

Thriving At Home Over Time

Finding a safe and affordable housing option that feels like the right fit can be life-changing but staying housed and well over time isn't always easy. Many Neurodivergent people face challenges not only in finding the right home but in staying in it.

This section offers ideas to help people stay well in their home over time by creating a supportive home, building community connection, planning for renovations and strengthening awareness and inclusion within one's circle of influence.

SECTION THEMES:

83 Maintaining supportive environments

88 Adapting to life changes

89 Considering future renovations

94 Support housing stability over the long-term by enhancing awareness



Maintaining supportive environments

A home needs to keep working for someone over time as needs or abilities change. When the environment is set up well, people are more likely to stay and thrive in their home.

Here are some ideas for making sure things continue to work, such as pet care, accessing supports, and connecting with others.

Support wellbeing by making it easier to keep pets



Insight: We learned that pets support Neurodivergent people by offering companionship and encouraging structure and consistent timing for daily self-care activities like eating, going outside, and exercise.



Tip: Connect people to local pet support programs that help with health care and emergency needs.



Tip: Share information about places that provide free or low-cost pet food or pet supplies because taking care of a pet can be challenging when money is tight.

Check-in with supports to keep things working well



Inclusivity: Support people can give suggestions for changes that might be needed as a person lives in a place over time. These regular check-ins can catch necessary changes early before challenges appear.



Example: We spoke to many people who explained the need to make sure that technology is working well. A common example was that reliable internet is an essential technology to complete daily tasks, access remote supports, and stay socially connected. It can be an important part of a system that helps people live independently and feel less isolated.



Application: Check out our [Is My Living Situation Working Well](#) tool to reflect on the current housing situation and start the process of making any necessary changes.

Is My Living Situation Working Well









Use this tool as a check-in to reflect on the current housing situation. It can guide conversations about what is going well or not well and start the process of making any necessary changes.

There is a spot to write the date of this check-in and a future date at the bottom of the page to revisit this again in the future.

Inclusivity: This is a person-centred tool. It can be used by an individual, potentially with the support of a caregiver, professional, or between housemates.

Decide on a rating scale that works best for the situation. This might be numbers, emojis, a sliding scale, checkboxes, colours, words, or something else that best represents the feeling. Here are some examples of different rating scale options:



Words	Faces	Emojis	Numbers	Colours
Never			0	Red
Sometimes			1	Orange
Often			2	Yellow
Always			3	Green

Rate and reflect on how you feel about each of the following:

Area	Question	Rating	Are there any exceptions or considerations to this?	Ideas for changes
Support needs	How often do you feel like your support needs are being met?			
Safety and security	How often do you feel emotionally and physically safe and secure in your home?			
Choice and control	How often do you feel comfortable advocating for your own wants and needs?			
Personal space and privacy	How often do you feel like you have enough personal space and privacy in your home?			
Sensory needs	How comfortable is your home environment for your sensory needs?			
Communication	How do you feel about the current level and style of communication between you and people in your home environment?			
Daily routine	How often does your home support your daily routines?			
Other area:				
Other area:				

Date of this check-in:

Date of next check-in:

Share info about options for hobby groups and community events



Insight: We learned the importance of creating opportunities for people to connect with others, to feel supported and to have a sense of community where they live.



Example: In our research, we asked Neurodivergent people what opportunities they had to connect with other people in their communities.

They described participating in a variety of activities, like fitness classes, sports, book clubs, and community events in their building.

Autistic person

For one person, joining a local social group for Autistic people meant that “we can talk of personal issues that are affecting us, and no one judges you. There’s no stigma, we can just share things openly.”

Service provider

For a community day program organizer hosting an art workshop, designing it to encourage all levels of engagement and trying to “not make assumptions about what people enjoy” was important.

Set up regular visits with a trusted friend, neighbour, or support person



Inclusivity: Close, interpersonal relationships can reduce isolation, help people feel understood and support a sense of belonging. This is particularly important when living alone.



Tip: Social visits can be virtual like gaming or watching online movies together. Virtual hangouts with cameras off can be an option too, if that supports comfort and unmasking.



