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Government urged to end scandal of poor housing for disabled tenants

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is calling for the Housing Bill currently going through Parliament to urgently address the scandal of disabled people being imprisoned in unsuitable accommodation.

There is a severe shortage of suitable housing in Britain making it impossible for many disabled people to live independently. Landlords and local authorities are often unwilling to make property suitable for disabled people and to ensure 'accessible' homes are available.

The DRC wants the housing bill to require local authorities to be legally obliged to hold a register of accessible housing for disabled tenants. At present such registers only exist on an ad hoc basis.

This is to ensure that when a disabled person moves out of a rented and adapted home, the property remains available for a new disabled tenant. At present, accessible housing is often stripped of adaptations for new non disabled tenants.

In addition, the DRC wants the bill to ensure that landlords can't prevent tenants making adaptations to their homes to meet their needs as disabled people. Many disabled people report being trapped in unsuitable housing, unable to move from one room, or even to have a bath, because landlords have refused to make changes.

Bert Massie, Chairman of the Disability Rights Commission says:

"It is a scandal that in the 21st Century many disabled people find themselves imprisoned in their homes. And with an ageing population more tenants are likely to be disabled so this is an issue which cannot be ignored.

"The case for Disability Housing Registers could not be stronger. The current situation of removing adjustments when a disabled tenant moves out of an adapted home is a terrible waste of public money. Registers are an efficient way of ensuring property and tenant are suitably matched without long waits in unsuitable accommodation."

Recent surveys have shown that:

- 17,000 disabled people living in unsuitable accommodation report that necessary modifications had not been made because the landlord refuses consent;*
- 21 per cent of disabled people live in homes where it is either difficult to move around or get in and out;**
- 40 per cent of disabled people felt their housing situation made them unnecessarily dependent on other people;**
- Of survey respondents in rented accommodation, 32 per cent had to wait more than a year to be offered their home and more than one in ten (11 per cent) had to wait over three years.**

Ends