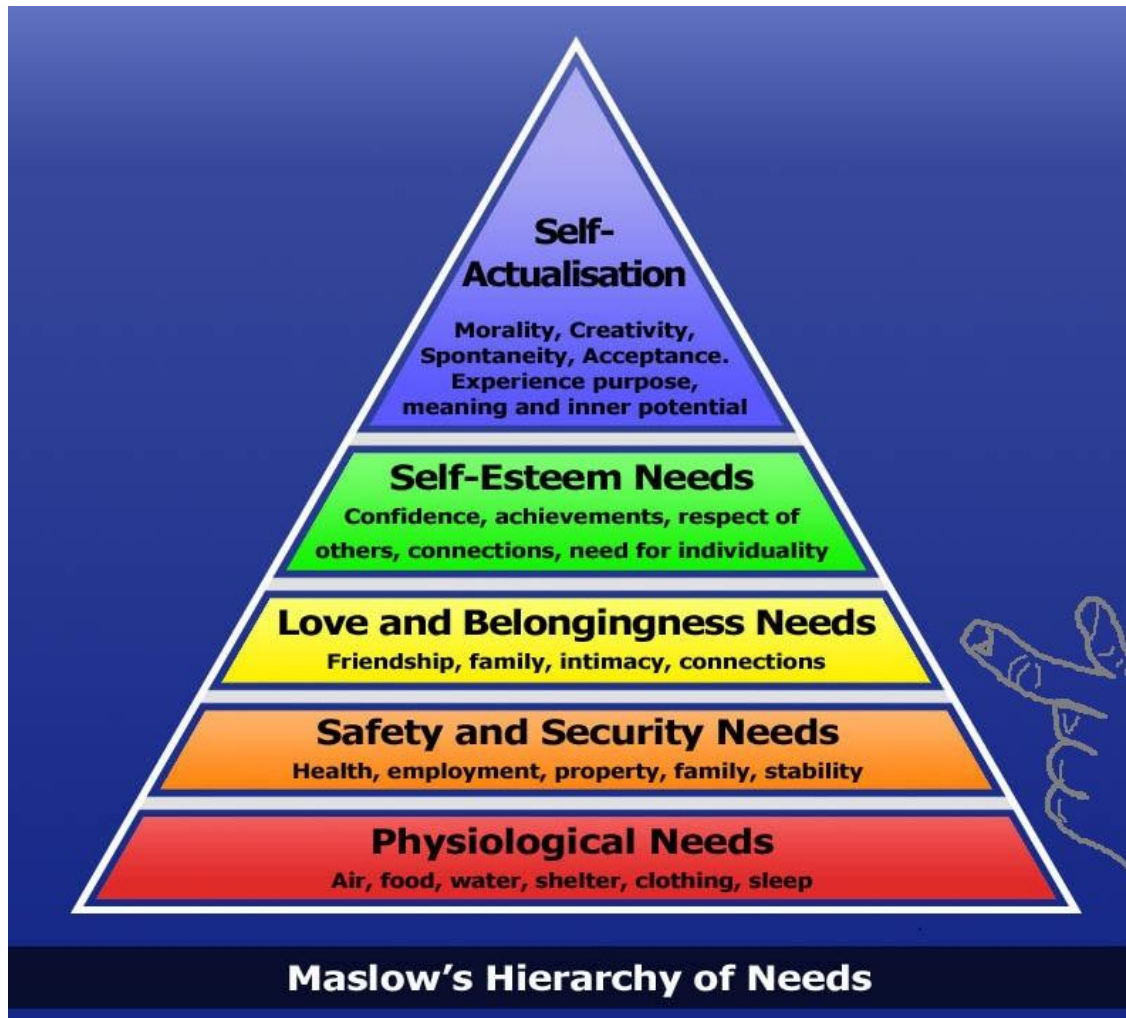


Health impacts of cold homes – the case for investment

Richard Armitage



Health & Housing

Health is 'the individual's state of physical, mental and social well-being, and is not limited to the presence or absence of disease, infirmity or physical injury, but includes psychological injuries and distress'.

