

Briefing for Parliamentarians: Mandating Wheelchair Accessible Homes

Date: 16th October 2025

1. Introduction & summary

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is a key opportunity to embed accessibility into housing from the start. Despite proposed amendments seeking M4(2) (accessible/adaptable) and M4(3) (wheelchair user) standards being tabled at every stage of this Bill, both in the Commons and the Lords, the Government has repeatedly rejected a national mandate. Instead, they rely on local planning discretion, claiming authorities already have powers to require accessibility 'where need is demonstrated'. This weakens protections, leads to inconsistent outcomes, and leaves many disabled people behind. Meanwhile, the impact is increasingly visible: disabled homelessness rising, people unable to find or stay in housing that suits their physical needs.

2. What Government has said (Hansard / Ministerial Wording)

Debate Stage / House	Minister / Speaker	Key Wording / Position
Lords Committee (9 Sept 2025)	Government spokesman	“Local planning authorities already have tools to apply M4(2)/M4(3) via planning conditions where there is demonstrated local need.”
Lords Committee (Sept 2025)	Government side	The Government will “soon outline its approach to accessible new-build housing.”
Commons / Report debates	Ministers	Declined to accept New Clause 120 (which would mandate M4(2)/M4(3) nationally).
General debates (Commons & Lords)	Ministers	Emphasis on local flexibility, that a 'one-size-fits-all' national standard is too rigid.

Implication: The Government is resisting a statutory, universal floor for accessibility and is pushing the burden onto local authorities’ discretion. Leaving it to the discretion of local authorities for decades is what has created the current shortage and unacceptable accommodations for disabled people in the first place.

3. Real-world evidence: What a recent Sky News investigation reveals

From 'Waiting for the bailiffs but nowhere to go: Sharp rise in disabled people facing homelessness' (Sky News, Aug 2025):

- Households approaching councils for homelessness assistance with physical disability needs rose from about 40,000 (2020/21) to around 70,000 (2024/25), a 72% increase.
- One in five households seeking help had physical disability needs.
- Two out of three councils couldn't say how many people on their housing waiting lists needed accessible social housing; four out of five couldn't estimate wait times.
- Some councils reported waits over six years for accessible housing.
- Many disabled applicants bid repeatedly on inaccessible properties.
- Councils often don't monitor or record accessibility requirements, making need invisible.
- Disabled people face multiple disadvantages: fewer work opportunities, reliance on benefits, and scarce housing options.

Takeaway: This is not a marginal issue, it's a crisis in plain sight. The failure to mandate accessible homes is contributing directly to disability-driven homelessness, invisible suffering, and systemic neglect.

4. Responses to the Government's 'local discretion / demonstrated need' argument

'Local need' is permission to ignore: Councils can simply argue there's 'no demonstrated need' and avoid imposing accessibility requirements.

Planning only reacts, it doesn't prevent: By the time local plans identify a need, thousands of homes may already have been built without accessibility.

'Soon guidance' is a stalling tactic: Each month of delay sees more inaccessible homes built, and guidance later can't fix that.

Equity and enforceability demand a standard: A legal standard ensures rights; local discretion leaves them patchy.

Moral imperative & systemic cost: Inaccessible homes create long-term social and economic costs for healthcare and social care systems.

Real people are paying the price: Disabled homelessness is rising at an alarming rate; the claim 'we leave it to local authorities' hides systemic neglect.

5. Call to Action

We urge MPs, Peers, and campaigners to support an amendment to the Bill that:

- Mandates all new homes to meet M4(2) as a baseline standard.
Requires a meaningful proportion of homes (5–10% or more) to meet M4(3) wheelchair user standards.

- Closes 'local need' loopholes by requiring councils to publish accessibility data.
- Requires mandatory data collection on accessible housing needs and waiting times.
- Enforces immediate implementation and not future guidance.

Briefing by:

Public Affairs Team

Spinal Injuries Association

Email: campaigning@spinal.co.uk

One Page Summary

Build Homes for Everyone — Mandate Wheelchair Accessibility Now

Because dignity, independence and security shouldn't depend on postcode.

Thousands of new homes are being built across the UK but far too few are wheelchair accessible. The Government's refusal to include a national accessibility mandate in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill means disabled people will continue to be shut out of safe, suitable housing.

The facts

- The number of households seeking homelessness help with physical disability needs rose by 72% between 2020/21 and 2024/25.
- One in five people approaching councils for homelessness support has a physical disability.
- Two out of three councils don't know how many people on their waiting lists need wheelchair accessible housing.
- In some areas, disabled people wait over six years for a suitable home.
- Many local authorities build no wheelchair accessible homes at all each year.

The human impact

Behind every statistic is a person forced to live in unsuitable housing, trapped in hospital because their home isn't accessible, or facing homelessness because there's nowhere they can physically enter or move around safely.

What the Government says

Ministers argue local councils can already require accessible homes 'where need is demonstrated.' They say a national rule would be too rigid and that new guidance will come 'in due course.'

Our response

- 'Local need' is a loophole; most councils don't even measure accessible housing demand. This has led to more than half a million disabled people living in unsuitable accommodation, as a prisoner in their homes.
- Delaying for 'future guidance' locks in years of inaccessibility.
- A national mandate is the only way to guarantee fairness, consistency, and basic rights across the UK.

Our Call to Action

We call on Parliament to amend the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to:

- Mandate all new homes to meet M4(2) as standard.
- Require a clear proportion to meet M4(3) wheelchair user standards.
- Collect and publish national data on accessible housing need.
- End the postcode lottery for disabled people once and for all.

Accessible housing isn't optional, it's essential. Every new home should be built for everyone.

Briefing by:

Public Affairs Team

Spinal Injuries Association

Email: campaigning@spinal.co.uk