Tip: Try making a visual calendar to highlight who's been connected with lately and who might be due for a visit.



Example: We spoke with many people about the importance of social connection and heard some inspiring stories.

Autistic person

"I wasn't alone, there were so many others going through the same things."

They recalled how much it meant to be part of a peer support group in high school and how the group brought together family members and caregivers too.

"We were a family that understood each other. We really supported each other."

Parent

"There was no opportunity for shared experience, no way to just be with other people who understand. It was just easier to stay at home".

After reaching out to other families in the community, they began meeting up.

"It gave us a reason to leave the house. To share a few moments. To ask about each other."



Inclusivity: Caregivers play an important role supporting some Neurodivergent people. And they need social connection too. Making space for their social well-being helps reduce isolation, offers emotional support, and can make it easier to sustain stable housing for the people they care for.

Adapting to life changes

Life changes, sometimes slowly, sometimes all at once. Things like health and income can shift, and a living situation that once worked well might need adjustments. Planning ahead and being ready to adapt makes it easier to stay housed and supported through ups and downs.

Support access to therapists, psychologists, or other mental health providers



Inclusivity: Changes to mental health are expected throughout life and finding support when it is needed is essential.



Tip: Offer assistance with making or attending appointments, so that people can get the support they need.

Explore care options, financial supports, or community programs early to plan for aging



Inclusivity: Getting support like funding, home care, or services can take time, and there may be waitlists or system barriers. Planning early doesn't fix everything, but it gives you more time to explore options and find flexible solutions.



Insight: We heard that when people take time to look into care and support options early, it's easier to get the right help in place and to adapt it when a person's needs start to shift.

Considering future renovations

Over time, homes will need renovations and repairs to improve accessibility. These building renovations should align with the changing needs of the people who live there and support them staying in the place long term.

Here we offer ways to consider the needs of Neurodivergent people when planning to carry out renovations or repairs.

Check-in before doing renovations or repairs



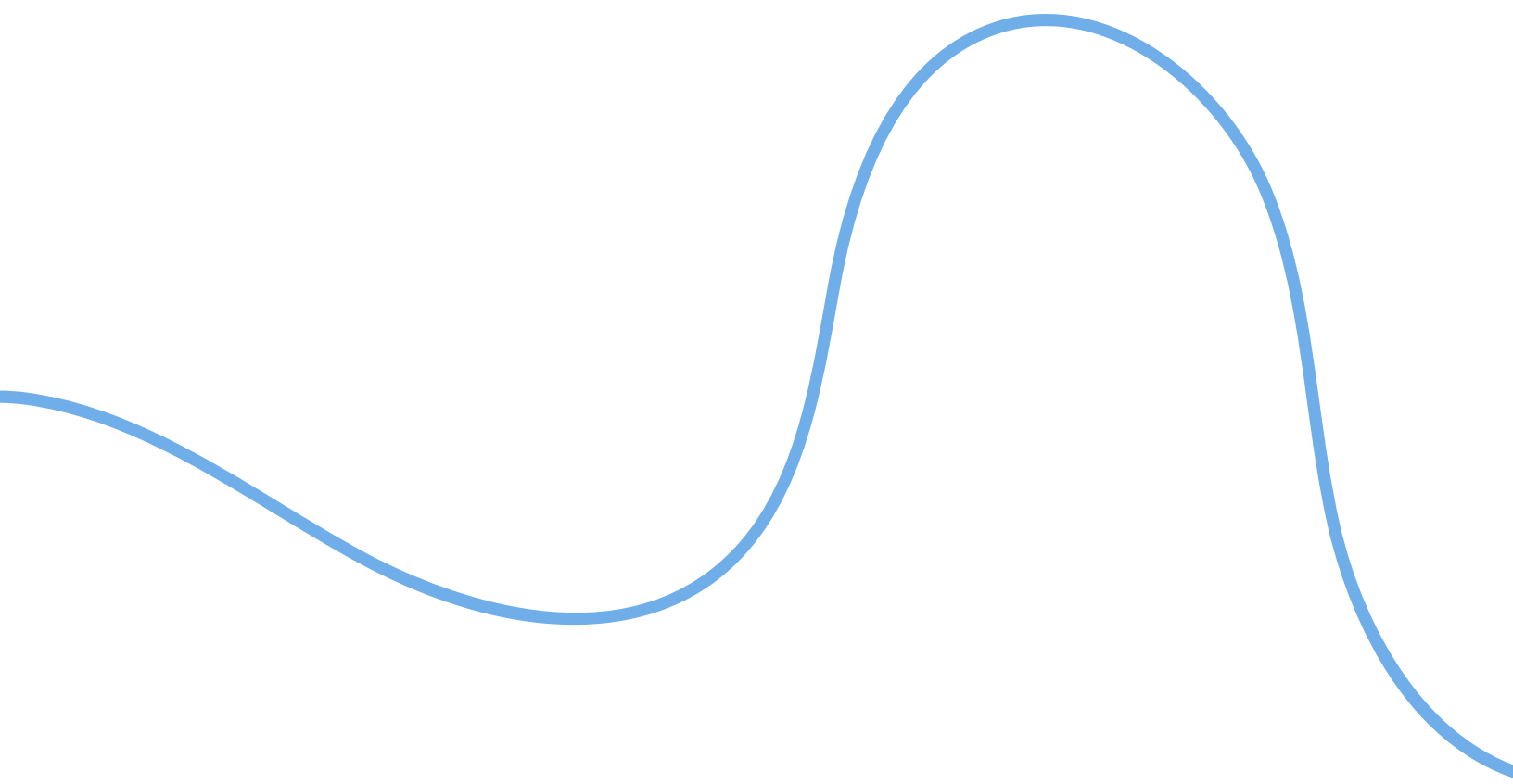
Inclusivity: Consulting people who live in the space before renovations or repairs reduces disruptions and makes the changes better meet the needs of people who live there.



