

Demonstrating the value of housing: health & care toolkit

Last updated: January 2024

Purpose

This toolkit has been developed as a resource to support a range of audiences, including:

- The CHC team in its various campaigning and influencing activity;
- Our housing association members when working alongside health and social care colleagues, including on Regional Partnership Boards;
- Local government colleagues and Members of the Senedd; and
- Our partners across the housing, health, social care and support sectors.

There is an increasing body of evidence showing the value of housing to public services, especially health and social care. Research demonstrates the importance of investing in housing for the significant health and well-being benefits that can be achieved, and the considerable cost savings that can be made. This briefing summarises evidence, research and case studies that demonstrate the role that housing plays, both to the individual and to the public purse.

This document will be periodically reviewed and updated, and you can find the most recent version on our website. If there are any reports or research that do not feature here but you feel would be valuable, please do let us know.

Key messages

- Investment in good quality homes means that people can be healthier and can live independently in their own homes for longer. This helps individuals and families but also saves public money by relieving pressure on the NHS and other public services.
- Social housing tenants include people on low incomes and those with complex needs. Housing associations can play a key role in closing health and wellbeing equality gaps, supporting tenants with their personal, social and financial wellbeing.
- Housing associations are rooted in communities across Wales, and have unique assets, insights, resources and relationships. They are well placed to support people to be healthier, as well as to amplify the work of health and social care partners.



Key tools and reports

Public Health Wales: The rising cost of living and health and wellbeing in Wales: a national survey, October 2023

A national household survey of over 2,000 Welsh residents aged 18 years or older was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023 in order to understand how rising costs of living are affecting people. Key findings include:

- 44% of people reported that the rising costs of living were having a negative impact on mental health and 19% reported a negative impact on their physical health
- 43% reported a worsening household financial situation and 23% did not think they would be able to cope financially

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Public Health Wales: Homes for health and well-being, July 2023

This report highlights the significant impact people's homes have on their health and well-being. Discussions held across four workshops identified seven themes that were crucial to making housing a key building block for a healthy life:

- Homes should be free from hazards, and able to be kept warm, dry, and well maintained.
- Rent and mortgage costs need to be affordable, as do household bills, adaptations and maintenance.
- Homes should offer security both on a personal, psychological level, and to provide the stability needed to fully take part in society.
- Homes should be suitable – particularly for older people and those with disabilities – and have enough space to live comfortably.
- Homes should be energy efficient, resulting in benefits for people (e.g. via lower energy bills) and the environment.
- Homes should be based in wider communities that support and provide a sense of belonging to the people living in them.
- Homes should be well and easily connected to essential services and green space.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Public Health Wales: Good practice guide, June 2023

Public Health Wales has launched a digital platform, the Welsh Health Equity Solutions Platform, to help stakeholders develop measures to reduce health inequality in Wales. Developed by the Policy and International Health team within the WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for



Health and Well-being, It is a tool for health professionals, local authorities and policy makers to help stimulate ideas and find answers to equity problems.

The platform will act as a repository of information, case studies and previous interventions used to help combat inequity and share good practice in Wales. The platform can be accessed [here](#).

The Full Cost of Poor Housing in Wales, January 2020

This joint report from the BRE Trust, Public Health Wales and Welsh Government looks in detail at the links between poor housing conditions, in this case 'hazards in the home' and their impact on health and well-being and cost to the NHS and wider society. Key findings include:

- In 2017-18, some 18% of the total housing stock in Wales featured a Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Risk System (HHSRS) hazard - this is defined as 'poor housing'
- The most common Category 1 hazards related to falls in the home and the consequences of living in cold housing
- The total cost to reduce the hazards across the whole stock to an acceptable level was estimated to be £584 million

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Making a Difference Housing and Health: A Case for Investment Main Report, June 2019

This report aims to inform, support and advocate for wider health policy and cross-sector approaches and interventions offering benefits to the public, health system, society and the economy. It summarises the impact housing (across tenure) has on health and well-being across the life course; sets out the case for investing in housing as a determinant of health by identifying which interventions work and offer value for money. It focuses on the three priority areas of housing quality, suitable housing and homelessness for preventative action within Wales.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Sector case studies

Adra

The housing association has begun work on a programme of creating specialist adapted homes for individuals and families with additional needs.

As of June 2023, nine properties had been completed by Adra, designed and built to the requirements of the families and individuals in need. There are three properties in Caernarfon, one in Dinas, one in Deiniolen, (all Gwynedd) and four in Meliden near Prestatyn.



Another property in Trebroth, specifically designed and adapted to the needs of the new tenant, was completed at the end of the year. A further three adapted homes in Blaenau Ffestiniog are expected to be completed by Spring 2024.

Adjustments to properties include a dormer bungalow where the ground floor has been made fully wheelchair accessible, with widened doors, a bedroom linked with adapted bathroom, a specialist shower and bath, hoists to travel freely between the bedroom and bathroom, a door to the garden from the bedroom, a soft lighting scheme, CCTV and additional sockets.

Newydd & Hapi

[Hapi](#) (Happy, Aspiring, Prosperous and Inclusive) is a health and wellbeing project providing local communities with free resources and access to workshops to positively impact their mental health and wellbeing. The aim of the Hapi project is to provide participants with the skills and knowledge to empower them to make healthier life choices.

Hapi [works with tenants and residents](#) to improve their general wellbeing by delivering free 1-2-1 advice and group workshops in several themed areas:

- Emotional wellbeing - e.g. mindfulness, stress management
- Physical activity - e.g. sports, pilates, family fitness
- Food and nutrition - e.g. cook-a-longs, weight management
- Education, employment and training - e.g. online accredited courses

Hapi is run by the community team at Newydd housing association and funded by the Big Lottery People and Places Fund. The project has been running in Rhondda Cynon Taf since 2016, based in the Rhydyfelin Community Hub in Pontypridd. Since March 2020 workshops have been delivered virtually, with participants joining in from around the world. Hapi has been [academically evaluated](#) by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

In 2021, the [project received funding](#) from Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to run similar activities free to all communities living in and around Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan. The project has continued to run community initiatives such as a Warm Hub project, sporting activities and free food events.

ClwydAlyn I CAN Hub

In partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, ClwydAlyn housing association opened an [I CAN Community Hub](#) in Rhyl, North Wales in 2020. Rhyl is a coastal town where the impact of health inequalities mean that healthy life expectancy can vary by up to 12 years compared with other areas of the country.

The aim was to establish a community hub to support citizens' positive mental health and emotional well-being. The primary objective is to provide preventative and early intervention support to enable individuals to prevent the deterioration of their mental well-being and to



alleviate social distress/crisis. The Hub is managed by ClwydAlyn with support from I CAN volunteers and statutory and non-statutory services.

A core element to the Hub is 'Welcome Wednesday', which brings partner agencies together under one roof. Individuals can then access a range of services within a non-stigmatised community setting. Engaged partners include GPs, mental health teams, third sector partners, housing officers and even vets and hairdressers.

Since reopening the Hub following an easing of lockdown restrictions, the staff team and volunteers have provided support to individuals with referrals coming from GPs, probation service, police, hospitals, CAB and voluntary organisations. The Hub continues to offer face to face, telephone and virtual support.

For more information about this resource, please contact sarah-scotcher@chcymru.org.uk.