population of 16 million people are disabled. Most of them need some form of adapted housing to meet their needs. About 20 per cent of their number live in specially designed housing, but most still live in mainstream housing.

Since 1997 all new homes in the private and social housing sectors must be designed to adaptable homes standards laid down in the National Building Code, which were introduced after sustained lobbying from the housing association movement. These cover such issues as thresholds, space requirements for wheelchairs, door widths and socket and working surface heights.

Many housing associations had been producing Adaptable Homes for some time before the law was introduced.

New housing apart, housing associations have carried out programmes of 'plus-grading' work in about 30,000 of their

existing homes, eliminating raised thresholds and bringing the houses and flats up to many of the Adaptable Homes standards. The goal is to bring them all up to standard to meet different degrees of disability, apart from a small percentage built and designed for younger able-bodied people.

The work is financed with a mixture of private finance, council grants and from housing association reserves. Government grants for adaptations to meet the needs of disabled residents are also available without means testing across all housing sectors.

Special accommodation for severely disabled people will always be needed, but an increasing number of disabled people, or those becoming progressively disabled, will be able to stay in their homes and communities and retain their independence with varying degrees of support. The Dutch experience shows that being disabled need not be a moving experience.

continued ▶



Sherpa homes in Hilversum

IZWG is one of six groups set up to work with housing bodies to produce a programme of 250 flats for disabled people in small and integrated schemes across the region. The groups also maintain local registers of disabled people and organise Independent Living Services, another regional government initiative that was introduced in 1990 to promote and regulate care and support for disabled people living in the community. Staff levels, standards of care and financial support are set under this initiative, which provides a programme of 24-hour care, where necessary.

'We have a fantastic working relationship with IZWG', says Erik Thora, general manager of the housing co-op. 'However, a large unmet demand still exists for flats with care and support for disabled people. Providing suitable accommodation for families with disabled children presents particular problems because of a shortage of larger houses'.

Ten years after its introduction, the Independent Living scheme needs reassessing, says IZWG:

- More money is needed to provide adequate care and support, and the cost of replacing and repairing the call system and leasing the telephone system, in particular, has been underestimated.
- The capital grant for disabled

facilities is inadequate, and cumbersome bureaucracy makes it difficult to access.

- The scheme should be extended to projects built before 1993, many of which do not meet today's standards.

Despite these shortcomings, the independent living initiative provides a successful alternative to institutional care, says IZWG, giving residents a client role rather than a patient role and a much greater say in the way their homes are managed.

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## Jan's story: a change for the better

Netherlands continued ▶

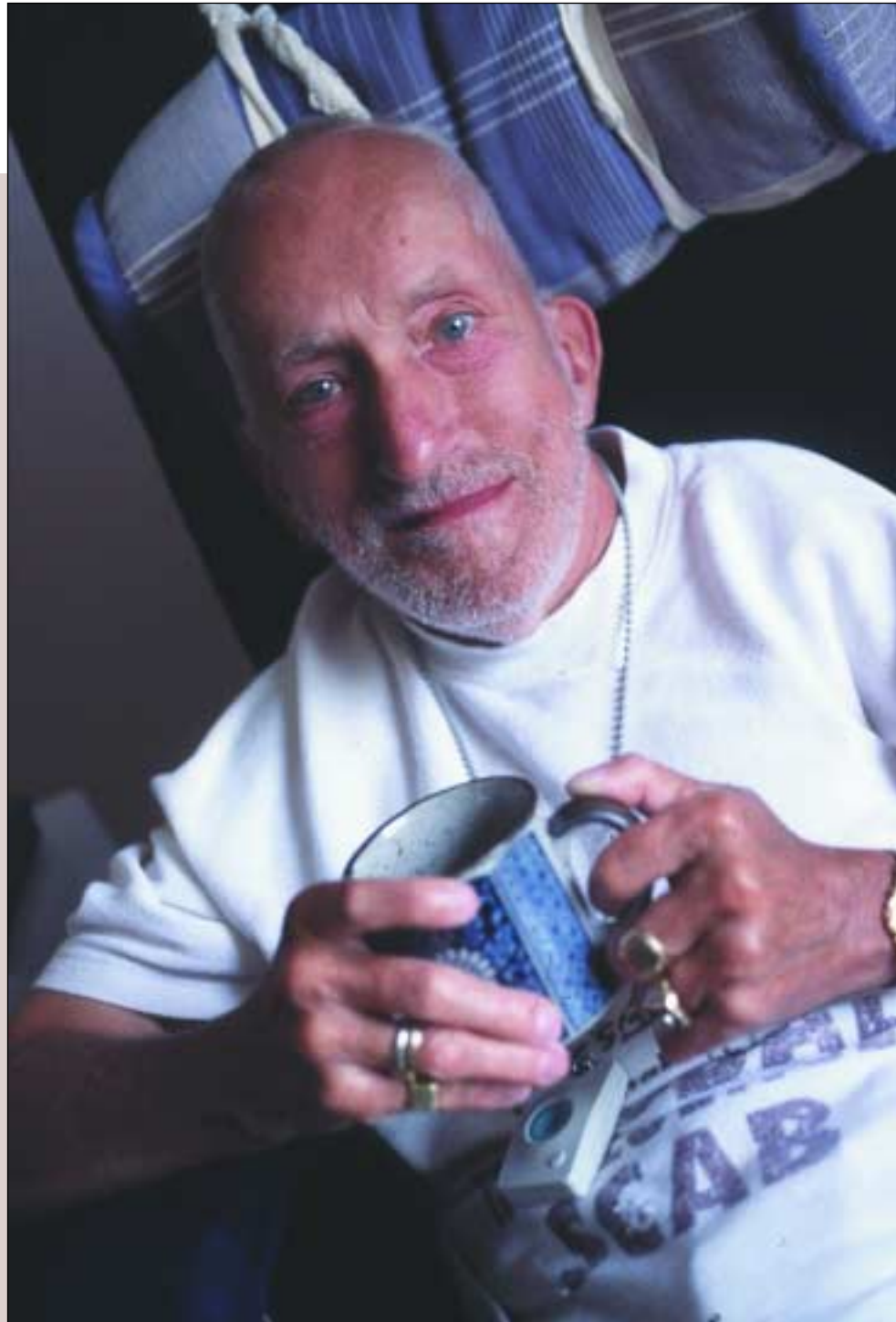
Jan's story is about the changing face of housing for disabled people in the Netherlands and across Europe. And it's a change for the better. For many years he lived in an older house that had been converted into housing for people with learning disabilities in Hilversum.

Now he is one of 16 people living in a purpose-built terrace of four large houses in the Dutch city. The scheme is the fruit of a partnership between Jan, the other residents and Sherpa, a not-for-profit organisation that provides housing, training and employment for disabled people. Together they produced the design and layout of the houses and their own rooms. They chose the carpets, the furniture, the curtains and the colour schemes.

Between them, the four houses contain three small schemes for people with learning and physical difficulties, each providing different levels of care. One house, for instance, is home to people with profound communication problems who are provided with 24-hour cover. A much lighter level of care is provided for Jan and the others in his house who have greater level of self-sufficiency. Most importantly, help is always available to those who need it.