The Housing Act 2004 includes both physical and mental conditions in its definition of health.

Some Housing Act Principles

- Any residential property should provide a safe & healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor
- Homes 'should be free from both unnecessary and avoidable hazards'
- **Hazard** – any risk of harm to health or safety of an actual or potential occupier arising from any disrepair or defect(s)
- **Harm** – adverse physical or mental effect on health of sufficient severity to be either fatal or justify medical attention

Excess Cold

- **Excess cold** is a hazard in cold homes that have a low energy efficiency rating
- **Thermal efficiency** – properties should be provided with adequate thermal insulation and suitable and effective means of space heating so that the dwelling space can be *economically maintained at reasonable temperatures*, (18 deg C min recommended)

Research on Cold Homes & Health Impacts

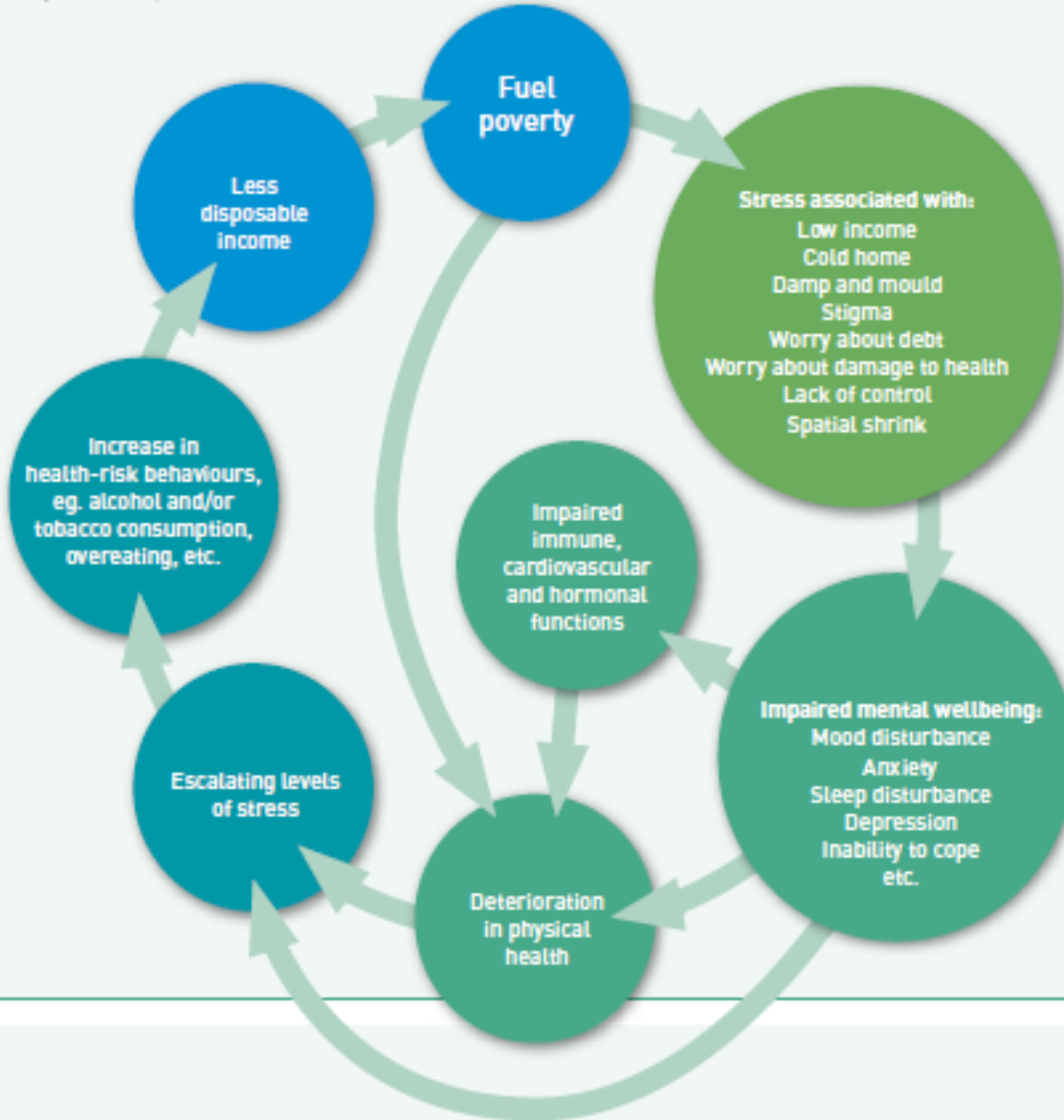


Cold homes & physical ill health

- Physical ill health in young and older people
- Respiratory and circulatory illnesses most common across whole age range esp. asthma attacks, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Higher risk of heart attack & stroke
- Aggravate and worsen existing health issues such as colds / flu, pneumonia, arthritis
- Increased risk of accidents, trips and falls due to reduced strength and dexterity
- Low infant weight gain, respiratory illness and mental ill health in children

Figure 5: Circle of risk linking fuel poverty and mental health

From Liddell C and Guiney C (2013) *Improvements in Household Heating and Insulation and their Associations with Adult Mental Health and Well-being*. School of Psychology, University of Ulster. Unpublished.



Cold homes & mental ill health

Life cycle impacts

- Low weight gain <3yrs old in families who struggle to meet their energy bills
- 30% more likelihood of low income families not in receipt of winter fuel subsidy presenting to health services & hospitals in the child's first 3 years
- These children are also 29% more likely to be underweight
- A child admitted to hospital every 18 mins due to their asthma. **Children living in a cold home for 3 years or more have double the risk of developing asthma.**

Cold related deaths

- Direct causal link between cold weather events and subsequent deaths, around a third caused by living in a cold home
- Excess winter deaths (EWDs) – no. of deaths that occur between Dec & Mar, over the average for the rest of
