



RSPH
ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH
VISION, VOICE AND PRACTICE

Housing as a means to create a healthier, happier nation

**William Roberts, Chief Executive,
Royal Society for Public Health**
wroberts@rsph.org.uk

[**www.rsph.org.uk**](http://www.rsph.org.uk)

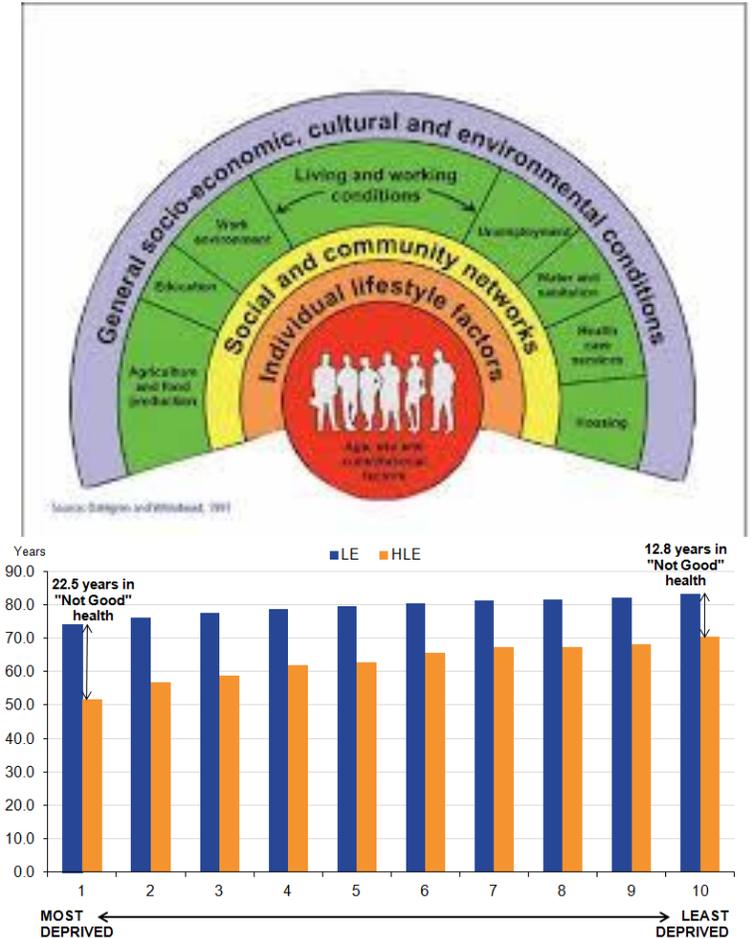
About RSPH



- World's longest-established public health body
- Incorporated by Royal Charter
- 4 nations
- Independent charity
- 6,000 members in the UK and around the world
- 40,000 learners annually
- 3 journals
- Undertake research, campaigns and policy

Why we need a healthy nation

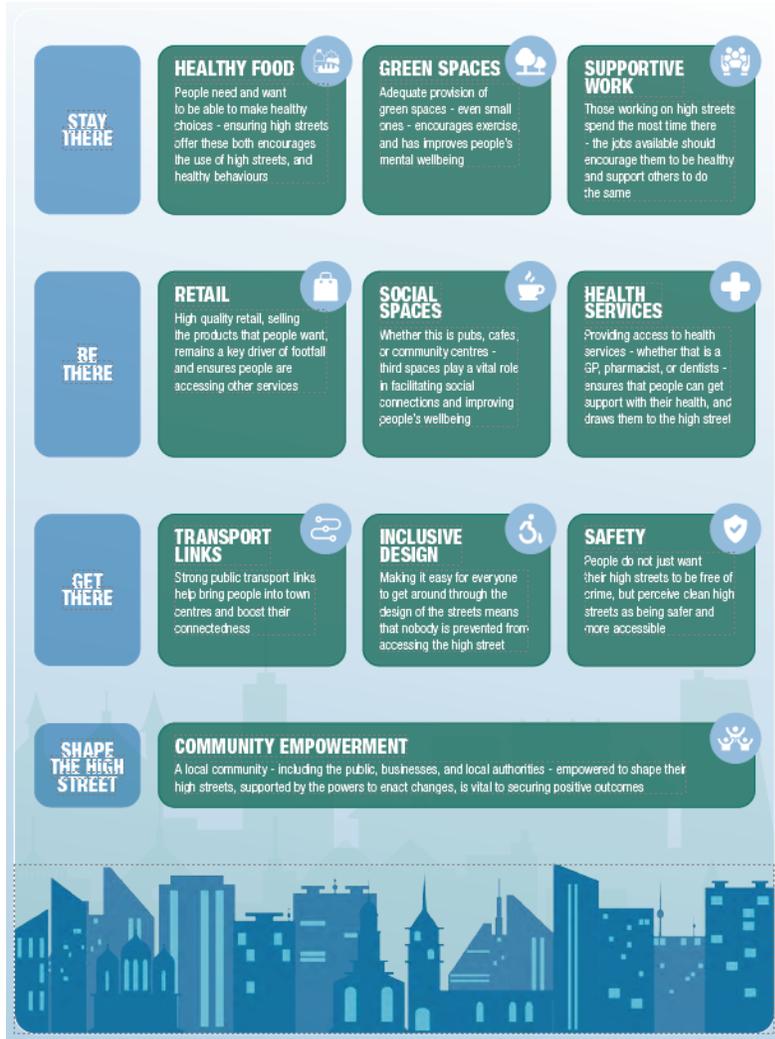
- Health drives growth, healthy communities are wealthy communities
- People are living longer but not healthier
- Healthcare is only responsible for around 10% of health
- Covid-19 taught us that a strong public health response needs more than treatment and the NHS



