



Enabling Older People to Live Safely & Well at Home

A self training module for health, care & support staff.

Commissioned by



Written by



Supported by



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



About this training module

This self training module is for people who visit older people at home eg. health care staff, care workers, hospital visitors and voluntary sector to give general advice on a range of topics.

It will help you to develop your knowledge and skills by increasing your understanding of:

- *the effects of poor housing on people's health*
- *the simple actions that can be taken to improve housing conditions*
- *the organisations that can help to improve people's housing conditions.*

When you have worked your way through the Toolkit you will be able to:

- *identify potential health hazards and problems in the home*
- *provide the people you visit with details about how to improve their health/reduce injury risk by dealing with these housing problems and*
- *make referrals to those who can help them.*

NOTE - Knowing where to look for information when you need it, rather than memorising facts, is the approach taken in the training.

Some of the information about solutions applies only to England. The sections about health problems & housing defects are applicable in all of the countries of the UK.

The module has been commissioned by **EAC FirstStop Advice**, an independent, free service providing advice and information for older people, their families and carers about care and housing choices in later life. EAC FirstStop www.firststopadvice.org.uk Advice Line: 0800 377 70 70

The module has been produced by **Care & Repair England**, an independent charitable organisation which aims to improve older people's housing conditions. www.careandrepair-england.org.uk.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this module is accurate. However, Care & Repair England and EAC FirstStop do not accept any responsibility for errors or omissions. This is a fast moving field – contacts, policy and practice are constantly changing. We would welcome any feedback about content, eg. broken weblinks, organisational changes. Please email these to info@careandrepair-england.org.uk.

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What does this training module cover?

The Module is organised into 3 sessions

If you have a limited amount of time you could aim to do about an hour a day over three days, but it is probably best not to leave larger gaps between study sessions as the sections are connected.

There are references for further reading, which would take additional time.

Session 1: Why does housing matter to health?

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Session 2: Identifying physical housing problems

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Session 3: Finding solutions

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Session 1

Why does housing matter to health?

Housing directly impacts on mental and physical health & well-being

Many common chronic health problems are caused or made worse by aspects of people's homes.

As we get older, and hence more likely to have chronic health problems as well as spending most of our time at home, the condition of our housing becomes increasingly important to our health.

Poor or unsuitable housing may be the reason a person cannot be discharged from hospital, or the cause of readmission

In most places there is a high demand for hospital beds and hence pressure to discharge patients who no longer have a medical need to be in hospital.

However, readmission rates are high and it is increasingly being recognised that effective integration of health care, social care and housing is necessary to enable older people return to living independently at home.

The standard and suitability of the older person's home is therefore crucial. Sending someone to live in a cold, damp property, or to sleep on the sofa with a commode in the corner, is more likely to result in readmission.

Putting the house in better order through even simple repairs & adaptations is good for patients' health. It also potentially saves money eg. reducing care packages (eg. putting in an accessible shower instead of strip washing by paid carers), or reducing readmissions (eg. grab rails reducing risk of falls).

Now have a go at the quiz on the next page to find out more about the housing & health links.

Why does housing matter to health?

Do you know...?

Task 1

Tick your answers then see page 23 to find out the answers. **Remember – this is not a test!**

Why not try using it as a basis for a team discussion about older people's health & housing?

- 1 How many older people (aged 65 and over) were admitted as an emergency to hospital with potentially avoidable conditions (eg fractures, respiratory infections & dehydration) last year, many of which would have been avoided through housing related improvements & better care at home.
5000 50,00 500,000 1 million 3 million
- 2 What percentage of older people (over 65yrs) live in ordinary housing (ie. not specialist such as sheltered, retirement or residential care)?
30% 60% 90%
- 3 One in three people over the age of 65, and one in two over 80's, fall each year. About how many falls take place in the home?
Most about a quarter about half
- 4 A cold home increases the risk of an older person having a stroke.
True False
- 5 How many vulnerable older people over 75yrs live in homes which are officially categorised as 'non-decent'?
10,000 500,000 1 million 2 million
- 6 Which of the following health problems are caused or made worse by housing conditions (tick each one that you think applies):
Asthma Arthritis COPD Heart disease Depression

Why does housing matter to health?