Many clients have close links with their families and go home for weekends and holidays. The residents have forged close links with the local community, a process that started with an open day for neighbours when the scheme was completed.

Sherpa was formed two years ago by the merger of two other specialist organisations and houses about 1,300 disabled people in its schemes in the Gooi region of the Netherlands around Hilversum.



Better by design: Jan planned his bedroom at the Hilversum scheme

It provides employment for residents through a network of day-centres, among them a carpentry shop, a bakery, a workshop that makes Christmas hampers and another that makes candles. It also runs gardening and light removal teams. Sherpa also finds works placements in shops and farms. One resident works in a bar for disabled people.

Not surprisingly, Sherpa has a long waiting list for places on its schemes. It would like to build more homes and work in other regions, but rising land and

house prices make this difficult. Revenue funding costs are met by the state, which spends about €2.3 billion a year on housing and support for disabled people in the Netherlands.

The Sherpa approach of empowering its residents, offering them as much independence as they can handle and helping them to fulfill their potential is one shared by other providers in the Netherlands. It is very different from the institutional care in which many disabled Dutch people used to live.

## National Fokus on tenants' needs

Fokus is a national organisation working in partnership with housing associations in the Netherlands to build supported housing for disabled people in the community. The associations provide the bricks and mortar. Fokus organises the social care. Through the Fokus programme, about 15 per cent of the homes in 68 social housing schemes

have been built and designed for disabled people. Fokus, which is working towards a target of 100 schemes in the next few years, produces a manual of guidance and advises housing associations producing new schemes.

In partnership with the Almere Housing Association, for instance, it has produced flats in two developments. More are

promised in a third. One of the schemes includes 15 specially designed wheelchair homes where 24-hour cover is provided for disabled people aged from 23 to 75 with a range of needs and aspirations.

Each of the ground-floor garden flats has been designed around the tenant's needs. Ineka, who has lived in her flat since the

1980s, has a control panel that operates the front door, her radio and other electrical appliances, telephone, lighting, heating. She can use it to call Fokus, if she needs help.

'We provide assistance only when the client asks for it', says Manager Mark de Jonge, 'but it is always there, if they need it'. The flats are plugged right into the centre of Almere City, close to shops and services where Ineka shops in her wheelchair. A volunteer visits Ineka daily to help feed her. Her daughter visits her once a week.

The work of Fokus, which also supports people in the wider community, is funded by a protected subsidy within the national health budget. Fokus, which started life as a pressure group for disabled people, is lobbying against Government proposals to bring the subsidy back into the mainstream – a move, it believes, that could seriously reduce its funding.

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'Fokus has changed my life', says Ineka



Sherpa and its clients are beating the drum for greater independence for disabled people





# AUSTRIA

## AUSTRIA GERMANY

### Housing and training service that rose from the rubble

- Jugend am Werk (JAW) was set up in Vienna in the 1930s by the Labour Movement and the City Council to help young people find work. Stopped in its tracks by the Second World War, it opened its doors again in 1945, setting up 'rubble relief' teams of young people to help clear the bombed city.

At the same time it began helping young people to pick up the pieces of education or vocational training shattered by the war. Nearly 60 years on, it has trained thousands of young men and women for Vienna's workforce, among them locksmiths, chefs, plumbers and engineers.

In 1958 JAW responded to a new challenge, setting up three occupational workshops for Vienna's first post-war generation of young people with learning difficulties. The previous generation had perished, almost without exception, in concentration camps.

The first JAW housing scheme for people with learning difficulties, a large group home, was opened in the early 1960s when it became clear that many of its trainees wishing to leave home were finding it almost impossible to find somewhere to live.

More workshops and housing followed. Today, JAW is the largest provider of services for people with learning difficulties of all ages in the Austrian capital. It has 21 workshops across the city offering vocational therapy to 1,570 disabled people and supports more than 600 disabled people in 25 purpose-built schemes and mainstream housing.

The workshops and the housing schemes share a common aim: 'to ensure that people with disabilities gain the most comprehensive personal independence possible'.

Many of the workshops for people with learning difficulties offer other activities, including gymnastics, swimming, football and music therapy. Summer and winter camps are held, and JAW runs a magicians' group, which gives public performances, and a successful theatre company where disabled and able-bodied people perform together.

The nature of the housing has changed over the years, reflecting shifting attitudes to the housing, care and support of people with learning difficulties.

Residents are offered a range of housing and care options:

- The first three group homes completed in the 1960s and 1970s each house about 60 people. The schemes have been refurbished to meet modern standards. Residents have their own rooms, eat together and spend leisure time together. 24-hour cover is provided, and living skills are developed in training flats with those clients who wish to move on to more independent living.
- More than 200 men and women live more independently in a network of 22 sheltered housing schemes. 10 of these schemes are part of regional

JAW centres integrated into larger high-quality housing schemes built by housing co-ops or the city housing company. Community facilities are provided at the centres, and care workers offer floating support when it is needed to other JAW clients living in neighbouring mainstream housing. The sheltered schemes offer a halfway house for residents moving from the larger homes to more independent living, should they choose that route.

- Almost 250 clients live in self-contained flats in mainstream housing with support from JAW, which owns about 100 of the flats. The rest belong to housing association partners and the city council.

Residents living in the sheltered co-ops and mainstream flats are required to cover all their housing and care costs. They receive a salary from their workplace, social benefits from the state, if they are not working, or a mixture of both. JAW residents are expected to have some form of occupation in industry or commerce or in one of the occupational therapy workshops. Exceptions are made for those who require constant attention through the day.

Where possible, JAW provides its various forms of housing close together to allow interaction between client groups. Its aim is to produce a care network covering the whole of Vienna that can offer clients support in their own homes, for example, after the death of their parents – a crucial time for many disabled people.

JAW works closely with Vienna City Council. It manages a number of the 1000 new flats for disabled people built as part of neighbourhood developments by housing associations with special

funding from the city during a ten-year period that began in 1985. A further 250 flats have been added to the target in recent years. It has also worked with the city to rehouse patients from a psychiatric hospital closed in 1997.

Vienna has a long tradition of providing high-quality public housing with community facilities, dating back to the 'Red Vienna' estates built in the 1920s. It owns 220,000 flats. About 60 per cent of Viennese households live in subsidised housing. Most of the new rented social housing is built by the city's non-profit making housing associations, who own 136,000 flats. Under the Viennese Building Order all new subsidised housing must be built to accessible homes standards. Grants are available to carry out aids and adaptations to existing flats.

'Vienna is different' is the city's promotional slogan. The work of Jugend am Werk is a defining element that helps makes the difference.

### Embedded in the community

Reinhard Welzel (above) lives in a mainstream flat in Nordmannngasse a modern car-free estate (residents sign an undertaking not to own a car) in Vienna completed by a group of co-ops in 2000. He can call up support when he needs it from JAW regional centre on the estate. Aged 35, he has lived in his self-contained flat for two years and works part-time at a local flea market and has a house-keeping job.

