
TITLE OF REPORT: **Review of the Role of Housing in Improving Health and Wellbeing – Interim Report**

REPORT OF: **Alice Wiseman, Director of Public Health**

Summary

Housing is a basic human need and good quality homes are essential to ensuring the best physical and mental health possible. A warm, affordable and dry home, that is safe, and has sufficient space, is a positive contributor to health and wellbeing.

The Council has high ambitions to ensure that there is an adequate supply of healthy housing in Gateshead, but challenges to this arise from ongoing changes to legislation, policy and funding arrangements.

Background

1. Care, Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that the focus of its review in 2016-17 will be the role of housing in improving health and wellbeing. The review has been carried out over a six month period and a draft interim report has been prepared on behalf of the Committee setting out key findings and suggested recommendations.

Report Structure

2. This interim report sets out the findings of the Care, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the contribution of housing to improving health and wellbeing in Gateshead.
3. The report includes:
 - The scope and aim of the review
 - How the review was undertaken
 - Summaries of key points from evidence gathering sessions
 - Analysis – issues and challenges
 - Emerging recommendations

Scope and aims of the review

4. The scope of the review was to consider factors influencing the ability of individuals and households to access and sustain a good quality home, suitable to their needs, and factors that impact upon the quality and suitability of homes. These factors included:
 - availability, affordability and choice
 - security of tenure
 - property maintenance and management
 - energy efficiency of properties (linked also to fuel poverty)
 - design that helps meet the requirements of those with specialist needs
 - the location and infrastructure of the neighbourhood
 - the provision of supported accommodation and/or housing support services

Responsibilities and Policy Context

5. As a local housing authority, Gateshead Council has a wide range of statutory housing responsibilities. Many of these statutory responsibilities, and also those set out in planning and social care legislation, confer upon the Council duties to influence, directly or indirectly, housing supply, housing standards and housing support.
6. Vision 2030 sets out the 6 Big Ideas for Gateshead. Of these, “Sustainable Gateshead” commits to improving living conditions, and “Active Gateshead” resolves to provide support to encourage people to improve their health and lifestyle. The five year Council Plan sets out how Gateshead will be a healthy, inclusive and nurturing place for all, and a destination of choice for families with excellent, affordable housing.
7. The Council’s Housing Strategy 2013-18 sets out the objectives and priorities for addressing key housing challenges covering three themes:
 - Housing standards
 - Housing supply
 - Housing support

Review methodology

8. The review comprised three evidence gathering sessions. The sessions were themed according to the three strands of the Council’s Housing Strategy (see Paragraph 7 above).

During these sessions the Committee heard evidence from a number of presenters regarding:

- the relationship between housing, health and health inequalities

- existing and anticipated demand for housing
- existing and anticipated demand for health and social care services
- demographic changes (especially the proportional increase in numbers of older people)
- national and local housing, health and social care policies
- what housing services are provided and by whom
- issues and challenges for the Council's strategic and operational housing functions including housing advice and support services

First evidence gathering session

9. The first session focused on improving health through housing supply by having the right homes in the right place.
10. The context for this was that ensuring the supply of good housing that people want and can afford in the places they want to live, now and in the future, meets a fundamental requirement – the availability of suitable housing.
11. The Committee heard from two presenters. Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director for Development and Public Protection and Jon Mallen-Beadle, Managing Director, The Gateshead Housing Company, presented on planning for future housing need, and working with the existing housing stock.
12. Key points included:
 - Gateshead has a disproportionately high incidence of people on low incomes in some localities
 - People on low incomes have fewer housing options and are more likely to rent
 - People on lower incomes are more likely to have poor health and live in poorer quality housing
 - Concentrations of poor housing are therefore also concentrations of people in poor health
 - This is another example of social impacts arising from individual/community economic status
 - Housing affordability and housing for older people are key issues for health and wellbeing with respect to the supply of suitable housing
 - There are costs to health arising from poor/inappropriate housing
 - Unplanned outcomes arising from welfare reform and the Housing and Planning Act 2016 are negatively impacting upon vulnerable groups in Gateshead
 - There is a desire to improve links between the council's strategic housing function and the Health and Wellbeing Board
 - There is a need to retain and improve our focus on a diversified portfolio of housing options for people that meet a wide range of needs and preferences as per the Housing Strategy and Housing Intervention Work Plan
 - A quality/attractive environment is important for improved health and wellbeing (ie. Life Time Neighbourhoods)
 - Action is underway to ensure the provision of appropriate specialist and elderly accommodation to reflect future need

