



Draft Local Housing Strategy Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC)

October 2013

Introduction

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process which supports organisations to assess the potential consequences of their decisions on people's health and well-being. The Welsh Government (WG) is committed to developing its use as a key part of its strategy to improve health and reduce inequalities.

Health impact assessment provides a systematic yet flexible and practical framework that can be used to consider the wider effects of local and national policies or initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health. It works best when it involves people and organisations who can contribute different kinds of relevant knowledge and insight. The information is then used to build in measures to maximise opportunities for health and to minimise any risks and it can also identify any 'gaps' that can then be filled. HIA can also provide a way of addressing the inequalities in health that continue to persist in Wales by identifying any groups within the population who may be particularly affected by a policy or plan.

The Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) was established to support the development of HIA in Wales and is funded by Welsh Government via Cardiff University and Public Health Wales (PHW). Its remit is to support, train, facilitate and build capacity in HIA and raise awareness of how the process can support and contribute to improving health and wellbeing.

Background

Local Housing Strategy (LHS)

The primary purpose of the LHS is to set out an agreed direction and vision for addressing housing needs and issues in Conwy over the next five years. Although Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) transferred its social housing stock to Cartrefi Conwy in 2008 the responsibility still remains with the authority to ensure there is sufficient local strategic thinking and planning for housing in Conwy. We are required to continually assess the housing needs within the County, and develop strategic plans to respond to these needs.

Since the production of Conwy's last LHS in 2008 there have been exceptional changes within the economic climate, which has led to significant financial pressures and challenges for housing. The economic downturn has drastically affected the availability of mortgage finance for home ownership; this has been particularly difficult for first time buyers and prevented many households from

purchasing their own home. The LHS will cover a five year period from 2013 until 2018. During this time the strategy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, this will ensure that the strategy is flexible and adaptable to respond to changing circumstances over this five year period.

An important aspect of the LHS development process is working in partnership. By working closely with our partners and stakeholders we have been able to write a strategy with outcomes which are ambitious but realistic for the current climate. As a local authority we know we cannot work in isolation to deliver these outcomes, we must work in partnership with RSL's, third sector agencies and other stakeholders to make change happen. Working in partnership to develop and implement the LHS adds strength to our ability to deliver during uncertain times by allowing us to bring our resources together and make them stretch further. It is also important for our partners to have ownership over the LHS if we are going to be successful implementing it.

A successful LHS which meets housing needs and aspirations can only be delivered through a meaningful consultation and engagement process. Conwy's LHS has been written following consultation with local residents, community groups, stakeholders, and service users. The initial consultation process ran from April until August 2012, and focussed on what the outcomes, priorities and actions should be in the LHS. A further consultation process was carried out once we had written the strategy to ensure we had captured the views and needs of stakeholders during the initial consultation stage.

Stakeholders were encouraged to participate in the consultation process using a variety of methods including: consultation events, one to one interviews and online questionnaires. To be able to drill down and understand the housing issues facing different groups, specific focus groups and questionnaires were also carried out with landlords, people with disabilities and visual impairments, young people, transgender and black minority ethnic groups. The consultation process identified a clear set of housing issues and actions to be addressed through the LHS.

In addition the LHS has been developed to follow the principles of the Conwy Corporate Plan and One Conwy documents. This approach will ensure that housing services are working positively towards achieving the outcomes in these two overarching documents. Each of the eight high level strategic outcomes have been linked to the LHS consultation priorities identified by our stakeholders. Not all of housing services activities can address these high level outcomes, but our priorities and actions outline where our work can contribute to achieving them. For this reason some of the outcomes will carry more actions than others as housing services will play a larger part in delivering these outcomes for the authority.

The Conwy Local Housing Strategy can be read in full at:
<http://www.conwy.gov.uk/doc.asp?cat=8349&doc=27493&Language=1> .

Community Profile

Conwy is centrally located within North Wales and has a population of 115,350.

In terms of age profile, 20% of the population is under the age of 18 years, compared with 21.0% in Wales as a whole. Conwy has a high proportion of elderly people in its population, 4.6% are aged 65 years and over (aged 45-64 - 28.1% of

the population), a steady population increase is expected in coming years, with highest growth in older age groups. The increase in the number of older people is likely to cause a rise in chronic conditions such as circulatory and respiratory diseases and cancers. This information highlights important demands for health, social care and housing and other support services for children and older people, it also illustrates important areas where prevention and early intervention action can be targeted for both children and older people.

