

Factsheet 3:

Health and housing links



There are widely accepted links between many common health problems and housing conditions.

The following chart summarises some of the key health risks, their housing link, possible action and organisations that may be able to help.

Housing Link	Possible action	Who can help?
ACCIDENTS		
Home accidents caused by environmental hazards are most common amongst older people and very young children, especially in low income households.	Most areas now have accident prevention, home safety check or falls prevention schemes. People are usually visited in their home and major hazards identified. Some offer free or low cost remedial help, e.g. small repairs or adaptations.	HIA, CCG, AUK
Falls	Most fatal falls are on stairs/steps amongst people 75yrs +.	HIA, AUK, HIA, AUK
Fires	Fires are largely caused accidentally, with most injuries resulting from smoke inhalation.	LL
Carbon monoxide	Low level CO poisoning symptoms may be mistaken for viral infection e.g. nausea, headaches, chest pain. Faulty gas fires and blocked chimneys are the main cause.	LL, HIA, HAC
Electricity	Risk of injury caused by electric shock or fire, trip hazard from trailing wires where sockets are overloaded.	
INFECTIONS		
Inadequate, old and unhygienic food preparation and washing facilities can add to risk of infections and gastric illness, particularly amongst older people and children.	Improve kitchen and bathroom facilities. Landlords responsible for this in the case of rented homes.	HIA, LA, LL
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION		
Worry about crime, harassment, vandalism.	Install security measures	HIA, LA, HAC, FS, CAB
Worry about living alone and social isolation.	Move home, Befriending services	
Worry about repair costs, debt.	Financial advice	
CANCERS		
Radon gas exposure increases lung cancer risk.	Increase under-floor ventilation	LA, HIA

Housing Link	Possible action	Who can help?
CIRCULATORY ILLNESS		
<p>Cold homes with inadequate insulation and heating can cause cold related medical problems, particularly in older people. Mortality from ischaemic heart disease and cardiovascular disease accounts for about half of all excess cold related deaths.</p>	<p>Improve heating and ventilation</p> <p>Financial advice (to increase income to pay for heating)</p>	<p>HIA, FILT, LL, LA, CAB</p>
DISABILITY		
<p>Mobility problems around the home can increase accident risk and depression.</p>	<p>Home Adaptations</p>	<p>HIA, DLF, SSD</p>
RESPIRATORY ILLNESS		
<p>Damp homes and condensation may promote mould growth and dust mites, causing respiratory problems, especially among young children, older people and allergy sufferers.</p> <p>Restricted ventilation can increase health damage by pollutants, is linked to increase in eye and nasal infections, headaches and tiredness.</p>	<p>Improve heating and ventilation.</p> <p>Deal with cause of damp</p> <p>Reduce moisture level in home</p>	<p>HIA, FILT, LL, CAB, HAC</p>
DEMENTIA		
<p>Many localities are now aiming to develop dementia-friendly communities. There are some simple changes that can be made to people's home that can enable them to live well, and independently, with dementia.</p>	<p>Improve familiarity of home and external environment</p> <p>Good use of natural light and colour contrast</p> <p>Use telecare that aids people with dementia to live independently</p>	<p>AS, HIA, LL, SSD</p>

A-Z of who can help

AUK	Age UK: National information and factsheets Tel 0800 169 6565, www.ageuk.org.uk . Local groups may offer financial advice and practical help (e.g. odd jobs, gardening)
AS	Alzheimer's Society: www.alzheimers.org.uk
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureaux: Local offices provide information and advice on all topics, including welfare benefits and housing. To find your nearest branch ring 08444 111 444. www.citizensadvice.org.uk
DLF	Disabled Living Foundation: For information about equipment see www.dlf.org.uk . At some local centres disabled people can see and try out equipment that helps them to live independently.
FS	FirstStop: Provide information and advice about housing options for older people. 0808 377 7070, www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk
HAC	Housing Advice Centres: Local HACs can give advice about most housing matters but more often deal with landlord and tenant problems, homelessness and re-housing.
HIA	Home Improvement Agencies: These are the main source of housing help for owner occupiers. Often known as Care & Repair or Staying Put, these local services help older and disabled people with home repairs and adaptations. Many run small repair, adaptation, security, safety and falls check schemes. To find your local HIA tel: 0845 864 5210, www.foundations.uk.com
FILT	Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT): FILT is a registered charity that administers funds on behalf of RWE npower Health Through Warmth and the Electrical Safety Council. The funds have helped many of the most vulnerable home improvement agency clients to stay living in their own homes. www.foundations.uk.com/filt-(grants)/
LA	Local Authority: Responsible for repair and adaptation of council owned housing. May have schemes to support private tenants. Environmental health departments often administer grants for home adaptations for disabled people.
LL	Landlords: In the case of tenants, the landlord – whether a private landlord, the local authority or a housing association – is responsible for maintenance of most aspects of properties they rent out and will usually be the first organisation to contact about disrepair.
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Groups: May be the providers, or more often the commissioners, of community rehabilitation or falls prevention services.
RoSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents: Provide information and advice about all aspects of safety www.rospace.co.uk
SSD	Social Services Departments: Social Services Departments (or Adult Social Care) occupational therapists are usually the main route to obtaining help with, advice about and grants for adaptations.



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