- Poor housing standards are more prevalent amongst the private housing stock and improving standards remains important.
- Changing patterns of demand, shifting expectations and financial constraints have resulted in increased voids and reduced levels of homes meeting Decent Homes Standards in Council housing stock.
- The Council's capacity to respond to these issues is rapidly diminishing due to:
 - Budget cuts and fewer staff resources to intervene
 - Government policy
 - Lack of capital funding to bring forward much of our difficult to develop brownfield land.

Second evidence gathering summary

13. The second evidence gathering session heard information on housing standards in Gateshead with a focus on the condition of the private housing stock (both physical condition and conditions of management in the private rented sector), fuel poverty and affordable warmth.
14. Peter Wright, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, presented on the impact upon health and wellbeing of standards in the private housing sector and the role of place shaping, housing and health. Key points included:
 - Poor housing conditions including dampness, excess cold, disrepair and structural defects can increase the likelihood of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases; injuries due to trips, falls and fires; exposure to lead or carbon monoxide, and mental health problems including anxiety and depression.
 - The ability of individuals to avail themselves of a home suitable to their needs depends upon factors such as employment status, income level, health and lifestyle, security of tenure and educational/skills attainment.
 - Around 26% of all households in Gateshead are socially rented, while 74% of homes are privately owned. The proportion of homes with hazards identified through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System is greater in the private sector.
 - The proportion of privately rented homes in Gateshead increased by over 40% between 2001 and 2011 while the proportion of socially rented homes fell.
 - This change in tenure, combined with changes introduced through welfare reform, has seen a marked increase in the numbers of homes in multiple occupation, and in public health related housing requests for service received by Environmental Health.
 - The cost to remedy unsatisfactory private sector housing in Gateshead is estimated at £44M.
 - Examples of good practice in Gateshead have included a falls prevention home improvement service, once NHS funded and now entirely funded by the Council, the introduction of a Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme, and the adoption of a management methodology

that focuses the work of the Private Sector Housing Team on “helping people to live better lives”.

- Challenges include low national expectations for the improvement of private sector housing conditions, and issues with accountability for this.
- Housing is a key part of “place shaping” activity (ie. the creative use of powers and influence to promote the well-being of communities and citizens). This activity extends beyond objective changes in the physical environment – it concerns changes in subjective experiences and perceptions of place over time.
- Place shaping is allied to concepts of “place-based health”, a systems approach to promote prevention and independence that relies upon moving away from short term operational and political pressures through transformational leadership and vision.

15. Peter Smith, Head of Policy and Research, National Energy Action (NEA) Affordable warmth, presented on fuel poverty and health. Key points included:

- Living in a cold home contributes towards and can be a direct cause of a wide variety of physical and mental health problems including excess winter deaths, increased likelihood of use of primary care and admission to hospital.
- Cold, damp homes impact adversely upon children’s educational attainment.
- Fuel debts can cause emotional distress leading to poor mental health.
- The percentage of households in Gateshead experiencing fuel poverty using the low income high costs methodology is estimated to be 11.2%, significantly higher than the national average of 10.6%. This equates to around 10 108 households in Gateshead living in fuel poverty. This number has risen since 2011.
- Risk factors for fuel poverty include poor domestic energy efficiency, high energy costs and inadequate basic income.
- National research undertaken by NEA to determine the priority given to fuel poverty and excess winter deaths in local Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments awarded Gateshead a score of 2 out of a possible total of 6.
- NEA recognised that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and JSNA was not representative of activity on the ground, but voiced their concern that activity to improve affordable warmth in Gateshead relies significantly upon the limited and decreasing support available for the most vulnerable from the national Energy Company Obligation.
- NEA recommended that:
 - health and wellbeing boards update local policies and needs assessments to apply NICE guidance on cold homes
 - consider how the Health and Wellbeing Board, with support from Department of Health, PHE and NHSE, could undertake direct commissioning of health and housing services
 - health and wellbeing boards ensure that local initiatives that meet relevant NICE recommendations are sufficiently funded

