

# Healthier Homes for Healthier Children – Signposting families and carers to Affordable Warmth and Housing Services in West Yorkshire

Dr. Claire Gilbert  
claire.gilbert7@nhs.net

16 February 2022



# Housekeeping

- Thanks to Mo Sadiq, Workforce Development Officer, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
- Session will be recorded
- Video and slides shared on [www.yhphnetwork.co.uk](http://www.yhphnetwork.co.uk)
- Clickable hyperlinks to resources
- Please turn your cameras off if not presenting
- Keep microphones on mute
- Menti survey <https://www.menti.com/58yuknu59s>  
[www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com/57430615) 5743 0615

# Menti survey

- Have you ever had conversations about housing conditions and/or affordable warmth services with families or carers of children?
- How do you feel about having or the idea of having these conversations (in one word)?
- What questions or phrases have you found useful when having these conversations?
- Why should healthcare professionals have conversations with families or carers about housing or affordable warmth services?
- What are the barriers to having these conversations?
- What is your role?

# Background – Healthier Homes for Healthier Children

- New workstream within the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership
- £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
- Development of a policy between healthcare and housing services to ensure children and young people with asthma do not live in conditions that might exacerbate their symptoms



# Aim

To support healthcare staff working with children and young people whose health is being affected by cold homes or poor housing conditions such as damp to know what is available and how to access support services

## Affordable warmth

Many families in West Yorkshire are spending a disproportionate amount of their income on energy bills



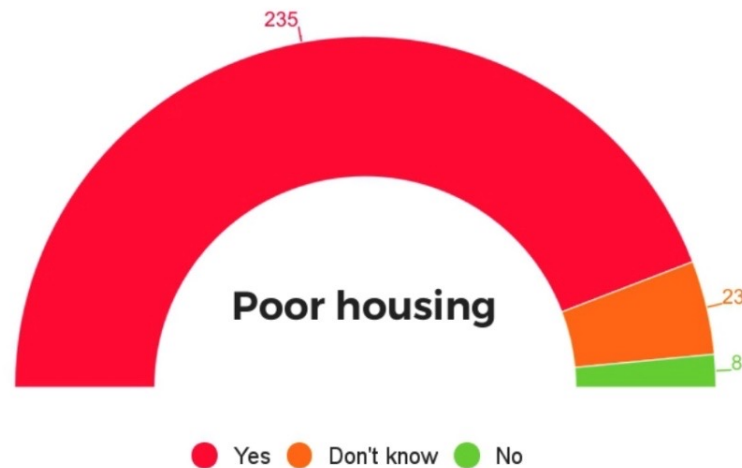
# Learning outcomes

- Discuss why housing is important to child health
- Understand how housing conditions affect child health
  - unhealthy homes
  - unsuitable homes
  - unstable homes
- Discuss what support is available
- Describe the 'duty to refer' and who it applies to
- Explore how to talk to someone about their housing

# Why should we have conversations about this?

- 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

---

- 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

---

- 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**

---

- 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 does climate change have to do with this?

- Domestic use of fossil fuels contributes 21% of England's carbon emissions, our homes produce more than our cars<sup>7</sup>
- Energy inefficient homes use more fuel and cost more to heat
- Widen inequalities

## *References*

- 7. [\*Decarbonisation: a guide for housing associations\*](#)

# What support is available? – local authority services

- [Gov UK postcode checker](#) to find which local authority for that patient
- [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

<a href="#">Affordable Warmth</a>
<a href="#">Alcohol</a>
<a href="#">Covid-19 Support</a>
<a href="#">COVID-19 Vaccinations</a>
<a href="#">Memory Problems/Dementia/Carers</a>
<a href="#">Falls and Frailty</a>
<a href="#">Financial Inclusion</a>
<a href="#">Fire Safety and Prevention (Safe and Well)</a>
<a href="#">Healthy Diet and Healthy Weight</a>
<a href="#">Housing and Homelessness</a>

# 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

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

2 Keep bedroom windows closed on cold nights



3 Layer clothing and wear gloves and scarves when outside



4 Keep as active as you can



5 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

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





# 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



# 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 Prevention 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

# 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>8</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:*

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

# ASK – ASSIST – ACT

# Ask-Assist-Act

Example for someone you have not met before:

‘Hello, I’m xx one of the social prescribers at your GP surgery. I’ve been asked to give you a ring about some of the free services that might be relevant to your child’s medical condition, would it be ok if I explain them to you?’

Sometimes a child’s health can be affected by cold or damp at home and there are a range of services that might be able to help, is this something that that would be of interest to you?

For example, 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?’

# Ask-Assist-Act

Example for raising the conversation incidentally during the consultation on a home visit / video consultation:

Conversation starter (ask):

‘Many families are finding it more difficult to pay their fuel bills and keep their homes warm and I noticed you’re wearing a coat indoors, is this something you are finding?’

‘Many families are finding it increasingly difficult to keep their homes warm and dry I noticed an area of damp on that wall/it feels cold in here’

(Assist/Act):

‘Would you be interested in some of the support services that can help reduce the cost of bills and advice on how to keep your home warm?’



# Ask-Assist-Act

Example for raising the conversation incidentally during the consultation on the phone/in clinic:

Conversation starter (ask):

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

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

(Assist/Act):

‘Would you be interested in some of the support services that can help reduce the cost of bills and advice on how to keep your home warm?’

# Ask-Assist-Act

Other useful phrases:

- 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?
- '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?'

# Top tips:

Introduce yourself – name, role, who you work for

Explain why you are calling

Raise the topic in a sensitive way, use ‘affordable warmth’ rather than ‘fuel poverty’

Use open questions

Avoid individual blame

Get consent if sharing details across organisations

Consider discussing with safeguarding lead if concerns

# 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 fuel poverty awareness course 17<sup>th</sup> March  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/254443335867>

# Learning outcomes

- Discuss why housing is important to child health
- Understand how housing conditions affect child health
  - unhealthy homes
  - unsuitable homes
  - unstable homes
- Discuss what support is available
- Describe the 'duty to refer' and who it applies to
- Explore how to talk to someone about their housing

# Questions?

- Thanks for attending
- Please complete the menti survey if not already done so
- Evaluation survey
- [Clare's story, Groundwork](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvWLMZ4ZFak)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvWLMZ4ZFak>