

Moving Out

Lisa Bridle

Imagining Home Peer Group Meeting

November 16, 2020



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Our guest speaker was Lisa Bridle, who is a long time friend of Imagine More. She shared the story about her son, Sean moving into his own home with a housemate. In her presentation, Lisa described the thoughtful path they followed in realising Sean's dream of living in his own home, connected with the community and living the good life.

Sean's story can be described as an **Independent living option (ILO)**. Sean does not have an ILO funding in his NDIS package but has clear goals in place around his home and funding attached to that. There are many ways to approach imagining a home for your son or daughter rather than wait for the funding to work out first.

Community

A really big consideration for us was for Sean to stay in our local geographical community. We looked at some lovely units which were reasonably close but just not part of our "natural community". We also looked at places much closer to us – but which were not as ideal in terms of other characteristics (transport, shops etc).

For Sean to live closer to us seemed like a "safe" option initially, but when thinking about Sean's future independence we considered other factors. Being close to the train, shops, and facilities would increase his independence. It would also mean Sean would more likely run into people he knows – the shopping centre was one we frequented regularly during his childhood, and so many of the kids he went to school with (younger and older) and their families still also use this centre.

In the end, being known in the community is far more important for his safety than the team of support workers.

Figuring Out Supports

- Lisa spent time identifying what supports she coordinated at home apart from his current paid supports that need to be in place when he has his own home.
- The family was conscious about paid support not being intrusive but having the ability to provide that bridge between other natural supports or relationships.
- Finding a housemate that is the right fit was very important. One main reason was that there would be another person knowing how Sean was travelling on a day-to-day basis.
- Finding the right geographical place for the home with easy public transport (accessibility) in his local community was another way to minimise the support needed.
- The unit chosen for Sean had an onsite manager, which created a safety net.
- Putting in steps to get to know Sean's neighbours. Sean has invited some over and they have also been invited. Building on relationships with neighbours will be an important safeguard for Sean.

Housemate

- Use of standard advertising to find the housemate with some help. (shared on FB, email and realestate.com). The vetting process for the housemate and the advertisement was done by a real estate agent who knew Sean and the family. Tip: Use your networks in processes that can be delegated.
- Housemate agreement: Sean's housemate pays rent and Sean pays the housemate an allowance for the 'coaching' given by her. The family thought this was a better approach than reducing rent.
- Having a housemate agreement was a better arrangement to facilitate the coaching/mentoring rather than being in a 'paid support worker' role. Making sure Sean was able to share his life with the housemate rather than be supervised.
- Establishing communication and how to keep working together was part of the housemate agreement.
- Making sure that the housemate shared the same 'ethos' of the family.



Challenges

There were not as many of these as Lisa expected.

- Finding a suitable place (many house visits, time and managing disappointment)
- How much information support workers needed (e.g How certain meals were prepared)
- Working out new appliances, managing sensory issues (noise)
- Working out or coordinating things whilst Sean was trying to be more independent (e.g. Sean not answering his phone)
- Being mentally prepared as a parent
- Keeping the family culture in place.
- Aligning values of all support workers with family values. For example, sometimes support workers may come up with all-encompassing regimes with good intentions but do not follow the family's values of "home".

Strategies That Helped

- Documented a lot of routines, preferences and essential info on the Ability 8 platform.
- Having frequent staff meetings to help facilitate a better transition
- Creating a Whatsapp group to keep coordinated and in touch.
- Setting up a safety net: (Life 360 app, extra keys, calendars)
- Continue Sean's skill-building
- Having a lot of conversations about your fears with everyone involved.

What's Been Great To See

- Sean is figuring out a lot of things on his own... (eating well, cooking more, personal hygiene)
- The role of host has been motivating for Sean
- Sean loves **taking the lead** and this has been an opportunity for him to grow and build his role within the family.

Key Takeaways

- **The importance of understanding what "Home" means for your son or daughter.** Sean's home was always part of his vision. It needed to be accessible and not on his own; comfortable; a place he would feel safe and proud to be in. It needed to be suitable for hosting since Sean wanted to have guests over at his home.

- **Doing the 'move out' at the right time is important.**
 - Don't miss out on the opportunities just because you – the parent is not ready e.g if peers are looking at moving out of the family home, sometimes you may find a suitable housemate within the friendship group. But make sure to do your homework. A great friend might not necessarily be the right housemate.
 - If your son or daughter is keen to move out, take that initiative with appropriate planning. It may be that later on in life they may not be as keen.
- Importance of realising Sean's vision for an **interdependent, connected**, valued life rather than an independent one.
- **Community is very important.** Making sure that Sean stayed within his local community (where he is well known and valued) when choosing the house was an important safeguard put in place for him.
- Being open to different options will help find the correct one. e.g. Lisa realised a permanent home was a better fit for Sean than a rental because of what was available.
- Remembering to find a place that suited his lifestyle and age. For example, a place where he would have opportunities to meet other young people
- As Sean would be sharing the house, being thoughtful that the home should have two bathrooms, two bedrooms that were good in size, good for hosting etc.

Top Tips from Lisa

- Keeping it ordinary/ Don't overthink it
- Things might not go to plan, so be flexible
- Prepare for the predictable issues
- Listen to your child
- Having backup plans if things were to go wrong (put in safeguards)

Questions

1. **How are the support workers sourced?** An employment agency does the pay but the family does the selecting.
2. **What's the arrangement for housework?** Use the NDIS package to get cleaning /ironing.
3. **How do you work out what to ask the housemate and what to ask the support workers?** It depends on who you were able to get as the housemate and what their skills are. Sean's housemate was able to cook so she did that and support was taken for cleaning. Have conversations with the housemate on how things can work, and what they are able to comfortably achieve.
4. **Who is keeping track of Sean's health and does he have support if he needs to go to the doctor?** The family is still responsible for any medical issues but is sometimes supported by paid staff.
5. **How did you come up with the housemate agreement?** Had a collection of old ads/agreements from networks and got professional help from an organisation when the actual one was being drawn up.

Current Strategies Being Explored by Peer Group Members

- Separation of the family home into two areas and trialling living separately.
- Using family networks to trial living away from home (two days a week at a vacant home). This gives the young person the opportunity to experience roles such as gardener and pet sitter.

Some Text Lisa Shared with Her Networks

We are on the lookout for a flatmate for Sean! Sean will move in as soon as the unit is painted, and the room will be available from Tuesday 23rd April – but inspections are possible the previous week (though there will be painters onsite). The unit is just behind Fairfield Gardens – so a great position with the train, bus, shopping and parks right there.

The room is a large bedroom (unfurnished) in a comfortable and secure 2 bedroom/2 bathroom unit. The room opens onto a secure patio area which can be used for storing a bike, as a private seating area or open space. The unit is (will be) freshly painted, has a washing machine, dishwasher, dryer, fridge, microwave and BBQ and is fully air-conditioned. There is a pool and outdoor seating and there is a secure car park available. (Common areas are fully furnished but if a flatmate has furniture for common areas, this can be negotiated or there is secure storage underneath).

And I can vouch that the flatmate is fun, outgoing, super happy about living in his own place – and great with laundry J

If you have any leads on people who might be interested in finding out more, they can contact me directly but Michelle, Sean's boss from MDA who now runs Welcome Residential, will be handling the inspections/applications. We haven't mentioned this in this ad, but there can be rent reduction or paid work to help Sean with things like cooking. This can be negotiated.