16. Gill Leng, National Home and Health Advisor for Public Health England gave evidence on the relationship between housing and health. Key points included:

- The right home environment is essential to health and wellbeing throughout life. It is pivotal to healthy communities and to health equity.
- The “right” home environment is one which is healthy (warm and affordable to heat, free from hazards, safe from harm), suitable (enables movement around the home, is accessible, presents space to live), stable (promotes a sense of security and stability, support is available if needed), and is based in a healthy neighbourhood and community.
- The right home presents numerous benefits not only to health and quality of life, but also to social care, including improved independence, positive care experiences and reduced demand for health care and social care interventions.
- The right home can also promote timely discharge and reduced likelihood of hospital readmissions, and enables rapid recovery from periods of ill-health or planned admissions.
- Such benefits are not limited to older people. The right home also enables children and young people to start and develop well and working age adults to live and work well.
- There are system interests in “home”. There are multiple interests in homes and housing within local authorities, and multiple other public bodies share this interest (ie. health organisations, criminal justice bodies, immigration services).
- The importance of home and health is represented in a document, “A Memorandum of Understanding to support joint action on improving health through the home” (“the MoU”), signed by government departments, its agencies such NHS England, Public Health England and the Homes and Communities Agency, sector professional and trade bodies.
- The MoU seeks to establish and support national and local dialogue, information exchange and decision-making across government, health, social care and housing sectors, including the coordination of health, social care, and housing policies.
- Some areas have undertaken to use the MoU as a template for local collaboration on housing and health.
- The Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Durham Sustainability and Transformation Plan (“the STP”) refers to the importance of housing and the home as the hub of the future health system (ie. from “hospitals at the centre” to “home as the hub”). The presenter noted that in her review of all 44 STPs for the Department of Health, housing has been a variable factor and a more substantial theme in other STPs that she has reviewed.

Third evidence gathering summary

17. The third evidence gathering session detailed the nature of housing support and advice and supported housing services available in Gateshead.
18. The context for the session was the role of housing support and advice services in helping people to live in their own homes, and maximising opportunities to improve health and minimise harms.
19. Elizabeth Saunders, Interim Director Commissioning and Quality Assurance, presented on housing support services for people with social care needs. Key points included:
 - Housing care and support needs are identified as part of an individual's Social Care Assessment.
 - Gateshead Council meets eligible identified needs by commissioning a range of services, including both accommodation-based and non-accommodation based services, ranging from small packages of care at home to 24 hour supported accommodation.
 - Examples of housing care services include:
 - Independent supported living (ISL) schemes for people with a learning disability and /or autism who choose to share a home with others
 - Floating support for people with complex needs, often learning disabilities, which currently delivers support to individuals in their own homes
 - Domiciliary care services that provide support to individuals in their own home
 - A re-ablement service for people returning home from hospital for need further support to regain their independence
 - Sheltered accommodation and Extra Care schemes
 - Extra Care Housing was used to illustrate how supported accommodation can impact upon health. Extra Care Housing offers residents self-contained flats to maximise independence. There are other facilities on-site to encourage a community feel and to reduce social isolation. A recent consultation with residents showed that most felt less isolated since their move, and less likely to need to move into a care home.
 - Models of working bring together colleagues from commissioning, social work and housing to facilitate better planning for future needs, to improve matching processes and to identify gaps in the market. This approach is now used for those with learning disabilities, and for care leavers and people with mental health problems.
 - Challenges include reducing budgets, meeting anticipated future demand, and providing housing and support to meet specific needs, such as people who display challenging behaviour, forensic services, autism specialist services and homes with specialist adaptations.
 - Opportunities and next steps include:

- A Learning Disability Framework will be in place from 1 April 2017. Providers will place a greater emphasis on independence and empowering individuals.
- A consultation has been completed to facilitate the re-tender of Extra Care schemes with a new framework in place by July 2017.
- Sites such as those at Tynedale and Addison Court present opportunities to address gaps in the market (eg. Step up/step down facilities).
- Transforming Care for people with a Learning Disability and/or Autistic Spectrum Conditions presents an opportunity for the development of a 'community offer' as well as exploring joint commissioning with health and other regional local authorities.

20. Elizabeth Saunders, Interim Director Commissioning and Quality Assurance, and Peter Wright, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, presented on preventative housing support and advice services for people who do not have eligible social care needs. Key points included:

- Housing support and advice services include a mixture of short term supported housing, floating support services, information and advice services and advocacy (statutory and non-statutory).
- The relevance of these services to improving and maintaining health and wellbeing can be thought of in terms of:
 - Early intervention – good quality advice, support and appropriate sign-posting at the early stages of crisis can often prevent poor health from deteriorating further thereby reducing demand for health and social care services
 - Housing Support – trained Support Workers provide direct support to vulnerable people often in poor health. Support can include promoting well-being and facilitating GP registration
 - Prevention of homelessness – poor physical and mental health is both a risk factor for and an outcome of homelessness. Referrals into supported housing services are designed for people who are literally homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Case studies of service users of housing support services users provided insights into how the services impacted upon their lives:
 - *“Elizabeth House gave me confidence, and independence they made me feel better about myself. I didn’t want to go into it, but I am pleased I did; I wouldn’t be where I am now if I hadn’t.”*
Elizabeth House service user
 - *“I strongly believe in leaving the past where it is, and I think being in here, I’ve turned a corner... I now have my own flat, the support of staff taught me I didn’t have to react badly to things and always know there is possibilities and positives around the corner. I feel a completely new person and can’t be any more thankful towards those who helped and supported me.”* Naomi House service user

- The Private Sector Housing Team provides a wide range of public health interventions to assist often vulnerable individuals directly, and to help them navigate and access other services, enabling them to remain independent and housed. Examples include:
 - Helping those inclined to hoard possessions, or those whose mental illness prevents them from keeping their homes free from clutter or pest infestations.
 - Mediating and resolving disputes between tenants and landlords, to get repairs done and to help tenants and landlords to understand their rights, and responsibilities, to support more positive relationships in the future.
 - Support to deal with neighbour issues such as leaks or refuse problems, pest infestations that cross boundaries, and anti-social behaviour.
 - Selective Landlord Licensing and HMO Licensing targets advice and guidance that can help to make tenancies more sustainable in neighbourhoods worst affected by poor housing conditions, antisocial behaviour and high resident turnover. Those living in privately rented properties, especially HMOs, in such neighbourhoods, are more likely to be vulnerable.
 - Financial advice on undertaking and funding home repairs and improvements to facilitate independent living.
- Challenges to the sustainability of much of this work arise from changes to funding for supported housing from 2019/20 linked to Universal Credit and the Local Housing Allowance, the Homelessness Reduction Bill, the Law Commission review of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards advocacy, and ongoing Council savings proposals.
- Opportunities and next steps include:
 - The opportunity to shape and improve advocacy services in partnership with new providers
 - The new emphasis on prevention and extending homelessness duties in legislation should assist people currently not in “priority need”
 - Continued focus on outcome based commissioning, e.g. future funding for supported housing
 - The re-modelling of supported housing, completed within a co-production framework, will improve services, offer more accommodation choices for service users and adopt new thinking, e.g. psychologically informed environments.