Think about what you have learned from the Quiz

- You now know that the vast majority of older live at home in ordinary housing and that many face daily risks to their health and safety at home
- You know that there is a measurable link between housing features and common chronic conditions
- Enabling more older people to live safely & well at home is not only important because it saves the NHS and Social Services money, but also because it improves older people's lives.

Why is living safely & well at home important to older people?

Independent living is important for all of us

Maintaining independence is a key objective for most people as they get older. Living in one's own home for as long as possible is often seen as key to retaining that independence.

Being in control of where we live and how we choose to live is also important to our sense of personal control.

However, for some people the ability to live independently is affected by deteriorating health, reduced mobility, isolation and/or low income. These difficulties may be exacerbated by poor housing conditions, so conversely, the experience of living independently can be improved by tackling housing problems.

Where we live is central to our sense of who we are

'People's attachment to their home, their identity and their sense of self worth are (closely connected)'

In old age, people see housing as possibly the most essential factor in whether they will be able to manage and live well'

These are some of the conclusions of a large scale study of older people *'Homing in on Housing'*, Clough, Leamy, Bright 2003

We can learn to help people find ways to improve their housing - we don't have to do it all

Recognising when poor housing is affecting a person's health is an important skill. However, once you have made the connection you don't have to take on all of the housing problems by yourself. There is outside advice and help. Knowing how to sign-post people to specialist agencies can make a real difference to their prospects for staying safely and healthily in their homes.

See Appendix B for an 'at a glance' summary of the main health & housing links.

Moving Home or Staying Put?

For most older people their preferred option is to live independently in their current home for as long as possible. Adaptations, repairs and services can all enable this.

For some older people moving out of their current home to a different property, sometimes to specialist housing such as sheltered or extra care, may enhance their ability to live independently.

A minority will move to residential or nursing care.

The factors that influence the decision to stay put or move can be complex, and there may be many factors and alternatives to consider.

To find out more about the issues, and the help and advice that is available see www.firststopadvice.org.uk

Factors that influence the decision

The housing factors which will determine whether an older person lives safely and well at home, or whether moving is preferable or even possible, will depend upon their housing tenure (*home owner vs tenant*), financial circumstances (*what can they afford by way of repairs, adaptations, services or alternative housing*) and what help is available (*from family, friends or professional services*).

Talking to someone who is completely impartial and independent is ideal in most cases as there can be other factors which influence the decision such as;

- The pressure to go for the fastest option if there is pressure to get a person out of hospital
- Families worry about an older person who lives alone at home, so want them to move to care facility
- Less benign family interests eg. in the value of a property
- Pressure from a landlord to vacate a property

Who can help?

FirstStop Advice is an independent, free service provided by the national charity Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) in partnership with other local and national organisations.

The service is for older people, their families, carers and professionals who are working with them. It aims to help people get the help or care they need to live as independently and comfortably as possible.

You can access FirstStop Advice through:

- the website www.firststopadvice.org.uk
- via the national telephone Advice Line 0800 377 70 70 or
- through one of their local partner organisations, some of which can visit the older person to talk through their options and help them implement their choice.

Interested in finding out more?

There is a self training Toolkit following a similar format to this one covering *Housing Options Advice for Older People*.

Housing choices in later life:

www.housingcare.org/downloads/kbase/3196.pdf

Advising older people about their care choices in later life:

www.housingcare.org/downloads/kbase/3126.pdf

Advising older people about their housing choices in later life:

www.housingcare.org/downloads/kbase/3125.pdf

There is also an online tool based on a series of questions that an older person can work through. 'HOOP' is designed to help older people think about their home, how well it works for them, how to tackle any problems and whether also to consider moving home.