"I have a many contacts with the community", he says. "I like living here a lot". JAW holds integration meetings with local residents before opening its schemes to overcome prejudice.

At its Carminweg Regional Centre, which has been open six years on another car-free co-op estate, JAW runs a Freetime Friends programme and encourages relatives and neighbours to use the café and drop-in centre, play table tennis, darts and table football. Parties are held on special occasions like Halloween and Christmas and outings organised.

The regional centres offer high levels of care. At Finsterergasse (opened in 1996), for example, the ten residents, a planned mix of older and younger people, are supported by six staff working shifts with one sleeping over at night and at weekends.

Residents play a part in running the house and have rotas for cooking and household tasks. A 'household parliament' meets once or twice a month to discuss common issues. Residents have their own rooms and share the bathrooms. They all have front door keys.

The older and younger groups have their own common rooms. In recent years, JAW has been developing services for older people. The young men and women who toiled in the 'rubble relief' crews after the Second World War are now their 70s. Some are still in need of care and support. Jugend am Werk is still there to help them.

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Afternoon snack at a Jugend am Werk scheme in Vienna.

Many of the organisation's projects are on traffic-free estates developed by housing co-operatives (right)







# GERMANY

## Moving to integration in the former E Germany

- Before German reunification in 1990, most state care for disabled people in East Germany was provided in large institutions. Little attempt was made to integrate disabled people into the wider community. Independence and empowerment were not seen as issues.

West Germany, meanwhile, was in step with the rest of Western Europe, turning its back on large homes and hospitals, building smaller schemes in the community and moving towards the wider introduction of adaptable homes in mainstream housing. However, both sides of the border shared a common problem: a large unmet need for housing for those with disabilities.

Since the Wall came down, national and regional government organisations have worked together to break down the barriers for disabled people and harmonise services and housing standards to tackle unmet need. It is a difficult task. Reunification has put huge pressures on the German economy, and the damaging migration from East to West continues, leaving many homes empty and the future of whole communities threatened.

In the early 1990s regional laws were introduced across Germany by the Lander to ensure a quota of housing for disabled people. In Brandenburg, for example, the

region of former East Germany that encircles Berlin, 10 per cent of all new social housing must meet generous disability standards set out in a comprehensive design guide published by the regional government in 1992. In addition, all new state-funded flats for older people must be barrier-free.

So far, private housing remains untouched by these laws, but the Brandenburg regional government plans to introduce a new law this year that will require one barrier-free floor in each new block of privately built flats.

Regional government means-tested loans of up to €18,000 are paid to home owners for aids and adaptations to their flats and houses. Borrowers must live in their homes for 15 years after the work is completed. Loans are available to housing associations and co-operatives to carry out aids and adaptations in their rented housing. The national Ministry for Social Affairs and the regional government fund care costs.

In Brandenburg this work takes place against a background of regeneration in cities where community needs have been ignored in the past. Plans include the demolition of empty blocks to make way for schools, hospitals, clinics and new housing. Building new homes for disabled people is a key element of this work.



## New approach in Potsdam

A purpose-built scheme for 16 men and women with learning difficulties in Potsdam reflects the new approach to housing for disabled people in the former East German territory. It was completed by the Potsdam Housing Co-operative with central government funding in 1999 and is managed by the Theodore Fleinder Foundation, a non-government organisation.

Seven care workers support the clients, 14 of whom live in self-contained flats in a modern block. The other 2 live in self-contained flats in a nearby development.

Residents go to day-centres and are employed in special workshops for disabled people. Most of them lived at home with their parents before moving in and are learning to live independently at their own pace. Four of the original residents have moved into mainstream housing where they can call on floating support when they need it.

The atmosphere at the main house is relaxed and informal and far removed from the institutional care it replaced.

The co-op, which has 3,500 flats in Potsdam and the surrounding small towns, was founded in 1958. It also provides purpose-built housing for disabled and older people in its general housing schemes and adapts flats for use by people in wheelchairs. Margeret Fricker, who is 88, moved to her specially adapted flat after living in another housing co-op in the city for more than 60 years. She is one of many older citizens of Potsdam who have been members of housing co-ops most of their adult lives.

New social housing is funded by a special credit institution set up to support the reconstruction of the old East Germany, which provides interest-subsidised credit. The co-op has plans for 150 new flats that will include at least 10 per cent built to wheelchair standards.



Enjoying the benefits of a new approach to housing for people with learning difficulties in Potsdam (left and below)



## New life for Doris

Doris Meier (left) moved from an institution for disabled people to her specially designed flat in a new waterside development of affordable rented homes in Potsdam last year. The scheme was completed in 2002 by the municipal not-for-profit housing association. More than 10 per cent of the 200 flats are designed for disabled people, meeting the regional government's requirement. Embedded into the estate, three to a block, they ensure their tenants are integrated into the able-bodied community of families with children, single people, couples and older people.

A carer from a specialist organisation visits Doris morning and evening. The rest of the time she looks after herself in her well-designed 90 square metre flat, and can reach local shops, the health centre and other facilities in her wheelchair.

'It's so much better here. I am independent and have control of my life' she says.

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# ENGLAND

UNITED KINGDOM  
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

## Habinteg: opening doors to disabled people since 1970

- Habinteg Housing Association has been opening doors to disabled people in England since 1970. At a time when institutional care was the only show in town, the Association established a revolutionary model of building small estates where disabled and able-bodied people live side-by-side in homes that are accessible to all residents.



Christine Drake: involved in community affairs

Today, a typical Habinteg scheme has about 40 homes, 25 per cent of which are built to wheelchair standards and the rest to Lifetime Homes standards. Community assistants provide support for disabled residents.

The Association has completed more than 2000 homes and works with about 40 local authorities across the country. Sister associations promote the core principle of integration in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. More importantly the principle of integration, and the opportunities for greater independence it offers disabled people, has been widely embraced by other housing organisations.

Many UK housing associations provide supported housing for people with disabilities and for vulnerable people, among them women fleeing domestic violence, people recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, ex-offenders and street homeless people.

Habinteg and the other associations use a mixture of public and private funding to finance their housing building programme. Residents' housing costs are met by through the national Housing Benefit system, which is administered by local authorities.

Care and living costs for physically disabled people are paid through a complicated menu of national benefits, allowances, tax credits

and income support. Many of the UK's 6.9 million disabled people (3.3 million of whom have jobs) rely on inadequate benefits for some or all of their income. Incapacity benefit, the main earnings replacement benefit for people unable to work, is only 17 per cent of average earnings.

The care costs of older people, those with learning difficulties and people with mental health problems living in housing schemes are met by the Supporting People system, which was introduced in April 2003. In its first year the scheme will cost €2.1 billion. People with learning disabilities account for 2.8 per cent of the homes allocated and will receive 23.5 per cent of the budget. People with mental health problems account for 3.2 per cent of the homes allocated and will receive 14.4 per cent.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are available from local authorities for aids and adaptations in the homes of disabled and older people.

Habinteg is more than just a housing provider. It has campaigned ceaselessly for the introduction of Lifetime Homes and for increased funding for housing for disabled people – an important issue in the UK where a shortage of about 300,000 wheelchair homes means disabled people have to wait more than three years for suitable housing.

