

# You Can't Solve Homelessness Through Housing Alone

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## Individual Supported Living (ISL) Manual<sup>1</sup> — A tool to inform the planning and evaluation of individual living arrangements.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is not responsible for providing accommodation for people in need of housing assistance.<sup>2</sup> What the NDIS is responsible for are the supports to 'assist a person with disability to live in the community, including building their capacity to maintain a tenancy'. This policy imperative is consistent with Australia's obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),<sup>3</sup> which includes the obligation to support people to achieve their rights to live in and be included in the community (Article 19).

In the context of an NDIS funding environment, questions therefore arise as to what constitutes quality (and indeed value for money) in individualised community living; and how might people and their families plan for and demonstrate quality outcomes that are sustainable over time? The Individual Supported Living (ISL) framework provides a research backed approach with practical guidance to address these questions.

## Individual Supported Living Framework<sup>4</sup>

The ISL framework is based on three assumptions:

1. With appropriate support, any person with disability can live in an ISL arrangement.
2. People do not have to live with other people with disability, or

people with whom they have not specifically chosen to share a home.

3. People with disability who live in an ISL arrangement do not have to live on their own.

## Framework Development<sup>5</sup>

The ISL framework and manual has been developed in three research-supported stages.

### Stage 1

Consultation with people living in established ISL arrangements facilitated the initial development of the ISL manual.

### Stage 2

The ISL manual was evaluated and further refined in consultation with people with the lived experience of disability and their families.

### Stage 3

A large-scale evaluation of ISL arrangements using the ISL Manual was then undertaken across Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. This component of the project was conducted with support of a Linkage Grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC), which enabled a partnership between Curtin University, The University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne, and a number of leading service provider agencies.

*'It is the robust consultation process that gives credence to the methodology in the development of ISL'*  
— Errol Cocks\*, 2017.

## Insights

In addition to the strong evidence-base supporting the ISL Framework as a means of establishing and sustaining quality individualised

living arrangements, many important insights have been revealed that can inform the future planning of others who desire to establish such arrangements.

Results to date have revealed a wide variety of ISL arrangements.<sup>6</sup> There is no one way to do ISL!

*'I have lived in social housing all my life. As soon as us kids turned 16, Mum took us down to social services and put us on the list. That's how I have a house now.'*

*'When my parents passed, my brothers and sisters made sure I could stay at home.'*

*'My mum and dad got me this flat in the city, so I could move from our farm to live in big city where I could get services and make friends, and I'm closer to my sisters too.'*

People have chosen to create living arrangements by:

- living alone
- living with a co-resident in exchange for free or reduced rent
- living with a host family
- living with a co-resident/partner without disability
- living with a person with disability who they choose to live with based on a pre-existing relationship (for example, a friendship or spousal relationship)

People have also obtained housing through:

- private rental
- home ownership
- financial share in house
- social housing
- inheritance
- family ownership
- public housing

## Sarahs' Story

I used to go to a 'special school'. I left home at 18 years of age, and moved into public housing. When things started getting a bit much, the only avenue of action that was available was to go through what they call a tenancy tribunal. I left as well, because, you know him [the neighbour] and his mates knew where I lived so I was out o' there.

For a while, I was just couch surfing, slept in a car a few times, slept on the street. Going home again just wasn't an option.

I think back to what I did next and it probably wasn't a good idea. I found a hospital so I stayed there, the things I saw. Well you know.

I've seen quite a few interesting things over the years.

I lived in a hostel for a few years. Well a few but there was a main one that I stayed at. They opened a second one and I became the night care taker. I got free rent basically, and a small amount on the side. I basically had a breakdown after a series of things that happened in the hostel. No one would have known, no one was there to see it. Until 2008 they [services] let me fall through the gap. The depression got diagnosed in 2008 soon after I asked a supported facility if they had any space. That is where I ended up. The services provided a roof over my head. They did everything for us. Two friends still live there and I always hear about stuff going missing. They didn't even trust us with the laundry. There were 60 people living there in the end. As a result, lots of things used to happen. Eventually, towards the end of 2011, I had sort of had enough so I moved out.

