

Somerset Annual Director of Public Health Report 2023

Summary for Adults & Health Scrutiny



Somerset
Council

Annual Report of the DPH

What is it?

- Statutory duty for *all* Directors of Public Health
- An independent, personal view
- Covering matters outside ‘business as usual’
- Often about issues whose profile should be raised, and where the ‘whole system’ needs to respond.

Housing and Health

Key messages

This year's report examines the relationship between health and our homes and neighbourhoods.

Housing is a core foundation for good health: safe, secure, affordable and good quality homes in healthy places enable people to lead healthy, independent lives for as long as possible.

'Without housing, no one can have decent health': housing is one of the 'building blocks' of health and living in a poor quality or insecure home is a major cause of health inequalities

Good Quality and Suitable Homes

Key messages

- Poor quality housing –damp or cold, contributes directly to poor health, particularly respiratory diseases
- Bad design can increase the risk of falls, notably for older people
- Overcrowding can be hazardous, especially for young children
- Energy inefficient houses are expensive to heat, and contribute to fuel poverty

Housing hazards are often found together, and can be mutually reinforcing.

Affordable and Secure Homes

Key messages

- Housing in Somerset is more unaffordable than the England average
- Insecurity of tenure – a common feature of private renting – can have harmful impacts comparable to smoking or unemployment
- Homeless people, especially rough sleepers, have multiple and complex needs, and can ‘fall through the gaps’ in services.
- There is inadequate supply of social housing, and a typical applicant is a young adult often with a pre-existing health or care need.

Healthy Places

Key messages

- Domestic energy emissions are a significant contributor to climate-change.
- Flooding, including flash flooding, is having increasing impacts on housing and the ability of residents to feel secure in their homes, and needs to be a major consideration of planning policy.
- How places are designed plays a major role in enabling people to lead healthy independent lives: public transport, walking and cycling routes, green space, 'safety by design', and access to local amenities, shops and services all contribute to resilient and connected communities and good physical and mental health.

Implications and Recommendations

There is hope: housing can be a *protective* factor

- We have many examples of good practice - working as a system to support to people affected by poor housing
- These interventions could be scaled to develop a health-driven approach that protects and prepares the population
- The new Local Plan give us a great opportunity to put new ideas into practice
- The Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy and forthcoming Supported Housing Strategy present further opportunities to embed systems approaches that put homes at the heart of prevention and early help.

Time for Questions



Contact email