The Association commissions local and national research programmes. One recent initiative identified ways in which local authorities can match the need for wheelchair and other specialist housing with the local supply. Another produced practical guidance on the application of Lifetime Homes standards in high-density developments.

Thanks to the work of Habinteg and other organisations, disability issues are moving slowly up the political agenda in the UK. Recent additions to the national Building Regulations require architects and housing providers to make provision for disabled people. Lifetime Homes standards, which are encouraged in new housing developments, have been adopted by many housing associations. Service providers are required to meet the needs of disabled customers under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Disability Rights Commission is an independent watchdog charged with enforcing the 1995 Act and promoting equality of opportunity.

Nevertheless, some disabled people in Britain still experience poverty and isolation, have fewer opportunities and face greater barriers to social inclusion than non-disabled people, and continue to face discrimination on all levels, according to RADAR – a national UK campaigning



Mary Harris: enjoying life in her Habinteg bungalow

## 'We can manage – no hassle'

group of disabled people. 'We can manage – no hassle', says Malcolm Uney. 'We've got the facilities and the support to lead independent lives'. He and his wife Lorraine share a bungalow on Habinteg's Park Road estate in Hull. Disabled and able-bodied tenants live together in the integrated estate where 25 per cent of the housing is designed for disabled people, 25 per cent for older people and the rest for general needs. The estate, which has a very low tenant turnover, has a laundry room, a community room and a guest room.

Like Malcolm and Lorraine, their neighbour Christine Drake has lived on the estate since it was completed 12 years ago. Christine, who is visited by her carer twice a day, is actively involved in community affairs and sits on a disability consultation panel with representatives of the police and other agencies.

'In fact, the disabled people on the estate are generally more active than their able-bodied neighbours', says Community Assistant Jackie Wood.

A two-year pilot Neighbourhood Warden Scheme covers the estate. Funded by Habinteg, another housing association and

Mark Baggley: part of a growing disability movement



the Government, it offers greater security to the tenants.

Mary Harris, who has Multiple Sclerosis, lives in a large three-bedroom bungalow on Habinteg's Bransholme scheme in Hull with her husband Peter, who is her full-time carer, and their three children. The family was among the first to move in when the scheme, which is designed to Lifetime Homes standards, was finished three years ago. Their home was adapted to meet her needs. 'We always consult future tenants before they move in to new schemes, if possible', explains Paul Common, Habinteg's Regional Manager (North). 'That way we can adapt their homes to suit their needs, and it saves us money in the long run because we don't need to make later alterations'.

'They thought of everything', says Mary, who spends many hours gardening and has decorated the entire bungalow. 'I was imprisoned in my last home and had to bump up and down the stairs on my bottom. Moving here has made such a difference for the whole family'.

Working closely with residents is one of the defining features of the Association's work. Jackie Wood and Barbara Garrigan manage 143 properties in Hull and know each resident by name. Each housing scheme sends one or two representatives to the Habinteg tenants' Forum in the North, which meets quarterly. The Association sponsors an entirely independent, national tenants' web-site where tenants exchange information and discuss common issues.

Malcolm and Lorraine Uney: 'We can manage – no hassle'

## Habinteg's Disability Housing Service

Habinteg's Disability Housing Service (HDHS) handled 2,628 inquiries between April 2002 and March 2003, an indication of the problems disabled people face in finding suitable accommodation.

Based at the Hull and East Riding Centre for Independent Living, the service is a one-stop shop providing free, independent and confidential advice on housing and related services to disabled people, their families and people working in housing, social services and voluntary organisations.

In addition, the four full-time staff, who are all disabled, provide training on housing disability issues for Habinteg staff and others. HDHS works closely with many organisations, among them the Choices and Rights Disability Coalition and the National Disabled Persons Housing Service. It organises regular forums where disabled men and women can have their say about the development of services.

Mark Baggley, who manages the service, wrote Hull City Council's physical disability strategy. With a group of disabled people and housing officers, the service has produced a housing guide of 15 issues disabled people should look for when buying or renting a house.

The service is financed by the city council, the Lloyds TSB Trust and Habinteg. 'We are part of a growing disability movement', says Mark. 'We help people with individual problems, and work hard to influence the political agenda to produce a better deal for disabled people'.

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# NORTHERN IRELAND

## Clanmil gets SMART with dementia

- Providing housing with care for men and women with dementia presents an enormous challenge for Europe's housing organisations. In Northern Ireland Clanmil Housing has risen to this challenge, using a combination of 21st century SMART technology and traditional care to provide secure accommodation for 28 older people in Belfast.



Clanmil, which provides housing for older people among its 1450 homes, developed this new model of care in partnership with the South and East Belfast Health and Social Services Trust. The two-storey scheme, Sydenham House, provides tenants with as much independence and choice as possible in a safe environment where 25 self-contained flats, a kitchen, dining room, common room and office face into a wide enclosed corridor around a central patio and gardens.

Sydenham House is earthed in the local community. Relatives are regular visitors, shopping and cooking for tenants and looking after their financial affairs. A Voluntary Service Bureau (VSB) supports the work of the 4 senior co-ordinators, 16 care staff, 1 housing worker and 2 domestic staff.

The atmosphere at Sydenham House is friendly and relaxed and about as non-institutional as it gets. With the help of VSB volunteers, tenants prepare and share a meal every Wednesday. Regular reminiscence and life-story groups bring residents together.

Some of the measures taken to support tenants are very simple. Front doors, for example, are painted different colours to help tenants identify their flats. Name-plates and family

photographs are displayed by doors to further help identification.

Other aids are more high-tech and manage risk in a discreet way, compiling tenants profiles that inform care plans. Each flat is linked to a computerised system in the main office that monitors tenants using:

- Passive infra-red presence sensors that map tenants' movements.
- Pressure pad sensors. Fitted under bedroom carpets, they alert staff when residents get out of bed. They also activate bedroom and bathroom lights at night.

Water taps in each flat can be controlled by sensors to prevent flooding. Cookers can be timed for use only when a staff or family member is present to reduce the risk of injury or fire. Sockets can be set up on a timer and individually programmed for each flat. Timers and sensors are set to meet individual needs after consultation with tenants and their families. Sensors alert staff when flat doors, fire doors or patio doors are opened. An alarm system links residents to the main office.

The cost of the technology works out at about €8,500 a flat, but as SMART technology becomes more widely used the costs will drop. Tenants' care costs are met



Residents and carers prepare lunch at Sydenham House

through the Supporting People scheme, which is described in the English case study (page 18).

Potential residents are referred to Sydenham House by social workers and care teams and thoroughly assessed before acceptance. All residents have detailed care plans.

Scepticism greets any suggestion that people with dementia can maintain any meaningful independence. Sydenham House demonstrates that this need not be the case.

Generally, there is little specific government policy on caring for people with dementia in the EU, says an Alzheimer Scotland report.

'In the near future the need for residential institutional care for people with dementia will increase significantly. Good quality care will most appropriately be provided in small-scale living units, of which there is a growing diversity of models to be adapted to particular circumstances'.

