

# Guide to what good supported living looks like (based on the REACH standards)

September 2024

**This guide is designed to help families ensure that their family members who have Down's syndrome live fulfilling lives in supported living environments that respect their rights and needs.**

The REACH Standards provide a framework for what good supported living should look like, emphasizing the importance of choice, control, and inclusion in all aspects of life.

At the end of this guide, you will find a detailed checklist (see Appendix) that can be used as a practical tool to assess and ensure that these standards are being met.



## Overview of the REACH Standards

The Reach Standards are a set of nine principles designed to ensure that individuals who have Down's syndrome, as well as others with learning disabilities, live as equal citizens with the same rights, choices, and responsibilities as everyone else. These standards focus on the importance of self-determination, personalised support, and inclusion within the community.

### The nine REACH Standards:

<b>I choose who I live with</b>	<b>I choose where I live</b>	<b>I have my own home (with a tenancy or ownership)</b>
<b>I choose who supports me and how I am supported</b>	<b>I choose my friends and my relationships</b>	<b>I get help to make changes in my life</b>
<b>I choose how to be healthy and safe</b>	<b>I choose how I am part of my community</b>	<b>I have the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens</b>

# 1. I choose who I live with



## What this means

Everyone should have the right to choose who they live with. Whether they want to live alone or with others, their preferences should be respected.

## How to support this

Encourage your family member to express their preferences about their living companions with their landlord or support provider. If they are unhappy with their current living situation, support them in exploring alternative options.

## Case Study: Rachel's experience with choosing a housemate

Rachel, a young woman who has Down's syndrome, initially moved into a shared house with two other residents. However, she found it difficult to connect with one of her housemates, who had different interests and a more solitary lifestyle. Rachel expressed her discomfort to her support worker, who facilitated a discussion about her preferences. As a result, Rachel was given the option to move in with another housemate who shared her love of cooking and social activities. The new arrangement greatly improved Rachel's quality of life, as she felt more comfortable and engaged in her home environment.

## In-depth exploration

Choosing who to live with is a fundamental aspect of feeling secure and happy in one's home. For many people who have Down's syndrome, the ability to choose their housemates can significantly impact upon long term well-being. It's important that this choice is not only offered initially but is revisited periodically as relationships and circumstances change. Regular conversations about living arrangements should be a standard part of support, allowing individuals to express any concerns or desires for change without feeling pressured or overlooked.

## 2. I choose where I live



### What this means

Everyone should have control over where they live. They should be supported to choose a home that meets their needs and preferences, whether that means living close to family, friends, or in a particular community.

### How to support this

Help your family member to explore different housing options, taking into account their preferences for location, accessibility, and proximity to community resources. Make sure that they are being involved in the decision-making process in line with their rights under the Mental Capacity Act.

### Case Study: David's journey to finding the right home

David wanted to live independently but close to his sister, who lived in a small village. However, the initial supported living option offered to him was in a city, far from his sister and the quiet environment he preferred. With his sister's support, David communicated his desire to live in a more rural setting. The support provider worked with David to find a cottage in the village where his sister lived. David now enjoys the peace of the countryside and the comfort of having family nearby, contributing to his overall happiness and well-being.

### In-depth exploration

Location plays a critical role in our respective quality of life. The environment should match a person's lifestyle preferences, whether that includes access to quiet spaces, proximity to family, or easy access to community activities. In David's case, the transition from an urban to a rural setting was essential for his comfort and happiness. It's important to recognise that preferences can evolve, and the support team should be flexible and responsive to these changes, ensuring that the individual's living situation always aligns with their current needs and life goals.

### 3.

# I Have My Own Home

(with a tenancy or ownership)



#### What this means

Every person should have a legal right to their home, whether through a tenancy agreement or ownership. This gives them the same rights as any other tenant or homeowner.

#### How to support this

Ensure that your family member is given a clear and fair tenancy agreement or ownership document (easy read if necessary). They should be supported to understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant or homeowner, and their home should feel like their own private space.