In the Online version www.housingcare.org/housing-appraisal-tool.aspx, suggestions are made automatically in response to any problems HOOP users identify. If these aren't enough, users can ask for further suggestions from an EAC FirstStop Advisor.

Session 2

Identifying physical housing problems

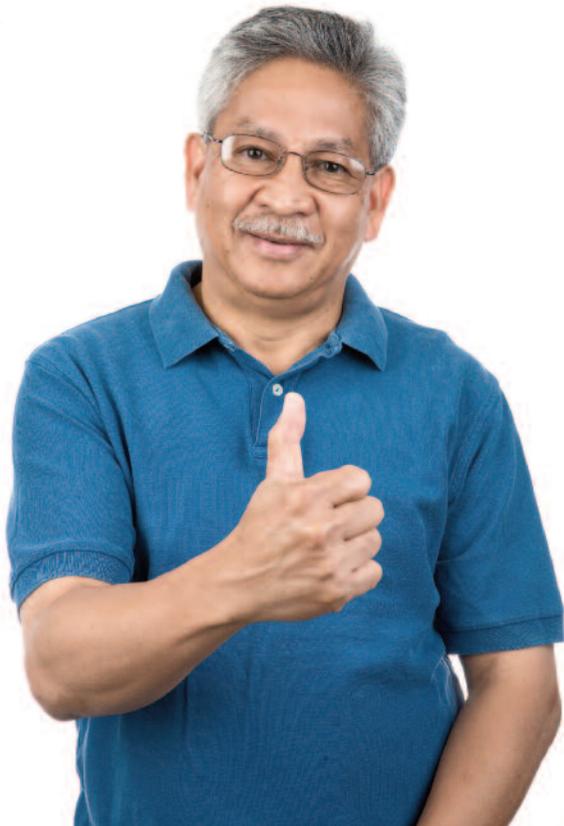
Task 1

Write down some of the physical features of a home that you have sometimes noticed that might affect the occupants' health & put them at risk.

Identifying physical housing problems

Housing effects on health

How many of these did you list?



Housing Characteristic

- Cold
- Damp or condensation, sometimes with mould growth
- Poor ventilation
- Inadequate heating eg using stand alone heaters in living room

- Old wiring eg old style of sockets or switches
- Trailing wires/overloaded sockets

- Poor lighting/dimly lit stairs & corridors
- Ragged or loose carpets/scattered rugs & mats
- Uneven stairs/lack of handrail

- Inadequate food preparation facilities

- Inadequate bathing and hand washing facilities

Related Health Risks

- Respiratory (COPD, asthma etc)
- Cardiovascular disease (eg heart problems, stroke)
- Arthritis & rheumatism
- Mental health problems
- Hypothermia
- Increased falls risk

- Falls
- Accidents/falls if sockets & switches are poorly located
- Injury caused by electric shocks or house fires
- Depression and anxiety due to worry about these risks

- Falls

- Increased risk of gastric problems, health problems related to poor diet

- Higher risk of infection/contamination
- Depression and anxiety due to worry about these risks

Also See Appendix B for additional information

Identifying physical housing problems

Housing effects on health

Some features in more detail

■ Cold has a serious effect on cardiovascular conditions

Blood pressure increases when temperatures fall below 12°C and the risk of heart attack or stroke increases as blood pressure rises.

According to the NHS between 18°C and 21°C is a healthy room temperature. Below 9°C poses the risk of hypothermia and death.

Higher rates of illness, hypothermia and death during the winter months are linked to cold, damp homes. Statistics published by the Office for National Statistics show that the mortality rate increases during the winter months for people aged over 65 years. Excess Winter Deaths in the UK are greater than those in other European countries, even those where the winters are longer and colder.

■ Dampness & condensation

The spores from mould growth can aggravate eye & skin conditions as well as affecting respiratory problems.

