

Potential Questions for Family Carers to use when thinking about supported living and meeting with Supported Living Providers

These Questions are based on the Reach Standards which are an essential tool in helping support providers to meet their responsibilities to support people to live an ordinary life. The questions were used when OXFSN carried out Quality Checks so are designed to find out information from both the residents and the support providers about the kind of life residents are living so they are aimed at those already in supported living. While they may not be the exact questions you want to ask, they will help you think about the questions you may want to ask support providers as hopefully it will give you a better insight in to how they go about supporting someone.

Background to the Reach Standards.

- Providers at all times should be thinking about how the Reach Standards are being met when supporting people with a learning disability and/or autism.
- No one should be a tick list of 'tasks to be done'. Supported living should not be a service model. Every person has the right to express their choice and should be involved in designing their own lives and support.
- What does a good life look like? Each individual is unique so they should be supported to live the life they want to lead depending on their age, emotional and physical health etc – and not that of those they share a house with or number of support hours.
- A good life is one where support changes depending on the needs of the individual being supported and evolves over their lifetime.
- The Reach Standards have also evolved over time. They hold a person at the centre in any consideration of their housing and support and when questions are asked that needs to be remembered.

The Reach Standards are based on three main building blocks.

Self Determination:

I chose who supports me and how I am supported

I get help to make changes in my life

I choose where I live

I have my own home (with a tenancy or ownership)

I choose my friends and relationships

Personalised Support:

I choose who I live with

I choose who supports me and how I am supported
I choose how to be healthy and safe

Inclusion:

I have the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens
I choose how I am part of my community

If you meet other residents in a supported living setting, they often say they are 'okay' with the life they lead. It may be that they **are** happy with the life they lead but is that because they don't know what else is out there; are support staff too scared to rock the boat or have individuals' aspirations being reduced to fit in with the service hours! So, when asking questions, try and talk to several people to get a fuller picture.

You also do not need to use all the questions – they are just suggestions and can be used as conversation starters.

1. Do the residents choose who they live with?

- How long have the other residents lived there?
- Was it their choice to move here or did they have support – if so from who? Were family involved in the move?
- Did they have the choice about whether they lived with someone or lived on their own?
- How did they choose who they lived with or who moved in? Do they get help to work out what kind of person they want to live with?
- What do they enjoy/not enjoy about being with the people they live with?
- Do they get to choose their new housemates along with the other people they live with?
- If they have a difficulty with someone they live with, how would they like to sort this out?
- Do they share spaces with their housemates or do things independently?
- Are there changes they would like to make as to how they share their home with other people and if so what would they be?
- If someone is unhappy about who they live with do they get help to change things? If so, what kind of help?

If someone lives on their own:

- What do they like/not like about living on their own? Would they like to make any changes?
- If they would like to share with someone, do they know who or what type of person?

2. I choose where I live

- Why did the people living here chose to live here/Did **they** chose to live here or did someone else make that choice? If so who – family/OCC? Did they get support from someone they trust to work out what kind of place they want to live in and where they want to live.

- Did they get support to understand the choices they have so that they can decide for themselves?
- What do they like about living here?
- Is there anything they don't like about living here?
- How happy and safe do they feel about where they live?
- Do they like living in this community? Are they close to their friends and family? Are they close to things they enjoy doing?
- What activities or groups are they involved in within their community?
- How often do they get to go to those activities? How are they supported to get there? If it is an activity that is important to them – they should be able to go more than once a week.
- Is there a bus route nearby or do the residents depend on other transport such as taxis or do they have a mobility car to enable them to see people or get to the activities they like taking part in?
- What are the support providers views on a house car?
- Has the house been designed to make sure it is comfortable to suit their needs? i.e., If someone is in a wheelchair, do they have plenty of space to move around in. Is there a downstairs bathroom? Is there a shower instead of a bath if that's what they prefer?
- Do they know their neighbours? Do they get on well with them? Have there been any issues in the past with neighbours?
- If someone is not happy about where they live where might they want to live and will they get help to change things?

