

Health and Housing: Practitioners Checklist

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

Some of these health problems can be tackled by referral to a housing service which can help a particular individual. The following chart summarises some of the key health risks, their housing link, possible action and organisations that may be able to help.

There are also more general housing and environmental impacts on health that cannot be addressed on a one to one basis, e.g. high crime, litter, air and noise pollution.

In such cases it would be useful to pass on information about the housing and neighbourhood problems that you are coming across to your managers and policy officers. They can then work with housing providers and others to bring about local environmental improvements.

To assist with such planning '*Health Risks and Health Inequalities in Housing: an Assessment Tool*' is available from the Housing Learning & Improvement Network at www.changeagentteam.org.uk/housing

This information is produced by housing charity, Care & Repair England for the Department of Health's Housing Learning & Improvement Network.



*Housing Learning & Improvement
Network*

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Practitioners Checklist

Health Risk	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, eg. small repairs or adaptations.	(see codes below)
- GENERAL	Burns, scalds, falls and swallowing objects are the main risks for young children.	Safety check with installation of stair gates, cooker guards etc. for children.	PCT RoSPA
-FALLS	Most fatal falls are on stairs/ steps amongst people 75yrs +.	Falls services may make improvements to the home, suggest exercise programmes and check use of medication.	HIA PCT AC
-FIRES	Fires are largely caused accidentally, with most injuries resulting from smoke inhalation.	Fire services and some voluntary organisations give out free smoke alarms to vulnerable households.	HIA AC
-CARBON MONOXIDE	Low level CO poisoning symptoms may be mistaken for viral infection eg. nausea, headaches, chest pain. Faulty gas fires and blocked chimneys are the main cause.	Carbon monoxide detectors can be installed by some safety check schemes. Contact the landlord or fuel utility company for a gas safety check/ to arrange servicing of equipment, cleaning of chimneys and flues.	HIA AC LL
-ELECTRICITY	Risk of injury caused by electric shock or fire, trip hazard from trailing wires where sockets are overloaded.	Fuel utility safety check. Landlord requested to act. Obtain help to organise rewiring.	LL HIA HAC
INFECTIONS	Inadequate, old and un-hygienic 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 incase of rented homes.	HIA LA LL

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION	Worry about crime, harassment, vandalism, Overcrowding Worry about living alone Debt, worry about repair costs	Install security measures Re-housing Move home Financial advice	HIA LA HAC EAC CAB
CANCERS	Radon gas exposure increases lung cancer risk.	Increase underfloor ventilation	LA HIA
CIRCULATORY ILLNESS	Cold homes with inadequate insulation and heating can cause cold related medical problems, particularly in older people. Mortality from ischaemic heart disease and cerebrovascular disease accounts for about half of all excess cold related deaths.	Improve heating and ventilation Financial advice (to increase income to pay for heating)	WF HIA LL LA CAB
DISABILITY	Mobility problems around the home can increase accident risk and depression.	Home Adaptations	HIA DLC SS
RESPIRATORY ILLNESS	Damp homes and condensation may promote mould growth and dust mites, causing respiratory problems, especially among young children, older people and allergy sufferers. Restricted ventilation can increase health damage by pollutants, is linked to increase in eye and nasal infections, headaches and tiredness. Overcrowding is associated with increased risk of disease.	Improve heating and ventilation. Deal with cause of damp Reduce moisture level in home Re-housing	HIA WF LL CAB HAC

Finding out more

Care & Repair England's *Healthy Homes, Healthier Lives* programme aims to raise awareness of the ways in which poor or unsuitable housing can have a negative affect upon people's health and well-being and to encourage referral to housing related services that can improve living conditions. It offers freely downloadable resources including:

- a *Training Kit* for use in a range of practice settings;
- a *Healthy Homes, Healthier Lives* Self-training workbook

Available from www.careandrepair-england.org.uk click on 'Healthy Homes'.

For more information contact Vicki Jellings, at Care & Repair England Tel: 0117 924 9046 (direct) or 0115 950 6500 (head office) Email: Vicki.jellings@freenetname.co.uk

A-Z of who can help

AC Age Concern England

National information and fact sheets Tel 0800 009966 www.ageconcern.org.uk . Local groups may offer financial advice and practical help (eg. odd jobs & gardening)

CAB Citizens Advice Bureaux

Local offices provide information and advice on all topic, including welfare benefits and housing. To find your nearest branch ring 020 7833 2181. www.citizensadvice.org.uk

DLC Disabled Living Centres

At some local centres disabled people can see and try out equipment that helps them to live independently and trained staff can give impartial information and advice. To find nearest centre Tel: 0161 834 1044 www.dlcc.org.uk

EAC Elderly Accommodation Counsel

Provide information and advice about housing options for older people. 020 7820 1343 www.housingcare.org

HAC Housing Advice Centres

Local HACs can give advice about most housing matters but most 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 know 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: 01457 891 909 wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com

LA Local Authority

Responsible for repair and adaptation of council housing. Environmental health dept. administers grants for adaptations and may help owner occupiers with repairs.

LL Landlords

The way that you can help people with their housing problem will usually be different for tenants and owner occupiers. The landlord, often the local authority or a housing association, is responsible for maintenance of most aspects of the properties that they rent out and will usually be the first organisation to contact about disrepair.

PCT Primary Care Trusts

May be the providers, or more often the commissioners, of falls prevention services. Also have wider public health responsibilities.

RoSPA Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

Provide information and advice about all aspects of safety www.rospe.org.uk

SS Social Services

Social Services occupational therapists are usually the main route to obtaining help with, advice about and grants for adaptations.

WF Warm Front

This is a national, government funded grant scheme offering grants for insulation and central heating installation. Tel 0800 072 0150 www.eaga.co.uk