

Independent Living Programme

Manchester – Chapman St.



Space Standards Review

June 2023

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1. Introduction

Space standards are rightly applied to new homes however, are there circumstances where it should be possible to provide smaller, well-designed homes for a specific need?

Space-saving or compact homes are often discussed in the context of how to solve the conundrum of providing enough places for city dwellers to live. Proposals for smaller spaces can stall as local authorities reference the minimum national living space standards. The question is whether there are situations when a deviation from the standard is acceptable, or should it always be adhered to no matter what the circumstances are.

Could building a smaller home be the right solution if there is a particular and specific need and how can good design help?

Centrepont is a charity with a mission to eradicate youth homelessness for those aged between 18 and 25, and the Independent Living Programme [link <https://centrepont.org.uk/what-we-do/independent-living-programme/>] provides an important head start towards living a completely independent life.

Those on the programme are self-sufficient, employed and/or developing their careers. Genuinely affordable rental rates are set at a manageable percentage rate of salary (approx. 33.3%) rather than a standard rate. For these young people, a home of their own provides a community and an intermediate springboard to an independent future.

“We want our accommodation to be what young people have always wanted: a place to call home.”

As part of the Independent Living scheme Centrepont propose to create 34 no. homes as part of the Chapman St. development at approximately 26m² each.

2. Space Standards Review

The Independent Living scheme is designed to provide medium-term accommodation for single young people aged 18 – up to 25yrs old – i.e. **not** couples or families - offering a maximum of a 5 year fixed term tenancy including a probationary period of 12 months.

It is therefore worth noting a comparison with studios of student accommodation, where the average size of a studio in London is 19.2m² and 20.6m² throughout the rest of the UK.

Centrepont recently completed a 33 no. Independent Living Scheme in Southwark (Reuben House). Reuben House offers a living space less than the minimum national living space standards at 21m². Although the proposed development at Chapman St. is slightly larger (at 26m²), Reuben House demonstrates that a smaller footprint can accommodate young people on the Independent Living programme.

Furthermore, Manchester City Council have been actively engaging in discussions to develop Independent Living accommodation across other sites in Manchester.

A number of case studies on Independent Living are included in Sections 3-5.

The proposed layout is demonstrated below.