Tip: Consider the timing, sensory considerations, and who will be involved while planning for renovations.



Application: Check out our fillable [Work and Disruption Notice](#) template that can be used and shared with people before making renovations or repairs to prepare them for disruptions and help them plan ahead.



Work and Disruption Notice

It's important to have clear notices to residents when renovations are being done in common areas or outside the buildings. Like construction notices issued by cities, these notices let people know what to expect from the work. Property management, landlords, and families can use this when planning renovations in and around the home.



Inclusivity: People benefit from knowing in advance that renovations are happening and what to expect. It empowers them to make choices and set themselves up for success during those times.

What: Share a description of the work.	
Where: Share where the work will be completed.	<i>For example, in all common areas or a specific site.</i>
Entries, pathways, and exits that will be impacted:	
Why: Share why this work needs to be done and what benefits it will have.	
Who: Share who will be doing the work.	<i>For example, one person or entire crews and contractors.</i>
When: Share when this work will take place. Include specific dates and times.	
Potential irritants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Noise: Share what light or heavy machinery will be making noise or vibrations.	<i>For example, drills, saws, or hammers.</i>

- **Smell:** Share what materials or products will emit strong odors.

For example, asphalt or paint.

- **Air:** Share what potential allergens or air irritants there will be.

For example, dust or gases.

- **Other**

Contact for questions: Share multiple ways to contact people working on the project.

- Name:

- Phone:

- Email:

- Online form:

Offer clear processes to request home modifications



Insight: We heard that home modifications are often needed over time and that the process to ask for them can be unclear or slow.



Tip: Provide opportunities to make some adjustments to rental homes such as wall paint colours, cabinet knobs, or storage shelving.



Example: In our research, we talked with people who tried or made modifications to their homes to better suit their needs.

- But making changes can sometimes be challenging, especially for renters. One person shared that it is often unclear what you can or cannot change without a landlord's permission.
- For small changes, several people explained that they tried renter-friendly options. For example, attaching foam soundproofing panels to the walls to improve the noise levels in their home.
- For larger things that cannot be easily modified, such as overhead light fixtures and ventilation systems, people chose smaller-scale fixes like floor lamps and fans instead.



Create or improve access to outdoor space



Insight: We heard that green space supports physical and mental health and helps many people stay well in their homes over time.