The award-winning Sydenham House offers one successful model. It is no surprise that housing and care experts from the EU and Russia are beating a path to its door.

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## Northern Ireland Housing Executive gets Wise

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has built a Wise House to demonstrate SMART technology, including video entry systems, pendant help-lines, pressure sensors and flood alarms.

With about 114,00 homes, it is the biggest social landlord in the UK and many of its tenants are older people. Accessibility audits have been carried out on selected estates to gauge the problems faced by older and disabled residents. Promoting Lifetime Homes standards in new housing is among key objectives for the NIHE, which is also looking at ways in which new technology can provide care to people in their homes.

The issue of hospital 'bed blocking', a problem across the EU, is a particular focus of concern for the NIHE. It is piloting a personal monitoring system that makes early discharge from hospital possible. Linked to a doctor's surgery, the system records and reports the patient's condition, heart rate, blood pressure etc, from his or her home, alerting support where needed. It has the potential to liberate hospital beds. without prejudicing the health and care of vulnerable people.

Last year the NIHE spent €37 million on aids and adaptations to existing homes in the public and private sectors, providing everything from grab rails to purpose-built extensions for disabled people.

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## SCOTLAND

### Key priority for Scottish Parliament

- The housing needs of disabled people are firmly established as a key priority by the Scottish Parliament in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Under its provisions Scotland's 32 local authorities must:

- Include provision for people with physical disabilities in their local housing strategies.
- Establish partnerships with Care and Repair organisations, who help disabled home-owners retain their independence by organising repairs and adaptations to their homes.
- Keep good records of housing suitable for disabled people.

Amendments to the Scottish Building Regulations, which require all new and converted homes to be barrier-free and more accessible to people with disabilities, buttress this work.

Scotland's 251 housing associations are key members of the partnerships that help local authorities meet these responsibilities. Completed two years ago, the Renfrew Project, for example, illustrates the way that associations, local authorities and many other groups work together to produce developments that bring people with disabilities and able-bodied

residents together in a supported environment.

In partnership with building company the Robertson Group, the Margaret Blackwood Housing Association built a scheme of 25 new homes, 14 specially designed for disabled people and the rest for sale. A further 2 flats for disabled people were fashioned from the conversion of a large 19th century stone house on the site.

Offices, overnight accommodation and a drop-in centre are provided in the converted house for the Thistle Foundation, a national care organisation, which provides support for disabled people living in the scheme.

The scheme is completed by 16 homes built by Horizon Housing Association, 5 of which are now home to disabled people who have moved from long-term institutional care.

Overall cost of the two developments was £2.3 million, funded by a grant of £1.3 million from Communities Scotland and contributions from the housing associations, the builder and the Thistle Trust.

The work of the two housing associations involved in the Renfrew Project reflects the

Scottish approach of building small and integrated housing schemes for disabled people. The Margaret Blackwood Housing Association has 76 small, integrated schemes across Scotland from Inverness to Ayr with a mix of family houses to suit wheelchair users, people with mobility difficulties, older people and able-bodied people. Individual houses are built in smaller towns and villages. Designed to barrier-free standards, the houses can be adapted to meet the individual needs of tenants.

Horizon specialises in providing houses for people with disabilities in integrated, barrier-free developments. To date, it has completed more than 30 projects throughout Scotland, creating 600 houses, including homes for rent and for shared ownership. It has received two national awards for its barrier-free design standards.

Meanwhile, Cube Housing Association, has consulted Alzheimer's Scotland, support groups and carers about the design of a purpose-built home in Glasgow for people who suffer from Alzheimer's Disease, which accounts for about 55 per cent of all dementia cases in the UK.

The £600,000 project of eight-flats has been designed to help residents maintain their independence for as long as possible. The open-plan complex will use colours to pinpoint key areas, such as yellow for the single entrance and exit where residents will have to pass a permanently staffed station that helps prevent them getting lost. More than 60,660 Scots were suffering from dementia in 2001, according to Alzheimer's Scotland.

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Margaret Curran, Minister for Communities, visits tenant Lorraine Brown in her new and specially designed home at High Mair

High Mair project, Renfrew



## WALES

### Moving up the political agenda

- Housing for disabled people has risen swiftly up the political agenda in Wales since the Welsh Assembly Government began work in 1999. At the centre of new housing policies is the Welsh Housing Quality Standard that has been developed to address, among other key elements, the issue of accessibility to housing. Under the Standard all necessary aids and adaptations should be provided to meet the specific requirements of any household members, including those with disabilities. In addition, they should reflect the changing needs of the household.

A range of standard Pattern Book house types has been introduced to ensure that the internal layouts of new houses built by housing associations in Wales are of consistently good quality and embrace agreed development quality requirements.

The plans incorporate Lifetime Homes standards to create a more flexible housing stock by providing homes that are adaptable to the changing needs faced by most families over time. Residents will be able to stay in their homes longer, and the demand will be eased for residential care and expenditure on grant-funded adaptations.

The Assembly is concerned that local authorities should make the most of the limited supply of housing for disabled people. It has urged them to introduce information systems that identify accessible and adapted properties and match them with the needs and choices of disabled people.

Many of the 200 housing associations working in Wales provide housing for disabled



### Tailor-made solution for Kirsty

people. Gwerin Housing Association, for example, approaches the task on a wide front that reflects the Assembly's policies:

- It builds and adapts bungalows to meet the needs of families with disabled members.
- Is carrying out an audit of its 16 sheltered schemes to establish what adaptations and improvements residents need to their homes and common areas. Many residents have lived in their flats for more than 20 years and have become progressively disabled. Furthermore, new residents are entering sheltered scheme at a much later age bringing impairment with them in many cases.
- Has introduced a scheme that fast-tracks repairs in the homes of disabled and vulnerable people.
- Has forged partnerships with specialist agencies who provide support at home to Gwerin tenants.

Gwerin, based in Abergavenny and Newport, owns and manages more than 2,000 homes in the region, including family houses, apartments and sheltered accommodation for the elderly. It is the second largest provider of housing for older people among housing associations in Wales.

Kirsty Betts (above) lives with her family in a four-bedroom bungalow tailor-made for her wheelchair use by Gwerin Housing Association. The bungalow was designed with help from the family, and an occupational therapist. Kirsty's bedroom with ensuite shower opens straight into the garden through barrier-free doors, and she has easy access to the rest of the bungalow.

Moving to her new home has been a liberating experience for Kirsty. The family used to live in a two-storey house where she slept in a kitchen/diner on the ground floor because she could not get up the stairs to the bedrooms.

Gwerin has built six bungalows for disabled people and their families nominated by Torfaen County Council's social services department. It also adapts existing bungalows. In each case, the homes have been designed around the needs of the incoming residents.

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# REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

## Supported housing scheme in rural area

- Highfield House hardly merits a second glance. A large detached modern house, it stands back from a country road in the midlands of Ireland about 70 miles from Dublin in rural anonymity. Yet the house has been very special since its conversion in 2001 by Newgrove Housing Association into a supported housing scheme for two young



Learning experience (above) at Highfield House (right)



men and two young women with autism.