#### Case Study: Tom's experience with securing a tenancy

Tom moved into a supported living flat with a clear understanding that he would have his own tenancy agreement. However, upon moving in, he realised that the support staff often treated his flat as an extension of their office, frequently entering without knocking. Feeling his privacy was compromised, Tom discussed the issue with his support worker and family. Together, they reviewed the tenancy agreement and clarified the boundaries with the support staff. As a result, Tom's home became a private and personal space, where he felt secure and respected.

#### In-depth exploration

A genuine tenancy or ownership arrangement is essential for fostering a sense of independence and responsibility. Individuals who have Down's syndrome should be given the opportunity to learn about and understand their rights as tenants or homeowners. This understanding can be facilitated through easy-read versions of tenancy agreements and regular discussions about their rights. Additionally, it's crucial to establish clear boundaries with support staff to ensure that the individual's home remains a private and personal space. The case of Tom highlights the importance of revisiting these boundaries regularly to maintain respect for the individual's autonomy.

## 4. I choose who supports me and how I am supported



### What this means

Everyone should have some control over who supports them and how that support is provided. They should be able to choose their support workers and make changes if necessary.

### How to support this

Make sure that your family member can be as involved as they want in the recruitment and selection of their support workers. Ensure that the support provided is flexible and responsive to their changing needs and preferences.

### Case Study: Emma's choice of support workers

Emma had a strong preference for female support workers and enjoyed a structured daily routine. However, when a new male support worker was assigned to her, she became anxious and withdrawn. Recognising her discomfort, Emma's family and support provider discussed her preferences with her. Emma was then given the opportunity to participate in the selection of a new support worker, choosing someone she felt comfortable with. This change significantly improved Emma's confidence and her ability to engage with her daily activities.

### In-depth exploration

The ability to choose who supports them is crucial for individuals who have Down's syndrome, as it directly impacts their comfort and trust in their living environment. Support should not be imposed but rather tailored to the individual's preferences. Regular evaluations and feedback sessions can help ensure that the support remains aligned with the individual's needs. Furthermore, involving the individual in the recruitment process can empower them and provide a sense of control over their care. In Emma's case, having a say in the selection of her support worker led to a more positive and effective support experience.

## 5. I choose my friends and my relationships



### What this means

Everyone should have the right to choose their friends and relationships, including romantic relationships. They should be supported to maintain existing relationships and form new ones.

### How to support this

Make sure that the support provider is helping your family member to explore maintaining and develop relationships wherever they wish. This includes helping them stay in touch with family and friends and supporting them in forming new connections, whether through social activities, work, or community involvement.

### Case Study: John's journey to building friendships

John was shy and found it difficult to make friends in his new supported living environment. His support team noticed his isolation and worked with him to identify social activities that matched his interests. John expressed a love for music, so the team encouraged him to join a local music group. Through this group, John made several friends who shared his passion. Over time, he became more confident in social settings, and his circle of friends grew, greatly enhancing his quality of life.

### In-depth exploration

Social connections are vital for everyone, including individuals who have Down's syndrome. These connections provide emotional support, reduce loneliness, and contribute to overall well-being. It's essential to create opportunities for individuals to meet new people and maintain existing relationships. Support workers can play a key role in facilitating social activities and encouraging the individual to participate. John's experience shows how tailored support in finding and engaging in activities of interest can lead to meaningful relationships and increased self-esteem.

## 6. I get help to make changes in my life



### What this means

Everyone should be encouraged and supported to make changes in their life, whether it's trying new activities, learning new skills, or planning for the future.

### How to support this

Make sure that support services regularly discuss your family member's goals and aspirations with them. As required work as part of their circle of family, friends and paid support to help them plan and make changes in their life, and ensure they are getting the support they need to achieve their goals.

### Case Study: Sophie's path to independence

Sophie had always relied heavily on her parents for support. As she transitioned into supported living, she expressed a desire to become more independent. Her support team worked with her to identify areas where she wanted to build skills, such as cooking and managing her finances. They set up a plan that gradually increased her responsibilities, with ongoing encouragement and guidance. Sophie now feels proud of her ability to manage many aspects of her daily life independently, which has boosted her self-esteem and confidence.