Tip: Try to:

- Add seating in outdoor spaces
- Make balconies more usable
- Create paths connecting to nearby parks

Provide opportunities for physical activity



Insight: We heard that safe and accessible spaces for physical activity are beneficial for people as they age in place.



Tip: Consider including or improving fitness spaces in long-term renovation goals.



Example: In our conversations with Neurodivergent people, opportunities to keep active supported physical health.

Autistic person

They shared that organized programs and leagues in their community, like bowling were a great option to keep active. For them and their family, bowling was a way to move, connect, and stay engaged.

Family member

They were part of a programming hub that provided activities such as interactive games, boxing and yoga classes, and lower-impact exercise equipment.

Importantly, people shared that these sports, interactive games, and structured classes can be designed or adapted to work for different needs and interests.

Support housing stability over the long-term by enhancing awareness

Inclusive spaces don't happen by accident. When people work together to grow awareness around accessibility, neurodivergence, and inclusion, we build environments where more people feel safe, respected, and able to thrive at home.

Offer training for first responders on neuroinclusion to build understanding



Inclusivity: First responders need to be prepared to support Neurodivergent people during an emergency. This includes understanding responses to different sensory situations such as alarms, sirens, or verbal instructions.



Tip: Attend educational events or webinars to learn about neuroinclusivity.

Include community members in building management or advisory boards



Inclusivity: This step brings neurodivergent voices to decision-making and creates housing where people are invested in staying and shaping the place they call home.



Tip: Include community members in service provider organizations too.



Application: Check out our readiness quiz on [Including Community Voice](#) to start thinking about what organizations can do to include Neurodivergent people in decision-making in meaningful ways.

Including Community Voice

Test your knowledge of how building management councils, tenant groups, and other organizations can include community voice in their decision-making and advocacy. Check your answers on the next page.

Ask for feedback from community members after drafting plans for a building.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Have more than one Neurodivergent person in a tenant group.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Lived experience can identify gaps in supports that organizations might miss.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Including community voice can empower people and lead to better housing outcomes.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Setting rules and expectations in council meetings limits participation from Neurodivergent people.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Create multiple ways for Neurodivergent people to provide feedback.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Having community input once a year is sufficient for making community-informed decisions.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>
Doing everything that the Neurodivergent members request is the best way to incorporate community voice.	True <input type="radio"/>	False <input type="radio"/>

Ask for feedback from community members after drafting plans for a building.	True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/> Answer: False. Get feedback before, during, and after making plans.
Have more than one Neurodivergent person in a tenant group.	True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/> Answer: True. Each person's experience differs and their perspectives matter.
Lived experience can identify gaps in supports that organizations might miss.	True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/> Answer: True. Lived experience means personal and direct knowledge gained from experiencing an issue or identity.
Including community voice can empower people and lead to better housing outcomes.	True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/> Answer: True. Including community voice prevents assumptions and encourages decision-making by the people who will be living in the home.
Setting rules and expectations in council meetings limits participation from Neurodivergent people.	True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/> Answer: False. Clear expectations that are communicated in easily understandable ways can facilitate discussion by reducing surprises.
Create multiple ways for Neurodivergent people to provide feedback.	True <input checked="" type="radio"/> False <input type="radio"/> Answer: True. Supporting different communication preferences makes it possible for people to fully participate.
Having community input once a year is sufficient for making community-informed decisions.	True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/> Answer: False. The amount of engagement depends on the Neurodivergent people involved, the need, and the project.
Doing everything that the Neurodivergent members request is the best way to incorporate community voice.	True <input type="radio"/> False <input checked="" type="radio"/> Answer: False. Not all requests can be promised or done, but they can all be addressed.

Capture your work in neuroinclusive housing and share it with other organizations



Inclusivity: When people share out their work in neuroinclusive housing through social channels, studies, events, or by other means, it generates momentum and leads to more people adopting good practices, improving standards, and creating new ideas.



Tip: Track what works in neuroinclusive housing. Real examples spread awareness and support solutions that keep people housed.



Tip: Document specific changes that support neuroinclusive housing, like design tweaks or program shifts.



Tip: Share educational materials about neuroinclusion with housing organizations to reduce stigma.