■ Defective electrics

At least one person in the UK dies each week from an electrical accident and nearly 1,000 are injured every day.

■ Steps and stairs

Most home accidents take place on stairs and steps. The risk is increased by poor lighting, loose or worn carpets, lack of a banister and grabrails.

■ Bathroom

The most commonly reported problem when older people make inquiries about home adaptations concern bathing and using the toilet. Equipment and adaptations eg. raised toilet seat, grab rails, putting in a level shower instead of a bath can greatly reduce risk.

■ Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning

CO is an odourless, colourless gas. It causes symptoms which are very similar to many other conditions and include:

- Drowsiness/dizziness
- Headaches & nausea
- Confusion
- Tiredness
- Chest pains/breathing problems

Exposure to even low levels can cause brain damage or death.

Around 4,000 people attend accident and emergency departments in England each year because of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Identifying physical housing problems

Housing effects on health

Indicators of dangerous physical faults include

- Black soot or stain marks on gas appliance
- Yellow or orange lazy flame on gas fire - it should be 'crisp' and blue
- Excessive condensation
- High level of particulates eg from solid fuel & wood stoves

■ Mental health problems

Are of as much concern as the physical effects of poor housing. Worry and anxiety about a home which is in need of repair can have a major impact on an older person's mental health. Living in a home which is cold, damp, in a poor state of repair or decoration can also contribute to depression.

The poor state of their home may also result in an older person becoming isolated because they do not wish visitors to see the conditions in which they are living.

Worry and fear about accidents eg because of not being able to go up and down the stairs or to use the bath to keep clean, can also have a very negative impact on mental health.

Carrying out the repairs and adaptations and making an older person feel that they have someone to turn to should they have a housing problem can have a greater positive effect on mental health generally than on any one physical health problem.

Identifying physical housing problems

Spot the defect

Have a look at the following photographs and see if you can spot the housing defect that could affect the occupants' health and safety.

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



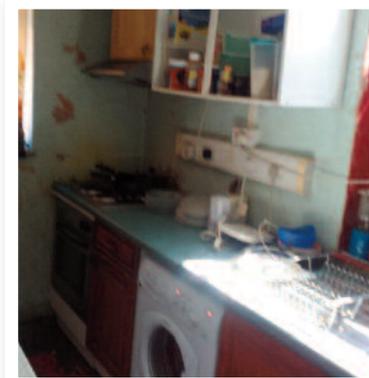
Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6



Identifying physical housing problems

Spot the defect

Answers

Main defect and associated health risk

Picture 1

This 87 year old lady is at increased risk of falling due to the additional metal threshold bar which has been installed on the top of the step.

Whilst it would be far better not to have such a fitting, the risk could at least be reduced by installing a grab rail.

Picture 2

Because of the type of window that has been installed, this 84 year old lady is now at risk of falling each time she wants to open the window.

Ideally when new windows are installed consideration about whether occupants can reach the catches should be a priority, but faced with this difficulty it may be preferable to install an electronic ventilator with an easy to reach switch.

Picture 3

There is a sooty deposit above the fireplace indicating that there is a broken seal and fumes/smoke are escaping from this defective solid fuel burner. There is also no hearth in front of the fire, hence each time the door is opened to put fuel on there is a risk of embers falling onto the carpet and causing a fire.

Urgent action is needed to remedy these defects.

Picture 4

There is grass growing in the gutters and as a result water is overflowing over the gutter and running down the walls. Some discolouration of the bricks can just about be seen. As a result of this water will be

penetrating the fabric of the building and there will almost certainly be damp, mouldy patches on the inside walls, with the risks noted above from mould and damp.

The windows are also clearly in a very poor state and this will also be adding to poor ventilation in the property, hence aggravated respiratory conditions.

Clearing the gutters and repairing damage to the walls would be the first step, but replacement windows are also clearly needed.

Picture 5

This gas hot water heater is defective and presents a risk of CO poisoning and possible fire hazard.