### In-depth exploration

Supporting individuals who have Down's syndrome in making changes in their lives requires a delicate balance of guidance and autonomy. It's important to empower people to take risks and make decisions while providing the necessary safety nets and person centred risk assessments. Structured plans, like Sophie's, that gradually build skills and responsibilities can lead to significant personal growth. Regular goal-setting sessions can help people articulate their aspirations and track their progress, fostering a sense of achievement and growing independence.

## 7. I choose how to be healthy and safe



### What this means

The individual should be supported to make decisions about their health and safety. This includes understanding their health needs, making informed choices about treatments, and staying safe both at home and in the community. Effective safety planning involves creating personalised strategies that take into account their unique needs and challenges. Any plan should be simple, clear, and easy to understand, using visual aids or step-by-step instructions if necessary. It is crucial for the support provider to involve people in their safety planning process to ensure they understand the steps and feel empowered to use them. Key components of a good safety plan include identifying safe places, recognizing potential hazards, knowing how to seek help, and having emergency contacts easily accessible. Regularly reviewing and practicing plans with the individual helps reinforce these safety measures, ensuring they are well-prepared to handle situations independently.



### How to support this

Support organisations should provide your family member with information about their health and safety in a way that they can understand. Support them in making informed decisions about their health care, treatments, and how to stay safe.

### **Case Study 1: Ben's approach to managing his health**

Ben had always been fearful of medical appointments and avoided them whenever possible. Recognising this, his support worker introduced Ben to a local nurse who specialised in working with people with learning disabilities. The nurse visited Ben at home, explaining medical procedures in simple terms and allowing him to ask questions. Over time, Ben became more comfortable with the idea of managing his health and began attending regular check-ups. With support, Ben now understands the importance of his health appointments and feels more in control of his well-being.

### **Case study 2: Johns approach to safety planning**

John, a 25-year-old man who has Down's Syndrome and a moderate learning disability, lives independently in an assisted living community. His caregivers noticed that John struggled with recognizing potentially unsafe situations, such as leaving the stove on or opening the door to strangers. To address this, they worked with John to develop a personalized safety plan. They created visual checklists for daily routines, including turning off appliances, locking doors, and what to do if someone unexpected knocks. They also trained John on how to use his emergency contact list, which was placed on his refrigerator, and practiced role-playing different scenarios. Over time, John became more confident in managing his safety, demonstrating improved awareness and the ability to respond effectively in potentially dangerous situations. This safety plan not only increased John's independence but also gave his family and circle of support peace of mind knowing he had the tools to stay safe.

### **In-depth exploration**

Health and safety are foundational to a person's quality of life. For individuals who have Down's syndrome, understanding and managing their health can be challenging but is essential. Simplifying medical information and providing consistent, compassionate support can make a significant difference in their ability to manage their health. Ben's experience highlights the importance of building trust with healthcare providers and ensuring that health information is accessible and understandable. Regular health reviews and personalised safety plans can further enhance their ability to live safely and healthily.

## 8. I choose how I am part of my community



### What this means

Everyone should be supported to participate in their community, whether through work, volunteering, or social activities as they wish. They should have the opportunity to share their talents and interests with others and be included in community life.

### How to support this

Good support providers should help your family member explore opportunities to engage with their community. This could involve joining local groups, volunteering, or participating in community events. Encourage them to pursue activities that interest them and help them build connections with others.

### Case Study: Megan's role in her community

Megan had a keen interest in gardening but had never had the opportunity to pursue it. When she moved into supported living, her support team connected her with a local community garden project. Megan started volunteering there once a week, planting flowers and vegetables. Through this project, she not only pursued her passion but also made friends and became a valued member of the community. The experience gave Megan a sense of purpose and belonging, which greatly improved her overall happiness.

