

# Healthier Homes for Healthier Children – Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

All our Homes: All our Health Webinar  
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11 January 2021



# Background – Healthier Homes for Healthier Children

- New workstream within the Improving Population Health Programme
- Strategy being developed
- Please share with me any work that captures real lived experience in West Yorkshire including volunteers for case study interviews [claire.gilbert7@nhs.net](mailto:claire.gilbert7@nhs.net)
- Awareness raising and training resources key priorities so far
- £1 million being invested by the Partnership to keep people warm – pledge that no one living across West Yorkshire should suffer due to fuel poverty

# Session overview

- Why is housing important to child health
- How do housing conditions affect child health
  - unhealthy homes
  - unsuitable homes
  - unstable homes
- How might I talk to someone about their housing?
- What support is available?
- What is the 'duty to refer' and who does it apply to?

# Why is housing important to child health?

- Survey responses of 266 Paediatricians in 2017
- >2/3 said homelessness or poor housing contribute to ill health of the children they work with<sup>1</sup>

*Do you believe that homelessness and poor housing contributes to some extent to ill-health among the children you treat?*



## References:

1. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2017) '[Views from the frontline](#)'

[www.wypartnership.co.uk](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk)

[@WYPartnership](https://twitter.com/WYPartnership)

# Why is housing important to child health?

- Poverty affects 30% of children and COVID-19 has widened inequalities for many children<sup>2</sup>.
- Pre-COVID estimates suggest poor housing affects around 3.6 million children<sup>3</sup>
- Poor housing could be costing the NHS £1.4 billion a year<sup>4</sup>
- Poor home conditions are the 9<sup>th</sup> most frequent modifiable factor affecting child deaths<sup>5</sup>.

## References:

2. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. (2020). [State of Child Health in the UK](#).

3. National Children's Bureau. (2016). [Housing and the Health of Young Children](#).

4. Building Research Establishment (2021) [The Cost of Poor Housing in England](#)

5. National Child Mortality Database (2021). [Second Annual Report](#).

# How does housing affect health?

There are risks to an individual's physical and mental health associated with living in<sup>6</sup>:

- an unhealthy home
- an unsuitable home
- an unstable home

## Reference:

6. Public Health England (2017). [Improving health through the home](#)

# Unhealthy homes

Housing that is cold, damp or hazardous<sup>6</sup>



**Unhealthy homes  
increase the risk of**

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- respiratory illness
- poor infant weight gain
- poor diet
- emotional and mental health problems
- physical injury and poisoning
- domestic fires

*‘Damp, mould and overcrowding cause flaring of respiratory conditions like asthma and bronchiolitis’*

*‘2 year old with recurrent seizures (50 in 4 months) living in a house with no heating’*

*‘A top floor flat with a single mother, who was unwell, with poor safety of windows and an active toddler’<sup>1</sup>*

# Unsuitable homes

A home that doesn't meet the household's needs due to risks such as being overcrowded or inaccessible to a disabled or older person<sup>6</sup>



## Overcrowded homes increase the risk of

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- behavioural and mental health problems
- meningitis
- respiratory illness
- tuberculosis
- physical injury
- tobacco harm

*'[I have seen] young babies who do not have a separate cot because there is no space'*

*'Overcrowding makes looking after children with learning difficulties or autism next to impossible'<sup>1</sup>*



# Unstable homes

A home that does not provide a sense of safety and security including precarious living circumstances and/or homelessness<sup>6</sup>



## Precarious housing increases the risk of

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- emotional, behavioural and mental health problems
- low birth weight
- missing immunisations

*'Child with chest illness living in a damp caravan'*

*'[I have looked after] a homeless [child with] sickle cell disease getting admitted in crisis frequently'*

*'Single mother evicted from rented property given accommodation in a Travelodge in another town. The child had multiple allergies. Could not afford decent meals.'*<sup>1</sup>

# What is 'making every contact count'?

- Making Every Contact Count is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day to day interactions that organisations and people have with other people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.<sup>7</sup>
- Focus on stopping smoking, drinking alcohol only within recommended limits, healthy eating, physical activity, healthy weight, and improving mental health and wellbeing
- MECC enables the opportunistic delivery of consistent and concise healthy lifestyle information

