

Building foundations for health and housing – sharing examples of collaboration

Case study: NHS Ayrshire & Arran/Energy Agency (Theme: Sharing intelligence/data)

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?

- Scottish Government commitment to tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency of homes in the most deprived areas.
- Investment in energy-efficiency also has potential public health benefits. However, there is limited evidence of the impact of energy-efficiency measures on health and wellbeing.

What actions took place and who was involved?

- Establishment of multi-agency working group with the Energy Agency, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, East Ayrshire Council, and South Ayrshire Council.
- Literature review, feasibility study, theory of change model and full-scale evaluation.
- Focus on combining building performance data with quantitative and qualitative data on the health and wellbeing of residents who have had energy-efficiency improvement work carried out.

What factors enabled you to take this work forward?

- Collaborative working between partners of the steering group.
- Development of tools and resources to inform practical evaluation procedure which captures the impact on health and wellbeing.

What challenges did you experience when delivering on this work?

- Sample size and diversity of sample.
- Obtaining accurate energy consumption data.
- Capturing data on long-term outcomes.

What was the outcome?

- Evidence of the public health contribution of energy-efficiency measures for people living in homes in areas of deprivation.
- Informing further collaboration between NHS Ayrshire & Arran and the Energy Agency to continue to develop the evidence base for the public health contribution of energy-efficiency improvements.
- Developing new partnerships with local universities (University of Strathclyde and University of Glasgow) including the creation of a new PhD project.
- Expansion of the project to a wider geographical area (including Dumfries & Galloway) and the development of a rolling monitoring and evaluation programme rather than a standalone study.

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

- Evidence of proximal outcomes such as improved housing conditions, increased indoor warmth/comfort and reduced fuel bills, which are likely to contribute to longer-term health improvements.
- Evidence of improvements in 'general health' for those who also reported warmth improvements.
- Anecdotal evidence of improvements to underlying health conditions including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma and arthritis.
- Anecdotal improvements to mood and mental wellbeing.
- Evidence of improved appearance of homes and a sense that streets and neighbourhoods had improved a lot.