The general fertility rate (GFR) is defined as the total number of live births born to females who are of childbearing age in a population, i.e. those aged between 15 and 44 years. This rate provides a useful indicator when studying population growth and change, within Conwy the GFR is 62%; it decreased until 2002, but has since shown a relative increase and is comparable to the Wales rate over this period.

The Conwy Communities First cluster targets those in greatest need and covers specific areas in Llandudno, Colwyn Bay, Old Colwyn, Llysfaen, Pensarn and Kinmel Bay and focusses on improving prosperity, learning and health in the most disadvantaged communities. Areas of Llandudno are a regeneration priority for Conwy County Borough Council and Colwyn Bay has received significant investment under the Bay Life+ initiative and is a part of the North Wales Coast Strategic Regeneration Area. Within the Conwy Valley, Llanrwst is a key market town and service centre supporting the sustainability of rural communities. (1, 2, 3)

The Health Impact Assessment

The health impact assessment built on a variety of evidence that had already been collated by the Housing Department and aimed to inform the draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS) within CCBC and contribute to its development. There had been extensive consultation with a number of local organisations and individuals over several months. The Housing Department approached PHW and WHIASU to support them to undertake a HIA so that any health and wellbeing impacts or unintended effects could be identified and also consider any inequality implications. An Equality Impact Assessment had also been carried out in August 2013 on the LHS.

The HIA was led by Liz Green, Principal HIA Development Officer from the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) and Siwan Jones (SJ), Principal Public Health Officer from the North Wales regional public health team and was qualitative in nature. It followed the systematic methodology described in the new 2012 Welsh HIA guidance of 'Health Impact Assessment: A Practical Guide' (4). It supports work and training that WHIASU has recently been undertaking across Wales to develop HIA and a consideration of health, wellbeing and inequalities with local authority Housing and Regeneration Departments, Housing Associations and national related organisations.

Evidence

In putting together the draft Local Housing Strategy and associated Plans and projects, the local authority had consulted extensively with many partner organisations and members of the public. It used the available evidence base to inform the Strategy which ties in with a number of national and local policies and strategies (5, 6, 7). This evidence included community information and statistics from local authority and census data (8,9,10), and supporting research that indicates that the quality of housing and internal and external environments that

people live in can have a detrimental or beneficial impact on their health and wellbeing (11,12,13,14,15, 16). There are a number of well conducted guidance documents and reviews, including systematic reviews, which have taken place in the field of housing and health many of them published since 2009. In 2011, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published a guidance document relating to the environmental burden of disease associated with inadequate housing (17) and WHIASU itself has recently produced a guide on Housing and HIA (18).

The HIA Development Officer searched for previous Housing Strategies that had been subject to an HIA via HIA networks (19, 20, 21) and identified only 7 in total since 2003 - with most of these having been completed in the last 6 years. A recent study was also identified that evaluated the effect on health that a Housing Strategy and its associated Local Homes Standard work had had on the local population in Carmarthen (22).

Rapid HIA workshop

This took place on October 15th 2013. A number of key stakeholders were invited to participate and contribute to the discussion. Those who attended the morning included a number of local authority officers from the Housing and Planning Departments, elected members for the area and the Head of Neighbourhood Services from Cartrefi Conwy Housing Association. The local public health team was represented by Public Health Wales. Other stakeholders were invited but unfortunately they could not attend. The agenda was as follows:

Outcome 3 - People in Conwy live in safe and appropriate housing

**Conwy County Borough Council
Local Housing Strategy
2013 - 2018
*'Building more than just houses'***

***Tuesday, 15th October 2013
9.15am - 12.30pm***

- 9:15 Registration (Tea/ Coffee available)
- 9:30 Introductions
- 9:40 An outline of the Local Housing strategy & development of outcome three
- 9:50 Outline of Health Impact Assessment and the morning
- 10:00 Introduction to Appraisal Tool
- 10:05 Screening session - using appraisal tool to identify key health impacts of Outcome 3
- 11:00 Tea/ Coffee break

- 11:15 Screening session - continued
- 11.45 Feedback or recommendations
- 12:30 Finish and Evaluation

As statistical evidence and other robust research on the health impacts of housing had been considered already, the aim of this workshop was primarily to gather professional and community knowledge and evidence about the potential impacts of the draft Local Housing Strategy within the local context and it will be synthesised with other comments from the consultation.

The HIA facilitated some interesting conversations about the LHS's impact and identified some cross cutting themes such as the need for discussions with other local authority departments to act on.