*Reference:*

7. Health Education England (2022). [Making every contact count](#).

# What support is available?

- [Mecclink website](#) has contact details for each local authority housing service, duty to refer contact details and affordable warmth resources

## MECC Link - Simple Signposting to Better Health and Wellbeing

[Home](#) » Yorkshire & Humber

Location view

Wellbeing view

[Affordable Warmth](#)

[Alcohol](#)

[Covid-19 Support](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccinations](#)

[Memory Problems/Dementia/Carers](#)

[Falls and Frailty](#)

[Financial Inclusion](#)

[Fire Safety and Prevention \(Safe and Well\)](#)

[Healthy Diet and Healthy Weight](#)

[Housing and Homelessness](#)

# ASK – ASSIST – ACT

# Ask

‘do you think there is anything about your home environment that might be affecting your child’s health?’

‘sometimes a child’s health can be affected by their home environment such as cold or damp, is this something affecting you?’

‘since the pandemic many families are finding it more difficult to pay their fuel bills and keep their homes warm, is this something you are finding?’

# Assist

- ‘did you know you may be able to save money on your energy bills by changing your electricity and gas supplier or get some help to make your home more energy efficient, would you like some more information on this?’
- ‘did you know there’s lots of advice on how to keep your toddler safe at home, can I give you a leaflet on this?’
- I’m worried about your housing conditions / risk of homelessness, would you consent to me sharing your details with the housing team at the council?

# Act – what support is available?

- Contact details and leaflets for support services on the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership website for [children living in cold homes](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#), a network of independent charities offering free and confidential advice about the [Grants and benefits to help pay energy bills](#).
- This includes details of the [Warm Home Discount Scheme](#).

## 6 tips for keeping warm

Aim to keep your home at 18 to 21°C (that's 65 to 70°F)

1

Keep bedroom windows closed on cold nights

2

Layer clothing and wear gloves and scarves when outside

3

Keep as active as you can

4

Contact one of the support services listed in this leaflet to find out if you are eligible for financial support to pay your heating bills or to make home improvements to keep your home warm

5

6

Have your heating and cooking appliances checked by a Gas Safe Registered engineer to check they are operating safely



# Act – what support is available?



0113 238 0601

[greendoctorleeds@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:greendoctorleeds@groundwork.org.uk)



[Groundwork](#), a group of charities that focuses on poverty and the environment.

Its Green Doctor telephone support service helps many people save money on their energy costs such as:

- Making the most of their income and debt advice
- Cost comparison and switching fuel providers
- Emergency broken heating, hot water or gas appliances
- Priority Services Register sign up for vulnerable people
- Energy efficiency advice



# Act - What support is available?

## Better Homes Yorkshire

A programme for residents in participating councils (Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale, Wakefield, York, Craven, Harrogate and Selby) to pay less for their energy and live in healthier, warmer homes. The programme has improved 3000 homes in the first three years alone.

You can find out more by calling: 0800 597 1500 or by going onto the [Better Homes Yorkshire website](#).



Both customers and non-customers of British Gas living in England can apply for an energy grant. You can find more information on the [British Gas Energy Trust website](#), including details about the [energy grant scheme](#), or call 0121 348 7797

# Advice on protecting children from accidents in the home

- The [Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents](#) produces a range of resources to help prevent accidents in the home, such as [strangulation including blind cords](#), [falls](#), [fires](#), [poisoning](#), [suffocating and choking](#), [drowning](#), and [scalds and burns](#).

# Duty to refer

- The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas, and to provide homelessness services to all those who are eligible.
- Additionally, the Act introduced a **duty on specified public authorities to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to local authority homelessness/housing options teams.**

# Public authorities with a duty to refer

- prisons
- young offender institutions
- secure training centres
- secure colleges
- youth offending teams
- probation services (including community rehabilitation companies)
- Jobcentres in England
- social service authorities (both adult and children's)
- **emergency departments**
- **urgent treatment centres**
- **hospitals in their function of providing inpatient care**
- Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the regular armed forces

# Further training

Video training resource in development

[E-learning for health](#) modules:

- ‘Helping People Living in Cold Homes’
- ‘Duty to refer for frontline NHS staff’
- ‘What is MECC and why is it important’

Groundwork offers half day training for frontline workers

# Session recap

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