



To: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)

Date: 5th April 2017

From: Liz Gaulton, Acting Director of Public Health

Subject: The Health Impact of Living Conditions

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this briefing note is to highlight how housing can impact on the health and wellbeing of Coventry residents, provide information on work undertaken to improve housing conditions to date and to suggest further areas of work to improve the quality of housing and therefore improve the health and wellbeing of Coventry residents.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board 5 is recommended to:

- 1) Endorse progress made to date on improving health outcomes through housing.
- 2) Agree that a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be set up to consider areas of work to improve the quality of housing and the health and wellbeing of Coventry residents.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The right home environment is essential to health and wellbeing, throughout life. Key features of a healthy home include:

- 1) Warm and affordable heat
- 2) Free from hazards, safe from harm
- 3) Enables movement around the home and is accessible
- 4) Promotes a sense of security and stability
- 5) Support available if needed
- 6) Healthy neighbourhood community

- 3.2 Disrepair and cold homes can cause immediate health issues to residents (such as respiratory conditions, hypothermia, risk of falls and death) and also negatively affect children's educational attainment, emotional wellbeing and resilience and put adolescents at five times more risk of suffering from multiple mental health problems.

- 3.3 17% of homes in England are socially rented and these are often the healthiest and most accessible type of homes.

- 3.4 19% of homes in England are privately rented. This type of tenure is expected to continue to grow and can have the highest prevalence of unhealthy homes.

4 Current Work to improve housing in Coventry

- 4.1 Public Health are contributing to the Selective Licensing proposal and are exploring the possibility for Housing Enforcement Officers to identify tenants who may benefit from a Safe and Well visit (a scheme run by West Midlands Fire Service that allows trained officers to promote and signpost citizens to services that can help improve their health, including consideration of the wider determinants of health).

- 4.2 Whitefriars has an extensive programme to improve energy efficiency of homes with external insulation and improvements to tower blocks. Since 2012, Whitefriars have improved 5,000 homes with external wall insulation and will be insulating a further 489 in 17/18. Whitefriars have also provided new heating systems to 4,500 homes since 2013 and continue to invest in their Coventry stock. In addition to this, Whitefriars provides energy advice to customers and is running fuel switching and Smart meter campaigns to further reduce resident energy costs. All of this work contributes towards tenants keeping their homes heated to a suitable temperature, therefore avoiding the health issues described in section 3.2

Whitefriars also undertakes home checks and employs a range of measures to support vulnerable customers in the home. This can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the individual.

- 4.3 Midland Heart provides care and support services for tenants that need support at different times of their life. The support they provide includes help with finances, personal care and daily living tasks (although the type of support does vary dependent on the tenancy that the individual has). By providing this support, Midland Heart can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the individual.

- 4.4 Orbit provide a Care & Repair service to people aged 60 and over and to those who have a disability (whether they are homeowners or rent). This service offers home repairs and adaptations, advice and information on paying for building work, home safety advice and information, support with hospital discharge, support with housing options, support for individuals who hoard and support with assisted technology. This early intervention to these vulnerable individuals can help to maximise their independence as well as their health and wellbeing. Orbit have also improved 294 homes with external wall insulation, allowing tenants to keep their homes heated to a suitable temperature, therefore avoiding the health issues described in section 2.2.

- 4.5 Public Health work with the Affordable Warmth team, who give advice and information to residents on how to stay warm and well, and save money on energy bills. Public Health commission groundwork to deliver the Keeping Coventry Warm community engagement programme to target vulnerable groups and signpost to advice and support. Public Health

are undertaking an Affordable Warmth on Prescription pilot working through the GP practices and writing to patients registered with COPD (a chronic health condition that can be exacerbated by living in a cold home). Eligible participants will be assessed for a range of heating and insulation measures, including new boilers and this will be fully evaluated to assess the impacts and potential health and social care savings realised by moving people out of fuel poverty.

- 4.6 There is a Memorandum of Understanding to support joint action on improving health through the home from 2014 which sets out the shared commitment to joint action across government, health, social care and Housing sectors in England. The MoU recognises that the home environment is crucial to creating a good quality and healthy life. This provides local authorities and other organisations with an additional lever to work collaboratively to produce a plan to improve health through the home.
- 4.7 Coventry City Council works with organisations to empower communities to become and stay connected, using and growing the strengths and assets in the communities. Examples of this work include developing sustainable, modern and comprehensive libraries as community hubs. By building a healthy, well connected community, residents are less likely to become socially isolated and they will therefore avoid the associated negative impacts on both physical and mental health.
- 4.8 Coventry City Council is a member of the West Midlands Housing Officer Group, which aims to achieve a long term preventative strategy for health through strategic housing. It covers cross boundary strategic housing issues and has allowed targeted work programmes to be carried out which, amongst other results, has led to improving existing housing stock (which can improve the health and wellbeing of the residents).
- 4.9 Coventry City Council is also a member of the West Midlands Best Use of Stock Group (WMBUS), which is a partnership of West Midland Local Authorities, West Midlands Local Housing Authorities and Housing Associations. The WMBUS partnership works together to explore innovative ways of making best use of stock to maximise the opportunity for people to move when they need to. The work carried out by WMBUS contributes towards the aim of everyone having a home that maximises their health and wellbeing.

5 Future Work

- 5.1 To build on the actions above and further improve the health and wellbeing of local residents via living conditions, it is proposed that:
 - 1) A Scrutiny Task and Finish Group is established to:
 - Identify and map work programmes already being carried out by housing associations in Coventry
 - Identify and map current work programmes already being carried out for tenants of privately rented properties in Coventry
 - Identify future areas for improvement and actions for housing associations and other partners.

2) Public Health undertake activities to improve housing conditions, health and wellbeing, including:

- Sharing information and best practice with the Coventry City Council representatives for WMBUS and the West Midlands Housing Officer Group.
- Work with the commissioning department to identify funded schemes underway and investigate what health outcomes these schemes are meeting, and what further outcomes could be included
- Continue to contribute to the Selective Licensing proposal to ensure that access to the relevant privately renting households is maximised

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