

Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) Development Session - 4th November 2015

Context: The HWB Development Sessions are part of the wider HWB structure. They provide an informal forum to explore particular health and wellbeing related themes and broader Enfield Issues. At the November Development Session the theme explored was the relationship between housing and health.

Table top sessions: Table top group sessions were facilitated to give HWB members the opportunity to discuss three questions in the context of housing. Each question directly related to the priorities of the Joint Strategic Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Below is a list of the comments that were made during the table top discussions.

Table 1: Making sure children have the best start in life

- Security of 10 year, not moving around too much
- Most difficulties in private sector – overcrowding, some families move every 6-12 months
- Families that have insecurity of housing – affects mental health, evidence of this.
- Housing should be as health promoted as possible – neighbours mixing, integrating
- Integration – whole devolution debate
- If you live in damp overcrowded conditions – families with young children should be prioritised.
- The point system looks more short term but should be more long term.
- 1000 days of life – anti natal appointments, when visits take place if there are housing issues they should be reported so they are dealt with as soon as possible. This will help identify families that need help early on.
- Could consider moving families out of borough to where there is more space. Better to significantly once then 10 times locally.

Table 2: Creating stronger, healthier communities

- There are two sides when think about “Healthier communities” – physically healthy community and community as in place with social interaction, network of people
- We see nice accommodation, community spaces etc. built and used initially but become not popular / unused / unwelcomed places as a result of residents’ turnover etc. Important to think about how can we sustain a) ownership of the community and b) community spirit for a longer term.
- We need to be more creative in using existing spaces / limited resources more effectively, is there any way of utilising school play area for the communities as well?
- Building homes for life – homes that can accommodate different needs at different stages of our life. i.e. designing and refurbishing for health
- Spaces that prevent / reduce social isolation

TABLE 3: Narrowing the gap in life expectancy

- Need to list major determinates in the gap in life expectancy.
- Need to identify factors such as heart disease, diabetes, smoking, lack of physical activities and housing in poor areas.

- Identify how many houses are social housing and affordable to who?
- Most new sites are providing fewer homes
- Most rents are still unaffordable, even for those not on benefits
- Many professionals are choosing to move out of London to afford more affordable homes
- Over occupancy creates problems
- Many rat infested areas
- 25%-30% of private sector rentals are not fit for purpose and this issue is getting worse
- If a child is born in a crowded property, child will develop in that environment, embedding their life opportunities compared to others which will have a direct impact on life expectancy
- Recognise the situation is challenging as it is and need to identify where you can influence to make a difference
- Perhaps change the circle of residents to shift the balance of poverty
- Housing and Public Health need to be linked
- Not good enough to just give people a home if they are struggling with other aspects of their lives
- Employment programmes and access to outdoor space is important
- Access to outdoor activities/opportunities may cause further tensions but also helps provide opportunities too.
- Many Eastern European residents now live in the borough and they would enjoy bbq or picnic areas; this could be a quick win
- Some areas are hilly and unable to be used as a park area. These could be flattened to make better use of the land.
- Growing food is very important. Giving people the responsibility often results in them being more connected to the community they are living in.
- Need to put investment into the core area where people live and then they can take more ownership
- Some boroughs like Hackney, people organise involvement themselves, but some boroughs need more facilitation/guidance to get things moving
- Gardening is key to get people out, grow healthy food and work in communities
- A roof over peoples' heads is important, but an outside environment could also be built into this at the same time
- Plan to use places that can be easily converted – funding spent does not represent work done

Conclusion:

- 1. Housing can have significant health benefits both mentally and physically if it's planned in a way that facilitates social engagement, community spaces (shared gardens etc), and takes into account aesthetics as well as cost and functionality.**
- 2. There needs to be greater controls in place to improve the quality of housing stock within both local authority owned and private sector housing rental housing.**