Before they moved to Highfield House, three of the residents lived in residential care and the fourth at home. Supported by a 12-strong care team who work in shifts to provide one-to-one care and 24-hour cover, they are experiencing community living for the first time.

Three of the residents have their own rooms in the house and the fourth lives in a self-contained flat fashioned from the adjoining large garage. The house also contains a very large kitchen, shower rooms, a community room, a games room, sleep-over room and an office.

Residents eat together, help with the housework and work with staff in the kitchen, preparing meals, laying the table and loading the dishwasher. The aim is to help them develop their living skills, and all four have made enormous progress since they moved to the house. They are helped greatly by social and recreational programmes and by relaxation and multi-sensory activities that include reflexology, massage and aromatherapy. With the help of the residents, the service manager plans to create a sensory garden with a water feature in the grounds of the house.

The Highfield House People Carrier ferries residents and carers backwards and forwards to local shops, the swimming pool in Roscommon and the bowling alley in Longford. Residents all come from the surrounding rural area and go home to stay with their parents some weekends. Strong links have been forged with neighbours who come to the house for open evenings.

Longford County Council funded the conversion of Highfield House through the Department of Environment and Local Government capital funding scheme. Residents receive a means-tested national disability allowance that is paid to people aged between 16 and 65. Care costs are funded by the Department of Health and Children.

The needs of autistic adults in the EU are often overlooked. In Ireland, for example, every regional health board has an autistic children's team that works with clients until they are 18 when the supports stops. Ireland is not exceptional. A similar pattern can be found across the EU.

Autism was first identified in 1943. The figures for the number of people it affects in the EU are imprecise. The London-based National Autistic Society estimates that about 1 per cent of the population in the UK are affected by an autism spectrum disorder. About 20 per cent have learning difficulties and will require support throughout their lives. This estimate suggests that 3.7 million people in the EU have some form of autism of whom 740,000 have learning difficulties.

The Irish Government is carrying out a survey of autism under its National Health Development Plan. In the Midlands Health Board area (population 250,000) 131 autistic adults have been identified – about half the estimated total of 250. A similar number of children with autism is believed to live in the area.

Highfield House is one of several supported housing projects completed by Newgrove Housing Association. Projects in



## Other help for disabled people

The Irish Building Regulations contain requirements for socially accessible housing. Many housing associations are now building general needs housing to barrier-free standards. Housing grants for aids and adaptations are available, without means testing, to the 81 per cent of Irish householders who are owner occupiers. The grants have a ceiling of €20,320 and cover 90 per cent of costs.

The Irish National Disability Authority works to ensure that the rights and entitlements of people with disabilities are protected and acts as a national body to assist in the coordination and development of disability policies

Sensational experience at Highfield House

Ballinamore, Cavan, Drogheda, Dublin, Dunkald, Galway, Monaghan, Nenagh, Sligo and Wicklow are home to people with a range of disabilities. More projects are in hand, including one in Dublin for people with Prader Willi Syndrome – the first in Ireland.

Residents have been involved in the design of their new homes in another Newgrove supported scheme in Dublin, choosing colours and carpets for their en-suite rooms in the purpose-built house. Average age of the four men and two women is 45. Most of them lived with their parents and they have completed life-

skills and personal development programmes to prepare them for their 'new' lives. Five of the residents have learning difficulties and the other mental health problems. Two have part-time jobs and five attend a day centre every other day.

The scheme is a prime example of Newgrove's mission to 'meet the needs of each individual and expand the opportunities for people with disabilities to live in and be part of their own communities'.

Both Dublin schemes have been funded by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council through the DELG capital

funding scheme.

Newgrove was set up in 1999 by RehabCare, an organisation that provides community-based health and social care in Ireland. RehabCare is part of the Rehab Group, a not-for-profit body that has worked with disabled and other marginalised people since 1949. Each year more than 40,000 people use the group's 160 centres across Ireland and the UK that offer training, employment, social care and commercial services.

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# FRANCE

FRANCE  
ITALY  
PORTUGAL

## Rennes coalition leads the way

- A coalition of 20 organisations is working to end the shortage of housing for disabled people in Rennes. The first of its kind in France, its members include two local housing associations: OPAC 35, which has about 14,000 homes in Rennes and throughout Brittany, and l'Office Public HLM de la Ville Rennes (OPHLM).

They work alongside the District de Rennes, the national government, health authorities, small housing organisations and groups that represent disabled people. It is a crucial initiative, which makes the most of limited resources. In the absence of a national framework for financing and providing housing for disabled people, local organisations are left to find their own solutions.

In 1997 the coalition published a protocol setting out its aims and:

- Established the local need and supply of housing for disabled people
- Set targets for a programme of new building
- Identified ways of funding the programme.

The coalition members agree an annual building programme (this year it is 15 homes). Planning and building takes about three years. During this period prospective residents are identified and their needs assessed. With occupational therapists and architects they work on the design and layout of their new homes, which are integrated into general needs housing. Where possible, the homes are built in small groups.

Building is confined to the area served by Handistar, a free door-to-door bus service for disabled people in the city of Rennes, which has the effect of excluding some neighbourhoods from the programme.

The national government and the District de Rennes each pays 10 per cent of the extra cost of building to accessible standards. Other funding is raised from residents' employers, a special Ministry of Housing fund and charitable sources. The housing associations make up any shortfall with private funding.

### Adapting existing homes

Each housing association is responsible for carrying out adaptations to its existing stock, which can range from installing a

grab rail in a bath-room to building ramps to front doors and replacing baths with showers. The housing association (80 per cent), the national government and the Department d'Ille et Vilaine (10 per cent each) fund the work. Some organisations ask residents and their families for a contribution to the cost of the work and/or help with internal decorating.

Government funding for adaptations is not available to home-owners, but a national



## Foued puts his independence to good use

A hoist and rail links Foued's bedroom with the shower room.

organisation, Partirim, can access subsidies from pension funds to carry out aids and adaptations for older and disabled people in this group.

About 50 homes are adapted each year by OPAC 35. Future funding for this and other housing association work is threatened by proposals to cut their tax relief, which could seriously affect their budgets.

Disabled residents' care costs are paid by a national disability benefits system. A housing benefit system covers rents, which are the same as those for mainstream housing.

A great deal of progress has been made. When the coalition began its work, the metropolitan area of Rennes (population 350,000) had only 50 purpose-built flats for disabled people. Six years later, the figure has risen to 180. OPAC 35, HLM of Rennes and other HLMs have built 20 flats a year.

Nevertheless, 150 disabled people have their names on a waiting list for adapted housing. On average, they will have to wait a minimum of two years before they are rehoused. There is still a long way to go.

'Since we have lived here, I have acquired an independence I had never experienced before', says Foued Bouchnak of the OPAC 35 flat in Rennes where he lives with his mother, Dalila and his father, Mahmood (above), and his brother and sister.

Foued, who is 22 and a mechanical engineering student, puts his independence to good use. An active campaigner for the disabled, he and a colleague recently completed a unique Tour de France in their electric wheelchairs from Rennes to Paris via Toulouse, Marseilles and Lyon. Widely reported in the French media, their marathon effort took a month and culminated in a meeting with President Chirac in the French capital.