A friend at church helped me out as far as getting a unit for me. Every church I have been to has been able to fix it and help out.

In 2013, I came to [the town in which I now live]. I decided I liked it so much I thought I'll live here. I was living by myself but I couldn't handle it. I didn't do cooking or anything. Sometime after I moved here, we [husband] reconnected on Facebook.

Early 2015 he moved here. We now pay rent to his parents. He keeps in contact with them still, that's for sure. Dad came over for the wedding.

In five years' time, we'll probably still be married. I don't think we will move anywhere. We kinda like it here.

Most important for us two being able to maintain this arrangement? Oh, I guess making sure that there is adequate and appropriate support. Which there is, from all respective parties. If we didn't get funding, that would be a threat.

### ISL arrangement evaluation process

The framework is structured around eight themes. These themes describe what needs to be in place to achieve a quality and sustainable ISL arrangement. Each theme has multiple attributes, which are the good practices that when combined establish 'the theme'. These are summarised below.

### Theme one — Leadership

One or more people have clear goals to set up an ISL arrangement. This might include the person with disability and a key family member. The leader(s) strongly advocate for the ISL arrangement. They bring together the resources that are needed (finances, other people and expertise, etc), and support the development of 'a plan of action'. They continue to call together a network of supporters and actively review 'the plan'.

