Quantifying the Impact of Poor Housing

Sue Adams
Care & Repair England
Who?

- **Care & Repair England; national housing charity aims to address poor and unsuitable housing conditions amongst the older population, esp. low income home owners (est. 1986)**

- **Pioneers initiatives over 30+yrs; Local Care & Repair services, Minor Works Grants, Handyperson, Housing Options Info & Advice, Healthy Homes, Older People’s “Housing Activism” etc**

- **Policy shaping: Older people’s housing – Chair of Housing & Ageing Alliance plus Home Adaptations Consortium; member of MHCLG & DHSC Integration Partnership Board, NHS England Task Group; LGA Adviser etc...**

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Health & Home

- A decent home - underpins quality of life
- Poor, unsuitable homes - impacts on health and social care and health, as well as affecting individuals’ lives
Recognising housing and ageing realities

The importance of numbers
Data and evidence

- English Housing Survey – THE data source
- BRE Trust - additional analysis
- Key Role in making the case for housing action
- Underpins Care & Repair’s activities
Where older people live

- Around 9.5 million older *households*

96% of older households live in mainstream homes

*HRP 55yrs+

Est. 500,000 in specialist (retirement/sheltered)
Not a minority issue

Older people (55+) live in 43% of all homes (9.5m older households)
Where older people want to live

80%

Want to live in current home for as long as possible
80% of 2050 homes already built
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Figure 1: A typology of English housing

(* The sample size in the EMS data is too small to produce a reliable estimate.)
10 million people are living in non-decent homes across England

4.3 million homes in England are classed as non-decent – a shocking 19% of all homes.

10 million people are living in conditions that may create or worsen health conditions and reducing their quality of life.

2 million of these non-decent homes are lived in by someone over 55.

Nearly 1 in 5 18% of households where someone has a long-term illness or disability live in a non-decent home, and 15% of all wheelchair users live in a non-decent home.

Homes are classed as non-decent for four reasons:
- The presence of a serious hazard (called Category 1) which poses a risk to the health of the occupant(s)
- Not providing a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (not having effective insulation or efficient heating)
- Being in disrepair
- Not having sufficiently modern facilities – e.g. a bathroom more than 30 years old or a kitchen more than 20 years old
Older homeowners are particularly at risk

Poor housing is a particular concern for older home owners with low incomes or fixed pensions because of their ability to pay for repairs.

Tenure types of households headed by someone 55+ living in non-decent homes:

- Owner occupier: 78%
- Social rented: 11%
- Private rented: 11%

Tenure types of households all ages living in non-decent homes:

- Owner occupier: 65%
- Social rented: 24%
- Private rented: 11%

Single person households of all ages are also more likely to live in a non-decent home compared to multi person households (22% vs 17%). The level is particularly high for those who are in the 55-64 yrs age group (26% vs overall average of 17% and for multi person household in the same age group 16%).
Households headed by someone aged 75 or over are disproportionately likely to be living in a non-decent home, with more than 1 in 5 of these households living in a non-decent home. Worryingly, the number of over 75s living in non-decent homes rose from 533,000 in 2012 to 701,000 in 2017.
Healthy and housing
The critical connections
Health impacts: Simplified list

**Causes/exacerbates long term conditions**
- Respiratory
- Rheumatism and Arthritis
- Cardiovascular

**Emotional impacts**
- Stress
- Isolation
- Depression

**Increased risks**
- Falls
- Accidents
- Electrocution
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Hypothermia
- Infection
Health, housing, ageing link

- Main reason homes non-decent
  - **Falls hazards**
    Falls at home = main cause of death & injury amongst older people
  - **Cold homes**
    Exacerbate main long term health conditions
The NHS is paying the price for non-decent homes

Number of Category 1 hazards

Explosions
Excess heat
Lighting
Un-combusted fuel gas
Electrical problems
Overcrowding
Ergonomics
Water supply
Noise
Carbon monoxide
Structural collapse
Pests (Domestic hygiene)
Entry by intruders
Sanitation (Personal hygiene)
Falls - baths
Food safety
Collision and entrapment
Dampness
Lead
Fire
Hot surfaces
Radon
Falls between levels
Falls on the level
Falls on stairs
Excess cold

The cost of poor housing to the NHS is vast, with current estimates putting the figure at £1.4 billion per annum. £513 million is spent on first year treatment costs alone for households headed by someone over 55 living in poor housing.
BRE Trust Data: basis for action

A Perfect Storm
An ageing population, low income home ownership, and decay of older housing

Off the Radar
Housing disrepair & health impact in later life
Off the Radar

Mr Monk, 67, lived alone in home he grew up in (and where he cared for his parents until they died). Low income, no savings.

HEALTH
Breathing problems, crumbling spine, mobility limited. Vulnerable to cold. Hospital stay with a broken vertebrae.

HOME
Contacted WEC&R when part of his kitchen ceiling had collapsed.
Caseworker visited – house very cold & damp. Heating boiler and cooker had been condemned. When gas company came to install a smart meter and cut off the gas supply as said it was dangerous so not even a gas fire to keep warm.
Current homes: Adaptations

- 7% of current homes 'visitable'*
- 72% of the housing stock could be adapted to this level

* level ground floor access, flush threshold, downstairs toilet, widened doorways, turning space
Importance of current homes

RETROFIT

- Greatest health impacts on the largest number
- Opportunity to build evidence of ‘what works’ for occupants and society
- Quantify social gains
- Helps to inform new homes design/standards

NEW HOMES

- Need evidence to help to make the case for improved standards
- Future proofing includes age proofing/ inclusive design
- Good homes for life all part of sustainability
Data, evidence, policy and practice
Shaping policy

- Fire-fighting - preventing prevention?

- Money - Scramble to protect sector specific budgets
Quantifying health impacts

- **2010** – the year that capital funding for Private Sector Housing Renewal was cut

- **BRE Trust 2010 report** was crucial in helping to secure some continued local action
Quantifying health impacts

Savings to the NHS – the only show in town?

Poor housing costs the NHS £1.4billion pa

One of the most influential figures in English housing policy?
Quantifying health impacts
Resulting impacts

- Decent Homes - quantified health impacts of investment in social housing
- Doubled the budget for home adaptations grants (DFG) – now £500m
- Handyperson and home improvement agency services - helped us to make the case for continuation
- Falls prevention - Put housing into policy
On the horizon

- **Health Agenda: NHS Long Term Plan - Prevention & integration emphasis**
- **Prevention: Cross Govt Policy?**
- **Building Standards & Regulations: Changes?**
Thank you for listening

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