The marks on the ceiling indicate water penetration from the roof and there will be damp/mould growth exacerbating respiratory conditions.

Picture 6

The trailing electrical cables across the sink present a risk of electrocution.

The poor kitchen facilities increase risk of infections & gastric conditions.

These photographs are all taken by local home improvement agencies called in to help low income home owners.

Whilst some are of exceptionally bad housing defects, even some homes which appear to be of a good standard may be poorly heated and present a health risk eg. under heated and poorly lit due to worry about fuel bills.

Session 3

Finding solutions

In this session we take a broad look at some of the main remedial measures for common housing defects & shortcomings.

The schemes & services that offer practical help are listed in Appendix D.



Finding solutions

Adaptations and equipment

Adapting a home or installing special equipment can make a radical difference to an older person's well-being and ability to live independently.

Risk of falls and accidents can be reduced and mental well-being improved.

Bathing adaptations

One of the commonest physical problems at home that older people face is difficulty with getting in and out of the bath safely.

Simple equipment such as a raised bath seat or a fully adapted level access shower can make a radical difference to an older person's life.

How a person goes about obtaining advice & information about the best technical solution or finds help with meeting the cost or ensuring that a suitable builder does the work well varies from area to area, but below we set out the main sources of help.

For independent, impartial information and advice about all aspects of housing & care, including finding local services and understanding what help should be available, contact EAC FirstStop

www.firststopadvice.org.uk

Advice Line: 0800 377 70 70

Smaller items of equipment & small adaptations (under £1,000)

These should be available free of charge for anyone assessed as needing them from a service run jointly by health and social services sometimes called the Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES).

Minor adaptations such as grab rails and hand rails around the home may also be provided by ICES. Very often an 'occupational therapist' (OT) will visit a person to assess what they need.

Fast track minor adaptations services are very often now linked to hospitals. These may be run by the local home improvement agency, AgeUK other charity or commercial organisation.

Sometimes people are able to meet the relatively small cost of a minor adaptation and choose to organise it for themselves. In such cases it can be helpful if a person gets some independent information about what is possible. Having a look at what is available in a local Disabled Living Centre, if one is available, can be a useful first step.

The Disabled Living Foundation (www.dlf.org.uk 0300 999 0004) offers impartial advice about equipment, adaptations & services to make living independently at home safer.

Social services or the local health service should be able to advise on how to obtain these.

Finding solutions

Adaptations and equipment



Major adaptations

How a person goes about finding help with more major adaptations depends upon the type of housing they live in and where they live.

For technical information, the Disabled Living Foundation and Disabled Living Centres mentioned above are a useful starting point.

Many Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) offer help to organise & carry out home adaptations as well as repairs. Some also carry out related practical work on the home eg. home safety checks and remedial measures. Foundations (www.foundations.uk.com 0845 864 5210) can put you in touch with your local HIA

The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a national grant to help with the cost of adaptations ie. it should be available in every area and the same criteria and means test applied in all parts of the country.

It is a means tested grant ie. whether or not a person gets a grant and how much they get depends upon their income and savings. The grant may pay for all or part of the necessary adaptation.

The local housing authority administers the grant, usually the environmental health department. However the social services occupational therapist is usually involved in the process because they make the recommendation about what the person needs to the housing authority.

Social services are also responsible for ensuring that a disabled person obtains the help that they need with regard to adaptations, but the law around how much they have to actually pay for or provide adaptations is complex.

More Information

The Disability Rights Handbook is a useful guide to DFGs and other rights for disabled people. Your library may have a copy or it can be obtained from Disability Rights UK

www.disabilityrightsuk.org/disability-rights-handbook-40th-edition

Finding solutions

Dealing with damp, condensation and mould growth

The cause of the damp problem will determine the right building solution so a basic understanding of the different types of damp and causes of condensation is a useful starting point.

