

Building bridges between housing and health

Project Background:

There is an extensive and compelling evidence base that housing and health are linked. There are multiple relationships that are bi-directional and impact on both mental and physical health. Housing is also a major determinant of NHS pressures. A cold home can exacerbate chronic illness. It is also a major element of hospital discharge, especially in situations where patient mobility has changed. Yet there is no systematic framework to convert the evidence into practice across Wales.

In recognition of this, this project has set out to build bridges between housing and health with a view to better linkages.

Project Aims/Objectives:

Aims:

The overall aim of the project was to set down a foundation for a long-term housing and health programme across Wales. The aim of such a programme would be to improve health and reduce NHS pressures by converting the evidence into practice.

Objectives:

- Develop a housing and health good practice guide
- Convene an all-Wales Community of Practice
- Test the good practice guide in at least one Health Board
- Raise awareness on the guide and the evidence-base.



Project Approach:



Project Outcome(s):

- Community of Practice brought together different partners, with the potential for future collaboration beyond the project.
- Good practice guide on health and housing delivered in a short and long version. A service user group was involved in the development of this guide.
- The good practice guide has been piloted in one health board.
- Awareness raised on the evidence based and guide.



Project Impact:

Impacts can be defined into 2 parts.

1. Indirect impacts in terms of discussions with other colleagues, including presentations at meetings.
2. Direct impacts are to be realised and given the current cost of living pressures, this project could help ease & mitigate these.

Key Conclusions:

This project has shown that housing and health partners can work collaboratively to develop practice solutions. The key product of the good practice guide is now ready for implementation.

Next Steps:

- The key next step is for ongoing discussions to be held regarding an all-Wales housing and health programmes.
- Alongside this could be a programme of research that evaluates the impact of housing projects on reducing NHS pressures, both currently and in future
- Wales could lead the world in having a fully integrated housing, health and social care programme nationally.
- There are already examples of good practice in Wales albeit these are variable and often based on local sensitivity. More could be done to roll this out.