At the outset, the group identified the main vulnerable groups who would be affected by the LHS using Appendix 2 of the Welsh guidance. A lively discussion followed and a wide ranging number of groups were highlighted as being directly affected by the Local Housing Strategy and Plans. These were (in no particular order):

Vulnerable Groups Affected

- Carers
- Children and young people (care leavers 16-25)
- Older people (+65)
- Families
- Low income
- Economically inactive
- Military and armed forces personnel
- Seasonal workers
- Those with ill health - Chronic conditions
- Homeless
- Mental Health issues and physical disabilities
- Ex offenders and those through the youth justice system
- Gypsy and travellers
- Those with substance and misuse issues
- Those in rural and inaccessible areas
- Communities with limited Welsh language skills
- Private developers and business people

After agreement on the above, the group then worked systematically through the wider or social determinants of health in turn and assessed the health and wellbeing impacts (as listed in Appendix 1 of the Welsh guidance) of the LHS. Positive or negative impacts were identified as were any gaps or unintended consequences. Suggestions were made for mitigation and documented. All of this is summarised in the table below.

The text highlighted in red within the body of the table documents specific comments and suggestions for further action and consideration put forward by the participants throughout the appraisal session. These should be noted along with the final recommendations which are listed at the end of the report.

Appraisal

Lifestyles	
+ve	-ve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will get homeless into temporary accommodation - access to cooking facilities for hot meals • Working with Conwy Food Share to access local food • Links to Older Persons Strategy/ Active for Life programme/Healthy Lifestyles • Improved regulation - higher standard of food making facilities • Improved conditions in housing through the LHS and better rural housing - benefit to physical and mental health • Improved housing - improved education and cooking facilities at home • Signposting to other agencies such as the youth service and community dieticians - life skills, cooking, shopping projects • Pilot ongoing to notify homelessness services if they see people rough sleeping (Supporting People programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B&B dwellers - no access to 2 other meals in a day • Issues around individuals going to food bank location (where are they located?) • Affordability of housing - heat or eat and fuel poverty - and the type of food consumed - Already trying to address this - fuel efficiency programme etc • Engagement with services is an issue - some individuals won't access help • Some individuals would rather live 'on the street' rather than use housing services • Limited access to sexual health services if not in accommodation • Link to Education to make positive food choices/ in schools to prepare individuals for living.
Community and Social Influences	
+ve	-ve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness & Accommodation Team - trying to prevent homelessness and keep together family • Older Peoples Strategy - address Welsh Language skills issue of isolation - liaise with private and social housing. • Welsh Language part of LDP, Welsh language assistance and developers expected to provide mitigation over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divisions /issues in rural areas because people don't have the welsh language skills to deliver housing support • If someone becomes homeless they may be offered accommodation not in area (or not want to move back) Impact on schools /social interaction. • Legislation curtails how flexible we can be with Social Housing

<p>10 houses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peulwys’ refurbishment and environmental improvement - improve fabric of area and local pride. • Signposting to other services and access info - Family Team in Conwy can help those in poverty - access to grants • A lot of tenant organisations get involved and participation • LHS - more focus on engaging with ‘tenants and reps’ 	<p>placement.</p>
<p>Environment</p>	
<p>+ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty Homes Officer - actively encourages these properties to come back in to use and identifies these for use. • Outcome 2 - work with prevention on ‘Slips, trips and falls’ • Use Section 106 to remove road and other hazards and eg If Aldi paid for dropped curbs, use future 106s to deal with other hazards • Social Landlords good at dealing with Anti Social behaviour • Gypsy and Travellers - carried out needs assessment to consider locations and housing needs • Reinforced Sea Defences to protect properties from flooding • Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) - all Cartrefi Cymru housing stock has this • Environmental improvements to areas and not just housing stock • Private sector has to have a higher standard • New builds through Housing Association tend to be of better quality than private developers • Adapted Properties Strategy - Social housing stock that has been adapted - try to match this to a tenant saving (£1/2M) for HA ‘because it would rip it out for new family/tenant’ • A number of houses on an adapted register - already 60 - keep this updated 	<p>-ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An empty home next door can impact on physical health - damp from no heating etc • Need to work with private landlord on this - will be addressed by HMO Additional Licensing scheme • Conversation with NWA teams/agencies to support people & housing department - (looking at community transfers with Cartrefi - Possibly CCBC) • Private rents up and affects affordability • Hazard safety rating - leads to 2 tiers of quality of housing • Housing Department limited in terms of resources • Adaptations take place in the private sector and so not known to Housing Department • Cartrefi Cymru open day - need to think about how to get people to them and also get CC to make link to falls prevention team and other services • Number of older people living in houses that they own and cannot continue to maintain etc - How many are on the radar? (Older Peoples Service - Liaise with this) • Issue of who to go to? - links to NHS locality - talk to them.