The base that makes Foued's independence possible is a large ground-floor flat fashioned from two flats in a modern block in a Rennes suburb. The family first applied for adapted housing in 1986, but such is the shortage of suitable flats in the city, they had to wait until 1997 before they moved into their 102 square metres home.

The family worked on the design and layout of their home with an occupational therapist from the



Centre de Readaptation de Beaulieu and OPAC's architects. l'Association Francais contre la Myopathie (AFM) also provided advice.

The fruit of their joint labours is a large flat with a wide central corridor, four bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, a large shower room and toilet and a separate bathroom. A hoist carries Foued from his bedroom to the specially designed shower room and back, and he has a remote control to open the front door and windows in the flat and the main entrance to the block. A large wheelchair accessible terrace leads off the

main living room.

The work cost €24,000 and was funded by OPAC 35, Mahmood Amel's employer, a national government fund, the Department de Rennes and AFM.

Foued is now campaigning with others to raise the money to buy 100 wheelchairs for disabled people in Tunisia through an organisation with the slogan 'Handicap en Liberte'. The slogan could be applied equally to him.

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# ITALY

## Trentino: widening a tradition of independence

- The citizens of the autonomous province of Trentino in Northern Italy fiercely protect the independence they enjoy from the rest of Italy. Little wonder they are so concerned to encourage and support the independence of people with disabilities living among them.

Istituto Trentino per l'Edilizia Abitativa (ITEA) – Trentino's community building and housing organisation – is in the front line in this war for independence. And it has enlisted the support of disabled men and women who help plan and design their new homes, schools, swimming pools, sports centres and other public buildings.

Giuseppe Melchionna, for example, played his part in designing an independent living project of 48 flats and office spaces where he lives and works in the heart of the city of Trento close to shops, medical services and the bus terminal. In line with ITEA and provincial government policy, the entire development is barrier free (the national requirement is only 5 per cent). Four of the flats have been specially designed around the needs of their disabled residents following 'fit and measure' and personal care assessments. To make this tailor-made design possible, the tenants were selected long before ITEA's in-house architects put pencil to paper.

'Disabled people are a valuable resource – an engine room of ideas', says ITEA President Elena Robecchi Defant. Their input into the new Trento development has helped produce large flats (80 square metres) designed for wheelchair use. Each flat has two bedrooms, a very large shower room and toilet and large living room/kitchen that leads onto a



Giuseppe Melchionna who lives and works at the independent living scheme

barrier-free balcony. The flats are fitted with sensors that detect fires, falls, gas and flooding. Flashing indicators warn deaf tenants when the front door bell or the telephone rings. All the flats are fitted with a video entry system.

Tenants open and close doors, windows and blinds with remote controls - by voice command, in the case of a tetraplegic resident. Each flat has provision for a hoist and ceiling rail linking bathroom and bedroom. Kitchens and bathrooms incorporate SMART technology. Carers providing day-time support include conscientious objectors who spend their national service period working in the community.

A fifth flat is provided for an able-bodied tenant who provides support at night, should any of her disabled neighbours need it. Emergency help can also be summoned through a link to a call centre. ITEA hopes to open its own call centre, staffed by disabled people, in the near future. The families of the disabled tenants also provide support and are a key element of the ITEA approach.

Construction costs of this and other ITEA schemes are funded by

the provincial government. Care costs payments for disabled people are means tested and range from a minimum of 60 per cent to 100 per cent. Rents are supported on the same basis. In both cases family earnings are taken into consideration by the provincial government which foots the bill. Grants are available to home owners for aids and adaptations to their homes, an important initiative in a province with one of the highest rates of home ownership in Italy.



## Co-operative solutions

Care and support for disabled people in Trentino is provided by specialist co-operatives through agreements with the 11 local authorities in the province who regulate and monitor their work. The Trento co-op, which has offices in the ITEA independent living project, employs 250 people who last year supplied 300,000 hours of support to 600 older people, disabled people and people with learning difficulties. Set up 20 years ago, the co-op also provides palliative home care for the terminally ill, and last year helped 140 people die with dignity in their own homes.

A network of 12 co-ops provide training and employment for more than 600 people in Trento, about 60 per cent of them disabled. Giuseppe Melchionna, meanwhile, has made his own way in the world of work. Following a training course in desk-top publishing, he works on a magazine for disabled people *prodigio*, which has an office in one of the large ground-floor commercial spaces in the independent living project. Yet another co-operative provides transport services for the disabled residents. *Infohandy*, a national co-op run by disabled people, assembles information on allowances, services, education and conferences for disabled people and their families.

The independent living scheme is testament to ITEA's aim of helping disabled people to 'be part of the normal life of the community'. It is seen as a pilot, and more will follow. About 450 of the 10,000 flats owned by the organisation are barrier-free. All new and refurbished flats are completed to barrier-free standards.

ITEA is working on a fully integrated barrier-free co-housing scheme of 25 flats where about 40 per cent of the residents will be

young families, 40 per cent mature households and 20 per cent older people. Some of the tenants may be disabled, and their flats will be designed to meet their needs using SMART technology, but no quota for people with disabilities has been set. A common room, where the different generations will meet, will be at heart of the scheme.

The tenants, who will be encouraged to offer mutual support, have expressed an interest in the co-housing scheme and will be given training to prepare them for their new co-operative lives before they move in. It will be a deep green development, with solar panels, tanks for rain water and a turf roof. A customer satisfaction survey will be carried out once the scheme has bedded down. Three similar schemes are in the pipeline.

Another initiative will provide temporary care for older and disabled people leaving hospital while their needs are assessed and their homes are adapted to meet them. In many cases the adaptations will incorporate SMART technology, which will also be used in the temporary accommodation to allow residents to familiarise themselves with its use before returning home. The scheme will also allow the early release of hospital beds.

ITEA has ambitious plans to take an abandoned village in the mountains and, with the aid of SMART technology and good transport links, create a 'Televillage': a mixed community, including disabled men and women, where people can live and work in a sustainable community.

Many of Trentino's 450,000 citizens live in narrow mountain valleys, each with its own identity, and their tradition of mutual help has provided the foundations for the cooperative approach that works so well in many services in **continued**





Barrier free flats have been fashioned from this 17th century house by ITEA's architects

Italy continued ▶

the province, says Eleanor Robbechi Defant. Disabled people living in Trentino certainly benefit from this tradition.

About 2000 ITEA flats in Trento are leased to OPERA a welfare organisation that supports the 15,000 students living and studying in the historic city. Recently, ITEA converted a 13th century barracks block in the shadow of the city walls into student flats. All flats are barrier-free and two flats have been designed for disabled students using SMART technology imported from Sweden and Germany. The 21st century hardware includes a sink-unit and cupboards in the kitchen that can be moved up and down walls at the push of a button to suit the needs of the tenant. Similar technology has been used in the design of the bathroom, which has an adjustable sink and mirror unit and WC unit and a specially designed shower. Doors, windows and the skylights are operated by remote control.

