



Rapid desktop health impact assessment (HIA) of Draft Housing Strategy, Denbighshire

County Hall, Ruthin

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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.

In most uses of HIA, 'health' is viewed as holistic and encompasses mental, physical and social well-being. Based on a social determinants framework, HIA recognizes that there are many, often interrelated factors that influence people's health, from personal attributes and individual lifestyle factors to socioeconomic, cultural and environmental considerations (such as housing).

While some impacts on health determinants may be direct, obvious, and/or intentional, others may be indirect, difficult to identify, and unintentional. An HIA can identify health inequalities in not only the general population but in "vulnerable groups" (eg children, young people or older individuals) as well. The main output of any HIA is an evidence-based set of recommendations that should lead to the minimization of risks and maximization of potential benefits. It can provide opportunities for health improvement and to fill in any identified 'gaps' in service provision or delivery.

HIAs can vary in terms of their timing and depth. They can be undertaken prior to implementation of a proposal (prospectively), during implementation (concurrently) and

after implementation (retrospectively). Prospective HIAs give the greatest opportunity for influencing change while concurrent and retrospective HIAs are more monitoring and evaluation exercises, respectively. The scope of an HIA will be determined by a number of factors, including the nature and complexity of the proposal being assessed, the availability of resources, the type of data that would be needed, and the decision-making timescales.

HIAs generally take one of three forms - desktop, rapid or comprehensive. A desktop HIA may take only a few hours or a day to execute, a rapid HIA may take a few days to a few months to complete, and a comprehensive HIA is more in-depth/time and resource intensive and can take many months to complete. The most appropriate type to conduct can be decided through a short scoping meeting and discussion of timeframes and resources and levels of stakeholder involvement.

HIA session

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 Housing Strategy within Denbighshire County Council (DCC) 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 Public Health Wales (PHW) and the Wales HIA Support Unit (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.

The HIA was led by Liz Green, Principal HIA Development Officer from the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) and Delyth Jones, Principal Public Health Officer from the North Wales regional public health team, PHW and was qualitative in nature. It followed the systematic methodology described in the Welsh HIA guidance of 'Health Impact Assessment: A Practical Guide' (WHIASU, 2012). 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.

Attendees:

- Lisa Williams - Health and Social Development Officer, Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council
- Sophie Haworth-Booth - Supporting People, DCC
- Heidi Gray - Strategic Planning Officer, DCC
- Liz Green - Principal Health Impact Assessment Development Officer, WHIASU/PHW
- Delyth Jones - Principal Public Health Officer, Public Health Wales
- Lara Griffiths - Senior Officer, Strategic Planning and Housing, DCC
- Jane Abbott - Local Housing Strategy and Development Officer, DCC
- Sue Lewis - Senior Officer, Strategic Planning and Housing, DCC

At the outset, the group identified the main vulnerable groups who would be affected by the draft Housing Strategy using Appendix 2 of the Welsh HIA guidance. A lively discussion

followed and a wide ranging number of groups were highlighted as being directly affected by the Housing Strategy and its Plans. These were (in no particular order):

Vulnerable groups:

- Children and young people
- Learning disability - specialist
- General population
- Gypsy and travellers - (Needs Assessment has been undertaken)
- Carers
- Domestic abuse - groups affected
- Children’s services - children with learning disabilities
- Homeless people
- Armed forces
- Ex-offenders
- Asylum seekers
- Individuals with chronic conditions
- Transient community
- BME

Other population groups who could be affected:

- Private landlords and the business sector
- Employees who are carers

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 Housing Strategy. Positive or negative impacts were identified as were any gaps or unintended consequences. Suggestions were made for mitigation and actions documented. All of this is summarised in the table below.

1 Lifestyles

Positives/opportunities	Negatives or unintended consequences/gaps or opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotments - older people and exercise - less falls/intergenerational work which has led to less anti-social behaviour • Support individuals to change their current lifestyle choices • More disposable income to support healthy living (e.g. fuel poverty) • Engagement with communities - provides opportunities for improvement in healthier lifestyles • Reduction in potential harmful behaviours on developing sites eg HWB • Less illness - access to NHS services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity - try and ensure that more of this is shared • Accessibility of house - individuals unable to get around • Heat or eat.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better school attainment • Additional Licensing Scheme in place 	
	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at good practice from elsewhere re: publicity • Disabled Facilities Grant - adapting properties • Maximise energy efficiency funding available - targeting individual households most in need