- UK has one of the highest EWD rates in Europe simply because their homes are warmer and more energy efficient.
- Over 9,300 deaths in the UK during 2012-3 caused by cold homes
- **Almost 1,100 EWDs caused by cold homes were in Yorkshire & Humber during this time.**

Social Impacts

- Children seek respite and privacy away from cold homes
- Lower levels of concentration and less 'task persistence' in children in cold homes
- Tension in families sharing limited heated space in the home
- Social isolation & loneliness of older people

Calderdale Challenges



Funding Challenges

- Warmfront heating & insulation grants – ended 2012
- Energy company subsidies towards insulation and heating vastly reduced post 2014
- Green Deal – limited take up, critical Audit review, uncertain future
- How did we respond?

Our response

- Better Homes scheme procured
- Successful funding bids to DECC via WYCA
- Calderdale - Local schemes
 - Dept of Health 'Warm Homes, Healthy People'
 - 'Boiler on prescription' funding, Social Care
- Challenging Cross Party Scrutiny review
- Private Sector stock review and Health Impact Assessment

Calderdale Health Impact Assessment

- Poorest housing conditions in Calderdale are responsible for over 1000 harmful events every year requiring medical treatment
- Estimated costs to health service is £3.9m per year
- Wider costs to society estimated to be £9.7m per year
- Over 5700 properties with a very low energy rating identified
- Estimated annual cost to health service £1m per year
- Positive cost benefit can be achieved within 7 years if targeting the worst housing with interventions
- Private rented sector known to have disproportionately higher level of excess cold hazards due to nature of the housing stock, and lack of investment
- Earlier research also identified a £0.42 per year saving in healthcare costs for every £1 invested in energy efficiency investment in the coldest homes occupied by the over 60s, **giving just a 2.5 year pay back period**

Affordable Warmth Programme

- £1.4m approved by Council for a 3 yr programme
- Area, person and tenure targeted projects to deliver affordable warmth to vulnerable residents
- Activities will include:
 - ✓ Marketing campaign & referral system
 - ✓ Managed works
 - ✓ Interest free repayment and equity loans
 - ✓ Help, support and enforcement for landlords
 - ✓ Warmth on prescription scheme
 - ✓ Energy efficiency advice and supplier switching

Any easy questions?

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Health & Housing Conference
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13 June 2016