

Briefing – Housing & Health: Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Following the passage of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, which includes a duty on public bodies to carry out health impact assessments (HIAs) in specific circumstances, this briefing provides supporting information about the application of HIA in the housing sector including Housing Associations (HAs). This briefing includes:

- A short introduction to the policy context
- Relationship between Housing and Health
- Identifying when HIA can be used
- The benefits of applying HIA within a Housing Sector Context
- Identifying opportunities to apply or contribute to HIA – Case Study example

There is no duty on HA's to carry out HIAs however you may be approached to participate in one as part of a wider project or you may volunteer to undertake a HIA to engage with local stakeholders. This paper outlines how HIA is highly relevant to the work of HA's and the advantages and benefits of implementing this approach.

Policy Context - the Public Health Act and HIA

A Health Impact Assessment is defined as 'a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, programme or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population'¹ The passage of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 heralds the statutory requirement for HIA to be carried out in specific circumstances (as yet undefined). A set of draft regulations are being developed and will be subject to public consultation in early 2018. The Act states '*The regulations must specify the circumstances in which a **public body** must carry out a health impact assessment*'².

The list below highlights the links to the housing domain and the likely policy areas for implementing statutory HIA:

- National and Local Development Plans
- Housing developments (proportionality and context will be important considerations)
- Welsh Government policies, legislation and Bills
- Regeneration plans and projects

HIA should also be considered within the context of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This again applies to public bodies but key to the success of achieving the 7 Wellbeing Goals is the application of the sustainable development (SD) principle through the 5 Ways of Working (which are also HIA ways of working/principles). These are; long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement.

Community Housing Cymru's (CHC) Housing Horizon project aims to '*...position housing associations as a partner of choice and an integral part of the solution to the housing crisis*'³ and the SD principle is at the core of this and HIA can facilitate it.

¹ - The European Centre for Health Policy (1999).

² Public Health (Wales) Act 2017. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2017/2/part/6/enacted>

³ Community Housing Cymru's (CHC) Housing Horizon Project - https://chcymru.org.uk/uploads/general/Housing_Horizons_-_Establishing_the_Challenge.pdf

HA's are a key stakeholder involved in the development of local and national policies and strategies relevant to the housing agenda and the population of Wales. HA's continued involvement and collaboration within the decision making process (including the application of statutory HIA) is key to public bodies demonstrating the delivery and implementation of the sustainable development principle.

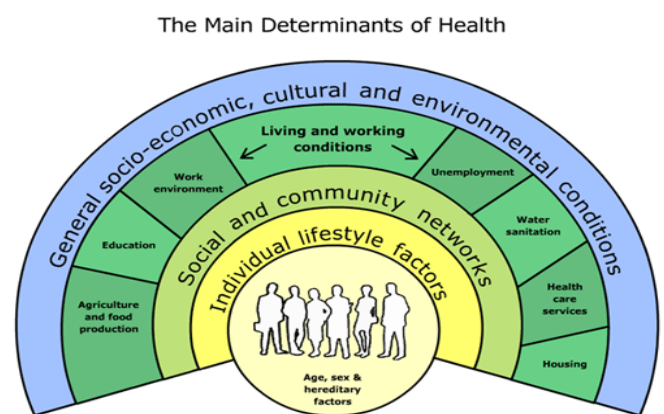
Relationship between Housing and Health

Housing is a key determinant of health and wellbeing (HWB) and there is a wide range of evidence showing how the housing sector impacts on physical, emotional and social wellbeing⁴⁵The Housing context incorporates so much more than the individual buildings and their condition and includes: the wider natural and built environment it is placed within: access to services and employment: a sense of place and social relationships; and the concept of being a 'home' rather than a 'house'. Therefore, issues related to the housing agenda have to be considered within the wider policy context including regeneration, economy, environment, planning and health in addition to specific housing policy.

Why use HIA?

Welsh Government (WG) has taken a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to policy making. HiAP seeks to integrate HWB and inequalities considerations into the development, implementation and evaluation of all policies. HIA is both a tool and a process promoted by WG to raise awareness and support the implementation of HiAP. It uses the wider determinants of health as a framework for appraising and evaluating policies, plans and projects. HIA facilitates the links between all policy sectors, strengthens partnership working and increases the understanding across all sectors of their contribution to maximise positive health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. Health inequalities and health inequities are key considerations within HIA. The housing sector has a contribution to make to reducing health inequalities.