3. I have my own home (with a tenancy or ownership)

- Do they understand what their rights and responsibilities as a tenant or homeowner are? Was their tenancy agreement explained to them? What **are** their rights as a tenant? Who is the tenancy with?
- If someone rent's, do they have an easy read tenancy agreement?
- Are their housing and care support separate?
- How do they pay their rent or mortgage? E.g., Is it online, does it go to a housing office? Is it through Universal Credit? How are they supported to pay their rent?
- Do the housemates decide what happens in their house and how the rooms are used? If not, why not?
- How are the repairs in their home arranged?
- Are they able to decide how their house looks and decorate it as they want? Do they have their own things in their home where they want them?
- Do they have their own key? If not, why not? Has someone else got keys to their home and if so, did they agree to this?
- Do their support workers knock before entering their house and their room and wait to be asked in?
- Are they happy about the way their home is treated by the support workers? Does the home look or feel like a workplace for support staff? Do they have an office there?
- Do support staff open the front door to visitors or check with the tenants first? Do they hold meetings there without checking with the tenants first? Do they have their post sent to the tenant's home?

4. I choose who supports me and how I am supported. I get good support.

- How is your family member going to be supported to get the right support in the first place from the right people for them?
- Will the support provider work with them to get help to think about the kind of person they want to support them? Did they get asked whether they preferred male/female support workers, people of a certain age, people from a certain culture, the skills they need or the type of personalities and interest they had?
- Were you as a family carer involved in recruiting your family members support workers? If so how? Will your family member be involved in recruiting the right support worker for them?
- Do the support workers know what kind of support your family member wants and does not want from them? Are they supporting your family member to do things for themselves to enable them to be as independent as possible and not try to do things for them? (Use of personalised technology, fingerprint locks, adaptations etc).
- What does your family member look forward to most during the day? Is there anything they don't like about their day? Can something be done to change this?
- Is there anything they would like to change about their support? Do they get support at the right time of the day for them or do shift changes impact on what they want to do? Is their support flexible enough that they do not have to stick to a fixed plan?
- If they are not happy with their support workers or the work they do, do they know who to complain to, to get help to make changes?
- Do they/you know who to talk to if they/you are unhappy about their Support Plan? Who is this?

(Support workers should not make assumptions about a person which can happen if they have known someone for a long time – they should be continually looking to enrich a person's life).

(Support workers who are supporting someone with profound and complex learning disabilities should have a good understanding of the person's communication chart. Especially important when people communicate with their behaviour rather than words)

5. I choose my friends and relationships

- Do your family members support workers know who is important to them and help them spend time with who they want? Do they know who in your family is important to them and help them stay connected? Are there other people they would like to see more often? If so who?
- How do support workers support them to stay in contact with their family and friends?
- Do they get support to meet new people such as neighbours and people living locally if they would like to? How are they supported to do this?
- Are friends and family involved in helping them make choices about their friendships and relationships or is it just the support workers?
- What things would they like to do with friends/family/work colleagues?

- Do their friends and family get to visit? Do they get enough privacy when they visit? If not, what changes would they like to see? (e.g., Facetiming without a support worker being there)
- Do they have a girlfriend/boyfriend? If not, would they like to meet someone? How could staff best support them to meet someone? Would they like to know more about sex or relationships? If so, what would they like to know? How can staff best help them think and plan about these things and keep you safe.
- If they have friends or a girl/boyfriend, are they able to stay over if they want them to?