Next door ITEA has converted a large 17th century house into large barrier-free flats for students. One flat is designed for wheelchair use. Great care is taken to preserve the character of the buildings, and the work is monitored by the Department of Culture.

More schemes are planned for disabled students who are coming to study at Trento in increasing numbers. ITEA and OPERA are working together to ensure that a lack of suitable housing does not hamper their ambitions.

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## PORTUGAL

### Co-operative success story

The overthrow of the Portuguese military government in 1974 was a watershed in the care of disabled children and young people in Portugal. In its wake the new government set up 50 co-operatives across the country to provide care, education and training from the cradle to adulthood. Today, the co-ops work with many thousands of children and young people with disabilities and their families.

About a dozen co-ops provide supported housing that offers their young clients independent living in the wider community. Among them is the Cercizimbra co-operative, which is based in the small coastal holiday town of

Cercizimbra skills and training centre for young adults with learning difficulties



Cercizimbra's first supported housing scheme for people with multiple disabilities

Sesimbra about 25 kilometres south of Lisbon. It began life in a small centre built by monks to provide holidays for poor children. Today, it supports 220 disabled children and young adults and their families, has three centres and is the biggest social enterprise in the area apart from the local authority, the Municipality of Sesimbra in the district of Setubal.

The co-op employs about 90 people - including psychiatrists, drivers, cooks, social workers, teachers and administrators. Volunteers, most of them parents, support the paid staff. Cercizimbra buses ferry clients backwards and forwards across the district. It works closely with the local authority, which nominates children and young people for its services.

Thousands of clients have passed through the co-op's barrier-free doors since they first opened in 1984. About 15 to 20 per cent of current clients have multiple disabilities and great physical impairment. At the other end of

the disability register are children and young people with mild learning difficulties. Many of the older clients still attend the centre every day. Health care and regular check-ups are provided for all clients.

The original centre was recently refurbished and extended with funding from the local Rotary Club. It has a large kitchen and restaurant, offices, a large recreation area and a 'sensation room'. A gymnasium occupies the former chapel. The centre runs a thriving gardening business which employs many of the clients, growing plants, making pots and sifting soil for sale at local markets and on-site.

A recently completed Cercizimbra education complex houses a nursery, kindergarten and 'early intervention centre' for older children. It cost €550,000 - 70 per cent of which was raised through private contributions. On another site it runs a skills centre for young adults that provides construction, IT and engineering

training. The co-op also supports children who attend mainstream schools, where they are always a class member but have special education programmes.

The running costs of all three centres are met by the state and based on the number of clients using them. However, the co-op has to raise some money to supplement the Government's funding.

Very few services for children and young people with disabilities are run directly by the government or local government. Most are the work of the co-ops or the private sector, which offered the only care - for the disabled children of wealthy families - before the co-ops were set up.

The development of the co-ops coincided with Portugal's entry into the EU and the flow of European money into the country. EU Social Fund contributions have covered about 75 per cent of the capital costs of the 50 co-ops and this stream of money will be available until 2006.



Cercizimbra buses ferry clients backwards and forwards across the district

Cercizimbra is an important thread in the fabric of Sesimbra. Two parents and five professionals sit on its board of management. Successful fund-raising among local people is a defining element of its work, and all its schemes are embedded in the local community. It is testament to the successful contribution a co-operative approach can make to providing services for people with disabilities.

continued ▶





A thriving gardening business provides training and employment for many of Cercizimbra's clients

## Cercizimbra's first housing scheme

Cercizimbra's first housing scheme was completed in May 2003. A barrier-free development, it meets the 'design for disabled' requirements of the Portuguese building code. Located in a residential area it houses seven full-time residents with serious physical disabilities, provides five beds for respite care and is run by eight care staff and a social worker. Each room has its own bathroom, and an additional large bath and shower room is provided. The elegant building also contains a dining room, kitchen, community room and staff room, all of which are painted in tranquil colours. It is close to a school and the community room opens up into the surrounding green open space. The large basement will be used by other organisations bringing parties of people with disabilities to the town in the summer.

The building was designed by Jose Carlos dos Santos Trindade, an architect and friend of the organisation who brought more than his design skills to the table and also designed the refurbishment of the Cercizimbra

centre. The building work was organised by the Chairman of the organisation, who is a retired builder and the parent of one of the clients. Their combined efforts and generosity kept the cost of the building down to €400,000, about two thirds of the normal building costs.

About two thirds of the funding was raised in the local community with the rest provided equally by the local authority and the national government. Usually, the Government contributes 80 per cent of the funding and the rest is paid by the local authority and through voluntary contributions.

'The new housing scheme is a good start', says Cercizimbra teacher and board member Jorge Rato, 'but we will need at least three more over the next decade to meet the needs of young adults with disabilities who are seeking greater independence. We hope to work in partnership with housing co-operatives'.

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Community room in Cercizimbra's first housing scheme

# HOUSING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE: RECOMMENDATIONS

## Ten recommendations based on the findings of this report

- 1 Disabled people must be involved, where possible, in the planning, design and management of their homes. A younger generation of disabled people across Europe is insisting that this should be the case.
- 2 Social housing providers should promote and sustain the independence of disabled people through their work. The provision of adequate housing should be supported by information services, work and training centres, social facilities and good public transport systems.
- 3 Housing for disabled people should always be integrated into the community. Disabled people should be able, where possible, to move seamlessly from housing with high care to mainstream housing with lighter support.
- 4 All new homes and homes in refurbishment programmes should be designed to barrier-free or Lifetime Homes standards. This requirement should apply to all housing, public and private, and be incorporated into the national building codes of all EU countries.
- 5 Homes for severely disabled people should be tailor-made to meet their needs. Tenants should be identified before new schemes are designed to make this possible.
- 6 Housing providers must work closely with social services and health organisations, identifying people in need and ensuring that adequate care and support are provided.
- 7 Local authorities and housing providers should match the need for wheelchair and other specialist housing with the local supply to make the best possible use of limited resources.
- 8 Housing providers should use SMART technology more widely in housing for disabled people. Currently an expensive option, the cost of new technology will fall as its use becomes more widespread.
- 9 Grants and loans for aids and adaptations to their homes should be available to disabled home owners and disabled people living in private rented housing. Advice, information and support services should be set up to help them gain access to the grants and loans, employ builders and ensure the work is carried out properly.
- 10 Special attention should be paid to the situation of families with disabled children, many of whom live in inadequate and overcrowded conditions. More specially designed larger houses should be built to satisfy their needs.

## Disabled Tenants' Charter

Disabled tenants are working with housing organisations on the development of a Disabled Tenants' Charter in England 'to identify key themes and models of good practice to help mainstream disability issues in social housing'.

The National Housing Federation, Habinteg Housing Association, Housing 21, John Grooms Housing Association and Yarrow Housing Association are carrying out the project with funding from the Housing Corporation.

Key aims of the project are to:

- engage with disabled users to identify how disability issues can be mainstreamed into social housing.
- develop models of good practice for housing associations to use in improving services.
- produce a guide for dissemination that will be available in different formats including an interactive website
- provide a transparent model of engagement for disabled users and housing providers to improve services.

The Charter will be launched in the summer of 2004.