

Building foundations for health and housing – sharing examples of collaboration

Case study: Aberdeen City Council and NHS Grampian (Theme: Strategic collaboration across health and housing)

Purpose

This is one case study in a suite of case studies (reflecting different themes) that we are publishing to build on the ‘Foundations for Health and Housing’ events. These case studies aim to share examples of practice; support future collaboration between colleagues working in housing and health; and highlight practice that is improving health and tackling health inequalities.

What were the primary reasons for developing this work stream?

- Revision of the five-year local housing strategy (LHS) for Aberdeen City in 2018 and recognition of the contribution of housing to the public’s health and wellbeing.
- Strategic links between housing and public health on the strategic planning group of Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP).

What actions took place and who was involved?

- The lead for public health and wellbeing in ACHSCP and lead strategist for housing in Aberdeen City Council (ACC) agreed to undertake a scoping health inequalities impact assessment (HIA) of the local housing strategy and its draft joint delivery action plan.
- A public health coordinator in ACHSCP and speciality trainee in public health with NHS Grampian facilitated an initial three-hour meeting to scope the potential positive and negative impacts of the LHS and its draft joint delivery action plan on a range of population groups and physical, social and economic determinants of health.
- The scoping HIA was informed by a political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental (PESTLE) analysis undertaken by the housing strategists in ACC and discussed at the start of the meeting.

What factors enabled you to take this work forward?

- Leadership for public health delegated within ACHSCP.
- A connection between public health and housing on the strategic planning group of ACHSCP.

- Leadership for public health and housing from the lead housing strategist in ACC.
- A housing contribution statement in ACHSCP's initial three-year strategic plan.
- Strong working relationship between housing and the ACHSCP.
- Willingness of staff in each organisation to dedicate time to meet and scope potential health impact and comment on draft reports.
- Strong desire of housing and healthcare staff to see an improvement in their clients' health and wellbeing by provision of good-quality and affordable housing.
- Appropriately trained local health improvement staff in ACHSCP to facilitate the workshop.
- Timely availability of speciality trainee in public health to co-facilitate the workshop, review available evidence and contribute to writing the report.

What challenges did you experience when delivering on this work?

- The complexity of consideration for the wider influences of 'place' on health and wellbeing.
- Assessing the impacts of housing on the public's health in isolation of the joint delivery action plan for Aberdeen and community planning.
- Some identified areas for action to improve health were partially or fully outwith the remit of the LHS. For example, multiagency effort is required to prevent and alleviate homelessness, and to ensure adequate access to cooking facilities for all, including those living in temporary accommodation.
- The timing of doing the HIIA in relation to production of the final LHS and its endorsement through the council committee structures.
- Key drivers informing the LHS related to the delegated adult services in the ACHSCP; there needed to be a stronger representation from integrated children's services, criminal justice social work and homelessness services as part of the process.

What was the outcome?

- Reporting of potential positive and negative health impacts on the LHS which informed actions in the joint delivery action plan.
- Proposed opportunities to emphasise positive impacts and mitigate against negative impacts.
- Identification of two priority areas for further collaborative work.
- Strengthened the relationship between public health and housing via the ACHSCP's strategic planning group and operational staff in localities.

How has the outcome contributed to health improvement/reducing health inequalities?

Housing strategists are working on key actions to mitigate the negative impacts that were identified. These will be fed into the annual reporting of the LHS.