6. I choose how to be healthy and safe

- How are they? Are they keeping well? Do they feel safe living in their home?
- How are they supported to keep safe and well when at home? How are they supported to keep safe and well when they are out? Do support workers know what their fears and worries are both in and outside of their home?
- If they use a computer/smartphone, how are they supported to be as safe as possible online?
- If they are able to go out on their own, what do they do if they suddenly feel they need some support or they get lost? (Safe Places awareness for both resident and support staff).
- Do staff support them to keep both emotionally well and fit? How do they do this? Do they give them advice about their body and health? (Do they make sure they go out every day, do they go to a gym or swimming, do they eat healthily?)
- Are they involved in planning their meals? When do they do this and do they get the opportunity to have takeaways?
- If they want to try something new and take risks, how do the support workers help them to do this in the safest ways possible? **(Positive risk taking should be able to happen)**
- Do was family member have a regular health check? Do they have a **health action plan**? If yes, were you involved in it? If not, why not?
- Does your local GP surgery make reasonable adjustments to see them if they need an emergency visit? Good to know if new GP.
- If they take medication, do they understand what it is for? How is it reviewed?
- Are there things they worry about? Are they able to tell staff about their worries? If so how. If not, what do staff need to know about your family member that would help them understand that what they are worried about? Is there something support staff could do to help them not worry so much?
- Is anyone ever unkind or rude to them? How can they supported to deal with this?

7. I choose how to take part in my community

- Do they go out into their local community often? If not, why not and how can staff support them to get out more? Do they like the community they live in?
- What type of things do they like to do? Where do they go? Who do they meet?
- Are they involved in any local events or group that are not just for people with learning disabilities?

- What community activities, hobbies and interests are they supported to have or be part of? (Football, choir, dance, sports club, church etc)
- Do they go out in the evenings and at weekends? If yes, what type of things do they go to. If not, why not? Is it due to staff rotas, financial constraints, transport issues?
Would they like to go out more? If so, what type of things would they like to do?
- Do they have a job, work experience or a volunteer role? If not, would they like one? Are there any opportunities that interest them?
- Are they able to get around their local community? Are there local buses they can use? Is there anything that would help them be more independent?
- How do they find out what groups/events are happening locally (Facebook, churches, newsletters, library notice boards etc)?
(How do support workers find out what is going on in the local community?)
Are support staff creative at thinking out of the box?

8. I have the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens

- Who will support them to look after their finances? Do they/you know what their money is used for? (i.e., daily living, food, household bills). Are they able to buy things when you go out?
- Do they have a personal budget to pay for their support? Do they understand what a personal budget is?
- Do they receive benefits? Do their support workers help them to receive the right benefits?
- Do they contribute towards the cost of their care? When was their last review? Have their support workers checked to see if they are contributing the right amount?
- Do they know how to make a complaint about their support if they are not happy about something? Who would they go to? How would they do this? If they have made a complaint in the past have they been listened too and taken seriously?
- Do they know what type of information other people keep about them? Do they understand what it is about? Can they see the information when they want? Are they aware that this information should be kept confidential?
- Do the support workers help them to understand what is going on around them? For example, change in support staff, news updates, change in routine etc.
- Are they registered to vote?
- Are they able to volunteer or do paid work?
- Are they supported to go out in the evenings and weekends and get up and go to bed when they want?

9. I get help to make changes in my life

- What if they want to make any changes in their life? If so, how do they do that?
- What makes them happy about their life? What doesn't make them so happy? How would they like to change things and what support from people do you think they need to help them make these changes?
- Do people around them listen to what they want and how they feel? Are they comfortable talking with them about their future and how they want their future to be? Who would they like to be involved in helping them make these changes?
- Do they have a person-centred plan? Does it say what they want it to say?
- As they get older or their health is changing, does someone help them to plan for their future? Do they need mobility aids? Will they want to plan a move or stay where they are?
- Are they supported to have meetings that involve them in all decisions about their life? Do they decide who will come to those meetings and where and how the meetings are run. Do you feel included in these meetings?
- Do they know what an independent advocate is? Do they feel like they need one? Do they know how to go about getting an advocate?
- Are any discussions about changes that they may or may not want to happen recorded in their Support Plan so that everyone knows what they want and how best to support them?