WHIASU has produced a guide to HIA 'HIA: A Practical Guide' ⁶



Source- Based on Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991)

Benefits to be gained from applying HIA within Housing contexts

HIA can contribute to a number of the objectives set by CHC⁷ to support housing associations and the wider housing sector, including:

- *'Influencing legislative change and shape the direction of future government policy'*
- *'Promote the viability and effectiveness of housing associations'*
- *'Provide opportunities for collaboration within the sector and encourage learning and sharing....'*
- *'Evidence the positive impact of member's investment in communities and on individuals'*
- *'Evidence the impact of policy change on member's, tenants and communities'*

⁴ WHIASU, 2014 - *Housing and Health Evidence Review for HIA*

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/522/Evidence%20Review%20for%20Housing%20and%20HIA%20Final.pdf>

⁵ World Health Organization, 2016, *Social protection, housing and health*

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/338490/housinghealth_E.pdf?ua=1

⁶ HIA: A Practical Guide (2012). WHIASU <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/page.cfm?orgid=522&pid=63782>

⁷ CHC Corporate Plan 2016-2019 - <https://chcymru.org.uk/comms/CHC-Corporate-Plan/index.html>

The **process** of applying HIA cannot be undertaken without the **involvement** of all stakeholders who will be affected by, or have an interest in, the plan, project or policy - making the decision making process more transparent and democratic. The **evidence** gathered during the process gives a clear view of **how** plans could impact on health and well-being. The **outcomes** from undertaking a HIA describe the consequences of a policy/project options on health and well-being and recommends how positive impacts can be maximised and unintended consequences minimised and can help shape both current and future policies and projects.

Opportunities to apply or contribute to HIA

The CHC's Housing Horizons project has identified a number of challenges for the housing sector:

- Changing demographics – which will impact on the provision of homes and services
- Changing household composition – has implications for new and existing housing stock
- Changing workforce – including retirement, fewer working age adults, growth in workforce and new technology
- Austerity and its impact on funding streams, organisations and tenants

The housing sector needs to bring its own evidence forward to inform the planning and policy for these challenges and any resulting developments at a national and/or local level.

In respect of statutory HIAs being carried out, the housing sector will be a key stakeholder, contributing expert knowledge and experience. Understanding the HIA process and its principles will support its contribution to these.

Advantages of choosing to implement a HIA

Planning programmes and projects or seeking funding for these requires insight from, and the involvement of all stakeholders importantly including tenants and residents. In addition to this, many funding bodies set assessment criteria as part of bids in relation to the both the evidence presented and the involvement of key stakeholders. Undertaking a HIA can provide robust evidence of both. HIA provides a tool and framework for evidence gathering and participation.

HIA has been applied in the following areas which have relevance to the housing sector:

- The Welsh Accredited Landlord Licensing Scheme (WALLS) – this informed the development and implementation of the 'Rent Smart Wales' Scheme
- Local Development Plans (LDPs) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)
- Housing Strategies and Plans
- Regeneration Schemes i.e. those funded via WG's 'Vibrant and Viable Places' (VVP) Regeneration Framework
- Specific housing projects such as Extra Care Housing Developments for Older People or environmental regeneration schemes and improvements to existing housing stock

Case Study

Gaer Bungalow Estate and new Derwen Development Health Impact Assessment (HIA) - March 2017

A rapid participatory HIA was undertaken which comprised of a half-day community and stakeholder workshop. This HIA built on a variety of evidence that had already been collated by Derwen and aimed to inform the organisation and contribute to the housing projects development. There had been previous consultation with a number of local organisations and individuals and feedback from them but the HIA would involve all the stakeholders directly and facilitate a structured discussion with and between them.

24 key local stakeholders and community members attended to participate and contribute to the discussions. These included a number of local authority officers from Social Services, Housing and Planning Departments; elected members for the area; public health and health care sector representatives; Derwen and Newport City Homes Housing Associations; representatives of the Gaer Community Centre; the third sector and Derwen HA residents from the Gear Estate.

This HIA supported work and training that Wales Health Impact Assessment Support unit (WHIASU) had recently been undertaking across Wales to develop HIA and a consideration of health, wellbeing and inequalities with local authority Housing and Regeneration Departments, Housing Associations and national related organisations such as Community Housing Cymru (CHC).

Many potential positive impacts and opportunities to improve the development and the services within it were identified. Potentially problematic issues were raised and addressed with recommendations and mitigation discussed.

Overall, it was concluded that the Gaer bungalow estate and development has the potential to be highly beneficial for the local area, its people and support some of the most vulnerable in society. It will positively deliver services and accommodation and these can be maximised and built on. It has also highlighted some issues that could potentially be problematic and the workshop participants provided some practical recommendations for actions to minimise these.

This briefing has been produced in partnership between CHC and WHIASU, August 2017. Authors: Lee Parry-Williams and Liz Green, WHIASU and Carly Dix, CHC

For further information or guidance on HIA: www.whiasu.wales.nhs.uk

The Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) was established to support the development of HIA in Wales and is part of the Policy, Research and International Division of PHW. Its remit is to support, train, facilitate and build capacity in HIA and raise awareness of how the process can support and contribute to improving health and wellbeing.