Issues/challenges emerging from the review

21. The review showed that many services across the Council actively contribute towards the housing and health agenda. The review identified that all of these services were aware of key issues and challenges in ensuring that housing contributes positively to health in Gateshead.
22. The relationship between housing and health is generally well-appreciated amongst housing practitioners. Housing services were able to articulate how

their activity contributed to health, and often saw securing, maintaining and improving the health of their service users as central to their overall purpose.

23. Evidence submitted showed that activity under each of the three themes within the Council's Housing Strategy 2013-18 contributes to the health and wellbeing of Gateshead residents. Delivering the Housing Strategy through the implementation of the Housing Intervention Action Plan is therefore key to maximising the contribution of housing to improving health in Gateshead.

24. The review showed that the Council faces significant challenges in realising its housing ambitions. These arise from ongoing changes to legislation, policy and funding arrangements.

25. The key housing objectives and challenges can be summarised as follows:

Housing supply

Objectives:

To ensure use of existing stock, and supply of new housing, best meets current and future needs and aspirations:

- More homes – 11 000 gross additions between 2010 and 2030
- Improved choice of homes – to grow and sustain our working age population, and meet the needs of an ageing population
- Fewer empty properties – to no more than 3% of total stock
- More jobs – economic growth, higher incomes, and greater skills, stimulated by housing development.
- Improved satisfaction with home and neighbourhood

Challenges:

- Accelerating the pace of housing development to meet current population projections and targets for sustainable housing growth
- Securing a range of affordable homes within new housing developments
- Utilising land efficiently through the use of brownfield sites and vacant properties.
- Securing the right mix of housing tenure and type to house increased working age and ageing populations.
- Reducing the number of empty homes
- Delivering strategic, place based regeneration

Housing standards

Objectives:

To improve the quality, condition and management of housing so that all residents benefit from safe, healthy and well-managed homes:

- Improved stock condition (including energy efficiency)
- Better management

- Reduced environmental impact
- More jobs
- Improved satisfaction with home, landlord and area

Challenges:

- Maintaining and driving-up standards (ie. condition, management, energy efficiency) in the existing private housing stock
- Maintaining Decent Homes Standard in the Council's stock
- Improving the quality of new-build design and space standards

Housing support

Objectives:

To help residents access and sustain a home which promotes their wellbeing:

- Fewer repeat interventions
- Fewer homeless households
- More people living independently
- Improved satisfaction with advice and support services

Challenges:

- Providing the most appropriate range of housing related support, to help residents access and sustain a home which promotes their independence and wellbeing
- Reducing future revenue costs to the Council

26. Please note that the final report will be further informed by the findings of a fourth evidence gathering session based on members' experience in issues regarding health and housing to be held in the Civic Centre on 1 March 2017 (room to be confirmed).

Draft recommendations

27. Review the actions set out in the Housing Intervention Action Plan, and, where appropriate, provide Public Health support to assist in maximising the benefits to health arising from delivering elements of the Plan. The evidence presented in the review identifies priority candidate elements with the greatest potential to improve health and wellbeing, further detailed below.
28. Ensure that improving health and wellbeing is reflected in the production of local development plan documents (ie. Making Spaces for Growing Places).
29. Review how health and wellbeing is reflected in Council Letting Policies and TGHC support services (ie. health criteria, preventative interventions).

30. Assess the current range of Council private sector housing interventions to maximise their contribution to health and wellbeing (including energy efficiency programmes, private landlord accreditation, Selective Landlord Licensing, financial assistance programmes, falls prevention, Making Every Contact Count).
31. Undertake actions to ensure that the greatest proportion of Council housing is maintained to a standard that secures the health and wellbeing of residents within the context of changes to revenue and capital funding.
32. Determine the circumstances where the Council seeks to ensure that high design and space standards are delivered, including accessibility.
33. Determine the need for, location of and processes to deliver adequate levels of supported, specialist, and older persons housing.
34. It is recommended that the Committee:
- Gives its views on the report presented to inform the preparation of the final report to be considered at its meeting on 25th April 2017.

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