



CASE STUDY

NHS Ayrshire & Arran and the Energy Agency

FOCUS AREA

The NHS, public health and social care organisations play an important role in local communities, as employers, and as core public service providers. They are an integral part of communities and can help support community groups, local agencies and local people to further build a sense of place and identity so people want to live, work and invest there. These elements create the conditions for improved health and wellbeing.



COMMUNITIES

For more information contact
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BACKGROUND AND AIMS

The Scottish Government's Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPS) provides local authorities with funding to improve homes in the most deprived areas. This programme is aimed at tackling fuel poverty and increasing the energy efficiency of domestic buildings.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran has been a key member of a multiagency working group (comprising the Energy Agency, Scottish Government, East Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council) undertaking work to evaluate the impact on the health and wellbeing of residents receiving home insulation through this programme.

ACTIONS

The project is a partnership between Public Health (NHS Ayrshire & Arran), NHS Ayrshire & Arran and The Energy Agency, an Ayr-based charity providing free, impartial and expert advice to households, businesses and communities on energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable transport. NHS Ayrshire & Arran have a long-established relationship with Energy Agency, having been an integral part of the Energy Agency's Management Board since 1998. This close relationship ensures that health impacts of cold homes has always been of interest to the Agency and the innovative energy developments carried out by NHS Ayrshire & Arran are relevant to both organisations.

The evaluation sought to provide detailed evidence on the links between domestic energy-efficiency improvements and health and well-being. A feasibility study including a detailed literature review and qualitative interviews with a sample of householders was carried out by Public Health (NHS Ayrshire & Arran) in 2014. The project continues to develop (in June 2019 over 500 interviews were completed). The process involves semi-structured interviews and monitoring of temperature, humidity, energy use pre and post wall insulation.





KEY IMPACTS

The project demonstrates the public health impacts of energy efficiency measures for people living in homes in areas of deprivation. Both the direct physical and mental health impacts and the indirect impacts on well-being are measured. There is evidence of positive changes to proximal outcomes such as improved housing conditions, increased indoor warmth and comfort and reduced fuel bills which are likely to contribute to longer term health improvements.

There is also evidence of improvements in 'general health' in those householders who reported an improvement to warmth in the home. Anecdotal evidence of improvements to underlying health conditions such as asthma, arthritis and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) have also been reported. Also, there are anecdotal improvements to mood and wellbeing, partly as a result of reduced stress of fuel bills and increased pride and happiness in the home. The University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde are also involved in the studies.

LESSONS

The involvement of NHS Ayrshire & Arran and the Energy Agency in the community-based project contributes to a greater understanding of the links between health and wellbeing, while improving housing conditions, increasing indoor comfort and reducing fuel bills. This has included self-reported evidence of improvements to underlying health conditions including COPD, asthma and arthritis, improvements to mood and mental wellbeing and an increased sense of pride in the community.

Building the links helps to build the evidence around the links between healthy, energy efficient homes and good health, to support activities to contribute more widely to health and wellbeing, and to ensure the maximum benefit of public and private investment in energy efficiency and housing.