2 Social and community influences

Positives/opportunities	Negatives or unintended consequences/gaps or opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes social inclusion • Individuals getting to know their neighbours and feeling a sense of belonging • Reduction in perception of fear of crime and disorder • Building neighbourhoods - influence where this is social housing • Welsh language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House sharing - for anyone... a potential opportunity - e.g. Llangollen - card in window. • Supporting individuals to stay in their own homes but in rural areas there is a reduction in facilities and services - may lead to social isolation and sense of community - How can Housing department facilitate this with other departments and facilities? • How does this strategy influence the larger developments e.g. Bodelwyddan. • How can we influence on some of our larger estates- eg Myddleton Park... - ? facilitate open forums and conversations • Potential to include the requirement for community cohesiveness, sense of place, neighbourhood... in brief for developers of large sites... • Place planning has potential - start with the community in developing places and reflect linkages with Town and Area Plans
	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore House sharing • Linking in with ABCD (corporate work)/Community Led conversations (Social Services) project which is been led by DVSC on behalf of Wellbeing Plan • Delivery plan will influence new developments • Addressing isolation on larger estates - community cohesion - could adopt

	<p>ABCD approach and links with Ageing Well strategy...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place planning - further discussion on this issue in Authority
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3 Living and environmental conditions affecting health

Positives/opportunities	Negatives or unintended consequences/gaps or opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less illness - less access to NHS Improved housing standards - contribute to improved health Energy efficiency work - impact on all on lower incomes Individuals who live in caravans - will be identified and supported to secure a permanent dwelling Lifetime homes - supports specific groups with disability - e.g. wheel chair access etc Lifetime homes - reduction in care home access Empty homes strategy - reduces eyesores Ageing Well plan - supports this work Theme 5 supports this priority Accessibility a norm as they are built - conform with life time homes if built by DCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining achieved quality standard of WHQS (covered) Adaptations - e.g wheel chair access more of a challenge in private rented sector Demand/need for accessible properties - no register matching up people with adapted properties evidence available Landlords selling property if standards are enforced, may lead to abandoned property Welsh Agent and Landlord Licensing Schemes - potential reduction in stock available to rent Impact on local economy of individuals from caravan parks who may need to move owing to new DCC approach - displacement and where they go... Will have an impact on those on lower income
	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build relationships with private landlords Promotion of Welsh Agent and Landlord Licensing Scheme (WALLS) to current landlords - Single Access Route To Housing project (common housing register) could take forward Strategy to be developed to address needs of caravan occupants

4 Economic Conditions affecting health

Positives/opportunities	Negatives or unintended consequences/gaps or opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local jobs for local people - apprenticeships Local affordable housing more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting household income - 23K benefit cap - Bedroom tax - support to date for

disposable income - local growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May encourage individuals into work 	individuals to remain in property - outlook is that this will change in the future and could lead to homelessness
	Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued monitoring of situation

5 Access and quality of services

Positives/opportunities	Negatives or unintended consequences/gaps or opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively facilitating creation of housing in rural areas • Home Buy scheme - deposit provided -rural areas/veterans/current social tenancy/specialist needs • Mechanisms for conversations with partners specifically on local services e.g. health/schools - large developments • Apprenticeships • Links with Digital Denbighshire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to transport could have an impact on the more rural areas • Infrastructure Plan - needs to be highlighted • Single Access Route to Housing - implementation required early 2016
	Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Plan - needs to be referenced in introduction • Single Access Route to Housing - implementation required early 2016 • Reflect work undertaken by Supporting People on Domestic Violence

6 Macro-economic, environmental and sustainability factors

Positives/opportunities	Negatives or unintended consequences/gaps or opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic equality plan - supports • Economic development in the county • Apprenticeships • Creates jobs • Reduced density housing/green spaces increased - Rhyl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration • Welfare reform - benefit cap • Needs more reference in the first section to Wellbeing plan etc - integration into themes • Environmental changes/climate change... needs referencing • Sensitive - AONBs/SSSIs/flood risk
	Action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference in the Strategy to the environmental changes and sensitive as above

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Summary

The workshop followed a systematic process, provoked a lively discussion made connections to other policy areas and stakeholders. Overall, it was concluded that the Draft Housing Strategy has the potential to be highly beneficial to the population of Denbighshire and support some of the most vulnerable in society. It will positively deliver on many key issues but it highlighted there are some matters that may need to be addressed both in order to enhance its effectiveness. Some are short term and some are longer term aims and impacts. It has been agreed that a further HIA will be undertaken for the Housing Strategy Action Plans. This will be a rapid participatory HIA and will engage a broader range of stakeholders in order to inform and influence their content and delivery.

The information and evidence gathered as part of the HIA will be now used to inform the the Housing Strategy.

Liz Green, WHIASU
Delyth Jones, PHW
Sue Lewis, DCC

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