### In-depth exploration

Community involvement is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. For individuals who have Down's syndrome, participating in community activities can lead to new friendships, skill development, and a stronger sense of self-worth. It's important to match community involvement opportunities with the individual's interests and abilities, as seen in Megan's case. Regularly exploring new opportunities and encouraging participation can lead to long-lasting and meaningful community connections. Support teams should be proactive in identifying and facilitating these opportunities.

## 9. I have the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens



### What this means

Everyone has the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen regardless of disability or label. This includes understanding and exercising these rights, managing finances, and making decisions about care and support.

### How to support this

Support providers should help your family member understand about their rights and responsibilities as a citizen. Help them to manage their finances if appropriate, understand their legal rights (to vote for example), and make informed decisions about their own care and support arrangements.

### Case Study: Luke's journey to financial independence

Luke had always struggled with managing money and understanding his financial responsibilities. With support from his team, he attended budgeting workshops specifically designed for people with learning disabilities. Over time, Luke learned how to manage his bills, budget for groceries, and save for personal goals. He also received help in setting up a bank account and understanding how to use it. Luke now feels more in control of his finances, which has given him a greater sense of independence and security.

### In-depth exploration

Understanding and exercising rights and responsibilities is a cornerstone of independence. For individuals who have Down's syndrome, learning to manage finances and make informed decisions can be empowering. Financial literacy programmes and legal rights education tailored to their needs can significantly enhance their independence. Luke's experience demonstrates the value of practical, hands-on learning opportunities that build confidence and competence. Ensuring that individuals understand their rights and responsibilities helps them to navigate their lives more effectively and with greater self-assurance.

## Final thoughts

The Reach Standards provide a comprehensive framework to ensure that individuals who have Down's syndrome live as equal citizens, with their rights fully respected in supported living environments. By following these standards, families can ensure that their family members have the support they need to live fulfilling, independent lives, while being fully integrated into their communities.

This guide is a resource for families to understand what good, supported living looks like and how to advocate for it. With the right support, individuals who have Down's syndrome can live rich, fulfilling lives, enjoying the same opportunities and rights as everyone else.

## Appendix

### A REACH standards checklist

This checklist is designed to help families evaluate and ensure that the Reach Standards are being met in the supported living arrangements of their family members who have Down's syndrome. Use this tool to regularly assess the quality of the living situation and make necessary adjustments.

#### 1. Choosing who to live with

- Does the individual have a say in who they live with?
- Are they comfortable and happy with their current housemates?
- Have any concerns about housemates been addressed promptly?

#### 2. Choosing where to live

- Was the individual involved in choosing their current home?
- Does the location meet their needs and preferences (e.g., proximity to family, community resources)?
- Are there regular opportunities to revisit and reassess their satisfaction with their living environment?

### 3. **Tenancy or ownership rights**

- Does the individual have a clear and fair tenancy agreement or ownership document?
- Do they understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant or homeowner?
- Is their home treated as a private space, free from unnecessary intrusions?

### 4. **Choosing support**

- Does the individual have control over who supports them?
- Are they involved in the selection and evaluation of their support workers?
- Is the support provided flexible and responsive to their changing needs?

### 5. **Maintaining relationships**

- Is the individual supported in maintaining existing relationships and forming new ones?
- Do they have opportunities to engage in social activities that interest them?
- Are they encouraged to develop friendships and participate in community life?

### 6. **Making life changes**

- Is the individual supported to make changes in their life, such as trying new activities or learning new skills?
- Are their goals and aspirations regularly discussed and supported?
- Do they have the necessary resources and guidance to achieve their goals?

## 7. Health and safety

- Is the individual provided with information about their health and safety in an accessible way?
- Are they supported to make informed decisions about their health care and safety?
- Are regular health reviews conducted to ensure their well-being?

## 8. Community involvement

- Does the individual have opportunities to participate in their community?
- Are they supported to pursue activities that interest them and help them build connections?
- Is their involvement in the community actively encouraged and facilitated?

## 9. Rights and responsibilities

- Does the individual understand and exercise their rights as a citizen?
- Are they provided with education and resources to manage their finances and legal responsibilities?
- Are they empowered to make informed decisions about their care and support?



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