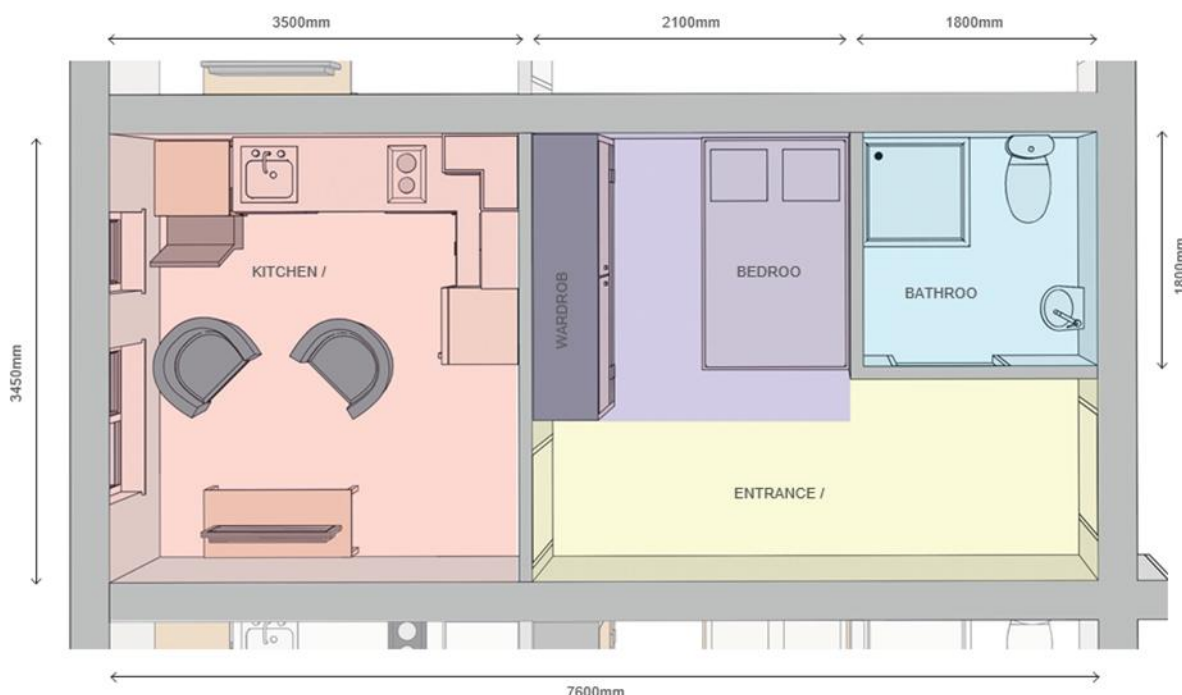


Figure 1: 26m² proposed layout

In terms of need, residents on the Independent Living Programme find the smaller size less daunting as they often do not have enough possessions to fill a larger space.

In addition, some residents may be transitioning from a 9m² hostel room with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities, so a self-contained home of 26m² is a manageable intermediate size with a much greater amount of personal space.

There is an urgent need for these homes and the huge benefits they can provide to the residents. Given the very specific parameters and the circumstances, we would be delighted to engage in positive conversations with stakeholders to achieve planning consents for these homes.

The original concept was developed by reviewing existing modular examples such as the SoloHaus (link <https://solohaus.co.uk/>) module which is 24sqm and the M-AR (link <https://m-ar.co.uk/>) module which is 21sqm. These examples have been used on similar sites in Haringey and Southwark (65 homes provided in total).

The proposed elevation of the Independent Living scheme at Chapman St is demonstrated below.



Figure 2: Proposed elevation

Centrepont has worked through the many design considerations with thinking centred around the following ideas for the homes, the site and the wider community:

- Sustainability
- Use of light and window areas to give a sense of space
- Highly efficient layouts for all aspects of living
- Positioning of spaces within a unit according to the need for privacy and/or visual connection
- Flexible built-in furniture allowing a single space to be used for multiple functions
- Tactile and comfortable
- Bright and optimistic
- Homely
- Safe and secure
- Robust specification
- Access to outdoor shared landscaped areas for socialising and creating community

Although we firmly advocate the principles of the minimum space standards, in this context, we believe there should be a valid consideration and acceptance of smaller, well-designed homes which are for a specific need. We would add that such homes would need to be carefully monitored by checking in with residents to make any design adjustments, including size, that might be needed.

If they are well-designed, we believe it is possible to make beautiful, light-filled, high-quality homes to help to set these young residents on their journey to independence. Let's hope we can all help Centrepont reach our goal to end youth homelessness.

3. Case Study 1 – Munira

Munira is 20 years old and has been with Centrepont since July 2018 when she moved into Ealing Hostel. She was chosen to begin a 15-month apprenticeship as a Junior Content Producer, which began at the end of October 2019.

She was referred through to Independent Living to support her ongoing journey and Munira saw moving into Petterson Haberdashers Apprenticeship House as a life changing opportunity allowing her to live independently.

She has just completed her apprenticeship and has been offered a permanent role in the organisation. She's ready to move on to more independent accommodation – she tells us this very regularly!

4. Case Study 2 – Dan

Dan is 20 years old and was referred into Centrepont by his apprenticeship provider – Leadership through Sport & Business. He has been successful in landing an apprenticeship with Natwest, working at Coutts bank.

He was referred to Centrepont as he had moved out of his family home and was sofa-surfing. Unfortunately, he has been a child carer for his mother, and this has impacted his ability to maintain employment and live independently.

Dan has described being offered a place with Independent Living as 'emotional' and in a state of mild shock – he cannot believe his run of good news after so many years of knock backs.

His apprenticeship provider said:

"It's an absolutely vital intervention, at a critical time, and will allow him to focus on his job and get started in a stable career. His living/working conditions were deteriorating by the day, and he would have struggled to perform much longer."

5. Case Study Videos

Further case study videos can be found at the links below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj_9TCbBMOk

<https://youtu.be/1B7hEFu6cf8>

<https://youtu.be/eGiXlhR973Y>

Bibliography

Statista (2023) [*Student housing: average size of en-suite and studios UK | Statista*](#)