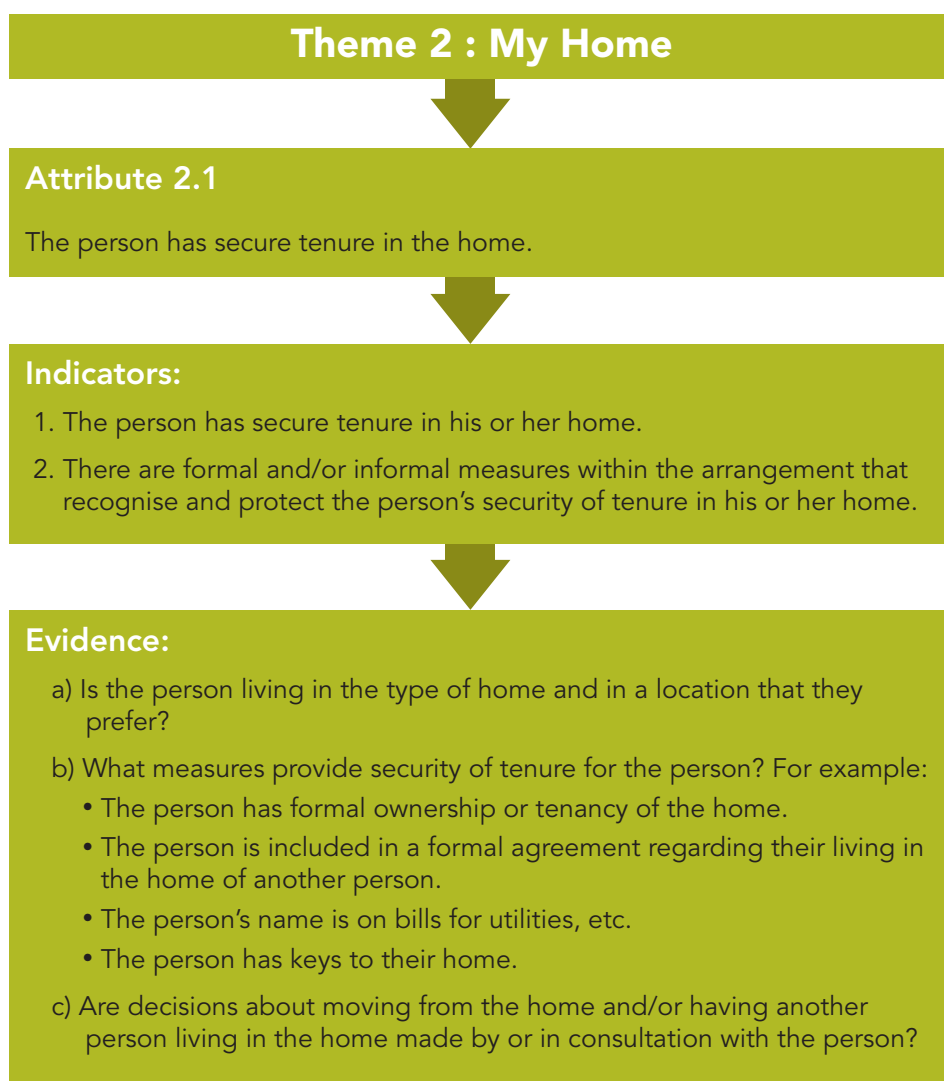
### Theme two — My Home

The persons' home is secure in the long-term and they have control over that tenure. They do 'normal' things around their home, which all other people do at home. Their home reflects their personality and interests.

### Theme three — One Person at a Time

The person is at the centre of the arrangement; everything about the arrangement is driven by the person's

Figure 1. Theme 2: My Home, its related attributes, indicators and evidence.



interests and preferences. The person chooses where they live and with whom they live.

#### Theme four — Planning

The person and those close to them (where appropriate) actively work together to plan to achieve the person's goals. They look to the future in a systematic way, and not just focus on the current situation.

#### Theme five — Control

The individual and people close to them (where appropriate) exercise choice and control over the arrangement. The person's self-determination is maximised in all planning and decision making processes, and support is provided for the person to develop their self-determination.

#### Theme six — Support

The person has just the right amount of support they need at any given time. The supports vary based on the person's needs. They are flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Support may come from formal (paid) sources and/or informal sources such as friends and family.

#### Theme seven — Thriving

The person is supported to assume valued social roles in their community (for example, being a student, being an employee, being a volunteer) and has opportunities for personal growth and development. They clearly have a 'good life'.

#### Theme eight — Social Inclusion

The person is connected with others, knows many different people on different levels, and takes part in the community.

The themes and their attributes provide the framework that people and their support networks can use to 'start a conversation' about developing an individualised living arrangement, and establish an action plan. These same themes and attributes can also be used to monitor and evaluate how the ISL arrangement is progressing. Importantly, the themes and attributes can be used to highlight where things are working for the person, and where attention to detail is required to ensure the arrangement is sustainable, and

supporting the person's quality of life. See figure 1 for an example of theme two: My Home, its related attributes, indicators and evidence.

#### Summary

While the NDIS is not primarily responsible for providing accommodation for people in need of housing assistance, it is responsible for ensuring that a person receives appropriate support to 'live in, and be included in the community'.<sup>7</sup> The ISL framework is a tool that can be utilised to plan for and review people's community living arrangements.<sup>8</sup> It has the potential to identify the issues that are facilitating and/or inhibiting the strength of a person's arrangement, and consequently inform the supports they require to improve, strengthen and secure the arrangement well into the future.

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\*\* The identity of the participant and minor details have been modified to protect confidentiality.

#### Endnotes

1. Cocks E, Williamson, M, Thoresen S 2011, *Individual Supported Living Manual*, Curtin University, Bentley.
2. Australian Government 2013, *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*, Australian Government, Canberra. Viewed 7 June 2017. <[https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2013L01063/Html/Text#\\_Toc358793041](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2013L01063/Html/Text#_Toc358793041)>
3. UN General Assembly 2007, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*, United Nations, New York. Viewed 7 June 2017. <<http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>>
4. Cocks E, Williamson M, Thoresen S 2011 op cit. p. 12.
5. Cocks E, Thoresen S, O'Brien P, McVilly K, Thomson A, Gadow F, Crosbie J, Prain M 2016, 'Examples of individual supported living for adults with intellectual disability', *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp 100–108. Viewed 7 June 2017. <<http://journals.sagepub.com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/doi/pdf/10.1177/1744629516629854>>
6. Cocks E, Thoresen, S, O'Brien, P, McVilly, K (unpublished) *Quality and outcomes of individual supported living (ISL) arrangements for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities*.
7. Australian Government 2013, op cit
8. Cocks E, Williamson M, Thoresen, S 2011 op cit.

Figure 2. Source: Cocks E, Williamson, M, Thoresen, S 2011 *Individual Supported Living Manual*, Curtin University, Bentley, viewed 7 June 2017

