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| **Supplementary Written Evidence - Disability and the Built Environment inquiry – Women and Equalities Committee** |  |

**National Planning Policy and Accessible Housing**

**Key Points**

* Research has shown an urgent need for accessible housing
* The National Planning Policy Framework leaves it to the discretion of local planning authorities to determine the extent of wheelchair accessible or wheelchair adaptable properties in their local area
* The London Plan requires **that 90% of new homes are built to Requirement M4(2)** – which replaced the Lifetime Homes standard – and that **10% are built to Requirement M4(3) to be wheelchair accessible.**
* **Inclusion London calls for all local authorities to be required to follow these targets**
* The creation of more accessible housing needs to be targeted where there is most need. This is in the social housing sector and truly affordable housing.

**London Plan**

The new optional Building Regulations came ‘into force’ in October 2015. Very few local planning authorities have introduced policy to require the optional accessible housing standards. However, the Greater London Authority led the way in terms of amending existing planning policy (the London Plan), to incorporate the new optional technical standards. Their altered London Plan policy requires 90% of all new build housing to be built to the new optional building regulation standard M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwellings, and 10% to be built to be wheelchair accessible or wheelchair adaptable dwellings.The Secretary of State has signed off the Mayor of London’s proposed alterations to the London Plan subject to monitoring, and they have been approved and passed by the London Assembly (February 2016).

**Equality Act 2010 and disability report**

The House of Lords select committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability report recommended that all local authorities should follow London’s example. Recommendation 51 reads:

We believe that other local authorities should follow the example of London and revise their planning policy to require a significant proportion of new dwellings to be wheelchair accessible or wheelchair adaptable (standard M4(3)), and all other new dwellings to comply with optional standard M4(2). (Paragraph 496)

The government rejected this recommendation in their report. The government response states that:

“Government believes that local planning authorities remain best placed to determine the extent to which provision of more accessible housing is necessary and appropriate in their local area, and have appropriate powers to introduce development plan policies to meet these needs, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Guidance and other relevant matters.”

**Accessible housing**

The urgent shortage of accessible housing is evidence that local authorities are clearly not in fact best placed to determine the provision required in their local area:

• 15% of households with 1 or more disabled person feel their home is not suitable for their need.

• The majority of homes in England (84%) do not allow someone using a wheelchair to get to and through the front door without difficulty.

• Research by Aspire published in October 2014 found that 23,886 wheelchair users were in urgent need of wheelchair accessible social or affordable housing in England.

• A survey by Leonard Cheshire published in July 2014 found that:

o 72% do not have an accessible door into their building (that is one that is easy to get into).

o 63% reported not having a bathroom large enough to fit a wheelchair;

o 52% do not have doors and hallways wide enough for a wheelchair.

o 50% do not have stairs big enough for a stair-lift to be fitted.

Inclusion London case studies included in our first written submission are further evidence of this.

**Cost savings**

Availability of accessible housing to meet need provides cost savings in the long-term as evidenced by numerous pieces of research, including:

* The ‘Hidden Housing Crisis’ report by Leonard Cheshire showed how falls caused by inaccessible housing requiring hospital treatment create costs to the NHS.
* This report also showed the relative costs of making simple adaptations to a standard home (which could be more than £20,000) compared to the cost of building a home to Lifetime standards in the first place (average cost of £1,100 or less).
* The DCLG commissioned report (2012) “Assessing the health benefits of Lifetime Homes”, by the Building Research Establishment, highlighted cost savings associated with Lifetime Homes.

**Inclusion London recommendations:**

All Local Authorities to be required to meet targets so that 90% of new homes are built to Requirement M4(2) and 10% are built to Requirement M4(3) to be wheelchair accessible.

**About Inclusion London**

Inclusion London is a London-wide user led organisation providing capacity-building support for over 70 Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations in London with a reach of over 70,000 Deaf and Disabled Londoners. We are part of the Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance which is a network of grassroots Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations across England.

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