Economic	
<p>+ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and signposting to finance/grants for housing. Poverty a 'cross cutting theme'. Poverty Forum work can be linked into LHS work. • Housing Solutions project - provides advice and guidance - signposting • Home Buy Scheme - helps to support people to get on property ladder • Empty homes - Grants available to improve housing • Social Housing Grant available • Financial Inclusion Group - Set up to look at this issue • Library Service aware of needs and provide access to IT - for homes in rural areas that don't have access • Free training for front line workers to raise awareness of financial inclusion - good links with Credit Union. 	<p>-ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of employment of head of household etc. Part time working - lack of appropriate opportunities can limit financial ability to choose better quality housing • LA mortgage scheme (check status) • CCBC subsidised 12/13 tenants to get on the housing ladder • Lack of broadband connection in rural areas - effects business, community etc and desirability of housing stock in these areas.
Access to services	
<p>+ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHQS's - provides opportunities for apprentices, training opportunities - try to maximise this • Local procurement arrangements - maximise training opportunities when housing is built. • Empower community to take up opportunities 	<p>-ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Grants decreased- thereby limiting access to services • Difficulty to access housing and other services in very rural areas.
Macro	
<p>+ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing through use of existing CCBC estates/land • WG tenancy agreements replaced for private rented sector • Landlord Registration Scheme • Agencies working together to mitigate impact of welfare reform and improve engagement with tenants • Consultations - changing more tax on 	<p>-ve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less funding for 'Supportive People' programme • Large amounts of county can't build on due to flooding risk

<p>empty homes/2nd homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to LDP - Allocated sites for housing and employment • 2nd Stage application for WG Regeneration funding (Vibrant and Viable Places) currently ongoing • WG - launched Independent Living Framework (housing a priority) • Energy efficiency - legislation 	
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Suggested Recommendations

Many potential positive impacts were identified. Several negative or unintended impacts were identified along with some gaps in the Strategy. Potentially problematic issues were also raised, further addressed and recommendations discussed.

Some of the issues are cross cutting themes for the local authority and it was suggested that the Housing Department needs to further facilitate linkages with other departments and Boards in CBCC (such as Planning; LHB and internal Boards) to discuss issues which can negatively affect the delivery of the LHS in Conwy or potentially maximise it further.

1. Cross cutting issues: Rural - Broadband connections to homes and services can be discussed with/referred to the 'Building Resilience and Anti-Poverty' Board. Economic - Issues about employment can be referred to the 'Building Ambition' Board.
2. Exploring if Housing Department can get food delivered to food banks. Pilot ongoing
3. Sexual Health - may be a GMU service to access in Llandudno for homeless (SJ to liaise)
4. Socials Areas Letting Agency - could widen choice of housing available. Allocation policy to address this. Recognise need for a Local Development Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance document for this. Further discussion to take place with Planning Department and make links to Allocation Policy
5. Need to have a conversation about addressing social isolation in communities. Further work to investigate the scope of older people in own homes who need help
6. Issue of injury prevention - SJ to look at this.
7. Continue to look at developing a Social Lettings Agency to improve availability and quality of accommodation by 1st April 2014
8. Issue of availability of green space within housing developments or if land that is used for informal physical activity is built on - Planning Department issues? - Have a discussion with Planning Department
9. Transport Grant - look to provide outreach schemes. Raise issue of potential impact of transport on housing with ERF/Transport
10. Conversation with LHB about impact of increased housing on health services and capacity (Sam Parry to let SJ know). Strategic Housing Partnership needs Health Representation in order to make linkages

11. Find out if there are statistics on slips, trips and falls by those in owner occupied housing
12. Give consideration of how emerging policies will have an impact on housing policies going forward.
13. Continue to be an active participant in CBCC's Welsh Government 'Vibrant and Viable Places' regeneration funding bid
14. Do further HIA's on draft plans, projects, funding bids etc.

Conclusion

Overall, it was concluded that the LHS has the potential to be highly beneficial to the population of Conwy and support some of the most vulnerable in society. It will positively deliver on many key issues but that there are some matters that may need to be addressed both at a Department level and LA level in order to enhance its effectiveness. Some are short term and some are longer term aims and impacts. The workshop followed a systematic process, provoked a lively discussion made connections to other policy areas and stakeholders.

An evaluation of the HIA was completed and this demonstrated that the HIA was of benefit to the participants and the partnership.

The information and evidence gathered as part of the HIA will be now used to inform the delivery of the Local Housing Strategy Plans and projects. The suggested recommendations will be discussed with the Executive Board of CCBC and/ or implemented by the Housing Department.

Author

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