We face a number of challenges

- Growing physical and mental ill health
- Stretched health and care services
- Premature mortality and stalled life expectancy
- Financial pressures and economic inactivity
- Increasing health and care inequalities

Creating healthy places is so much more than just health- we need to make healthier places



- 49% of people in the UK do not have access to green spaces where they can exercise or rest in their high streets.
- 42% told us they do not have good transport links.
- Existing grants and systems aiming at supporting high streets and local authorities are fragmented and short-term.
- There are essential building blocks that support our high streets to become healthier, among them community empowerment and supportive work.
- There are several projects that used one of these building blocks and positively impacted the health of their high street.

There are some obvious ways in which housing can adversely impact on your health



Counsel Kate Blackwell speaking at the Covid Inquiry on Monday. She said: "Housing conditions were recognised as a structural driver of poorer mental health" (picture: UK Covid-19 Inquiry)

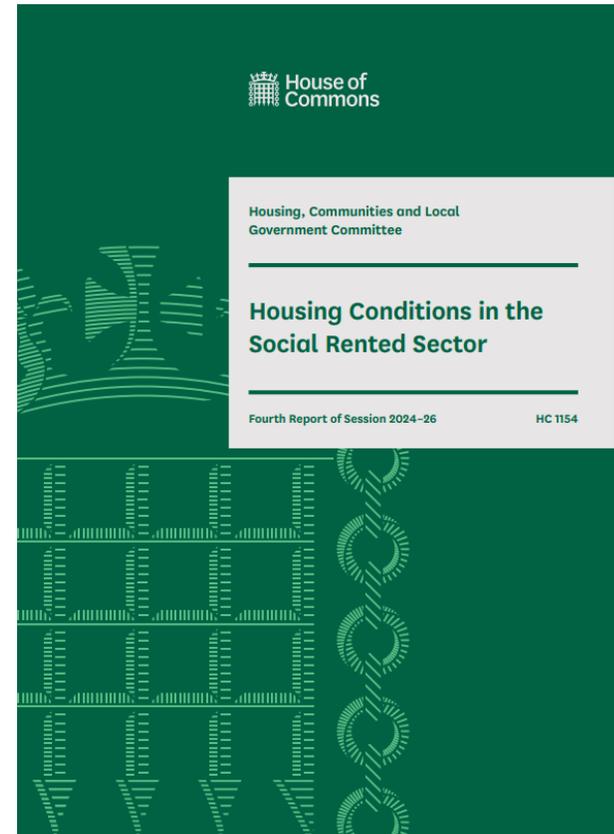
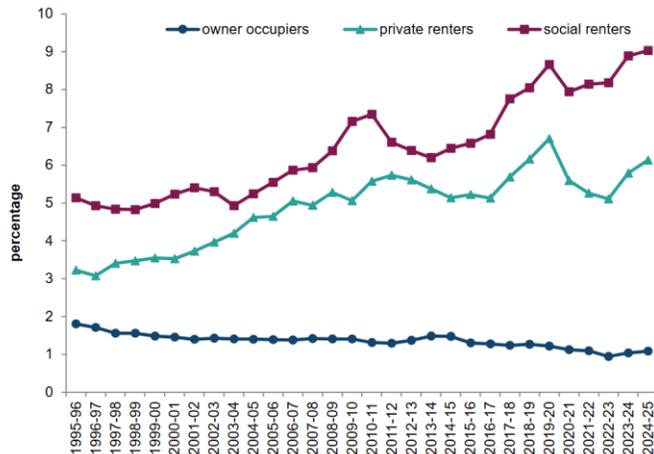


Figure 1.2: Overcrowding, by tenure, 1995-96 to 2024-25



Why this matters for housing

- Your tenants, residents and customers ability to use your product well depends on them being healthy
- The costs of not doing this are both visible and hidden
- You have a regulatory and statutory duty to adhere to
- Your product is more desirable
- This is what your organisations were set up to do

Developing models of prevention

- Best public health improvements combine both the benefit to the individual and the benefit to the state
- They do not have a single silver bullet but combine a range of things that improve health
 - Focus on interventions that support the whole population not just the high risk
 - Legislative and regulatory change is needed alongside societal and personal change not either or
 - All public health approaches need to be seen in the context of a wider set of issues as healthcare is only a small driver of health
 - Using market forces for good
 - National, regional and local action is needed

What can housing do to start to address a positive impact on health

1. Make brilliant homes and brilliant places
2. Understand the needs of your residents
3. Understand that the lives of those in your homes have an impact on your buildings and vice versa
4. Creating the conditions in which health can thrive
5. Develop the workforce to embed public health skills
6. Lobby for cross governmental action/health in all policies