Main causes of damp

Penetrating damp

You may see isolated damp patches on walls & ceilings, sometimes with mould growth. Rainwater is getting into the fabric of the home through defects in the walls, render, joints, roof, chimney stacks, flashings etc. One common cause is blockage of gutters or down-pipes which results in rainwater running down the outside walls. If left untreated major damage can be caused eg rotting structural timbers.

ACTION:

The cause of water penetration needs to be repaired as soon as possible. It may also be necessary to remove and replace internal plaster work and affected timber.

Rising damp

This is usually caused by lack of an effective barrier ('a damp proof course' or DPC) between the water in the ground and the walls of the home. Water soaks up the wall leaving a 'tide mark' on the inside wall (*not usually more than 1 metre high*).

ACTION:

There may be a simple solution such as clearing away debris & soil at the base of the outside walls which could be covering or 'bridging' the DPC.

To repair, improve or even install a DPC is a more technical (and expensive) job. If the householder is a tenant it is the landlords responsibility to organise the repair. In the case of a home owner the local home improvement agency may help.

Plumbing defects

Even a minor leak in water or waste pipes can cause a significant damp patch.

ACTION:

If the leak is rapid turn off the water supply at the stopcock. It is important to locate the defect and organise the repair of leaks straight away.

Finding solutions

Dealing with damp, condensation and mould growth

Main causes of condensation

Condensation occurs when warm, moist air meets a cold surface. This may result in black or green mould growth. Causes include:

- An excess of water vapour in the air
- Cold surfaces eg. poorly insulated walls
- Inadequate home heating resulting in the fabric of the building being cold

ACTION:

It is important for the householder to reduce the amount of water vapour in the home. The main ways to do this are;

- as far as possible it is best to avoid drying wet washing inside the home, especially in poorly ventilated areas. If unavoidable, drying clothes in the bathroom with the door closed and window open can help.
- cover pans when cooking liquids eg. boiling vegetables
- avoid using calor gas or paraffin - both produce large amounts of water vapour
- increase ventilation, especially in kitchen and bathrooms. Encourage people to open windows & turn on extractors where these are available
- improved insulation, particularly in lofts and walls, can reduce the 'cold spots' where mould growth occurs
- if the householder can maintain a slightly higher, more constant background temperature this can avoid cooling down the main fabric of the building

Who can help?

Contact EAC FirstStop 0800 377 70 70. Shelter & CAB can advise tenants about landlord's repair obligations. For home owners, home improvement agencies may offer technical advice & help to find builders.

Want to find out more?

Here are a few sources of technical information about damp and condensation

- www.maintainyourbuilding.org.uk/pages/rising_damp.html
- World Health Organisation (www.euro.who.int/en/home) for brochure 'Damp and mould: health risks, prevention and remedial action'
- Building Research Establishment sells technical guides www.brebookshop.com

Finding solutions

Cold homes with poor or unsafe heating



Cold homes

Homes are cold because

- The home is poorly insulated so expensive heat is escaping
- There is an inadequate or inefficient heating system
- The person is not turning on the available heating due to worry about cost

ACTION:

- Improve the insulation
- Improve or replace the inefficient heating system
- Claim benefits to help people to meet the cost of heating

Often the poorest people are getting the least heat for their money eg. if they have to use a prepayment meter, if they don't have access to the internet to search for the best tariff or have no alternative because of where they live eg. rural homes having to use oil.

To get the most heat for their money it is important that people check:

- Are they on the best possible tariff?
- Using the most efficient fuel?

Sources of price comparison include MoneySavingExpert.com, which.co.uk/switch/energy-advice or energysavingtrust.org.uk

Who can help?

Contact EAC FirstStop 0800 377 70 70 for information about current government backed schemes to help people who are living in cold homes.

The Energy Saving Trust

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk 0300 123 1234 provides advice and information on energy efficiency programmes and financial support.

Homes which are too warm also cause health problems. Many of the remedies are the same - improve insulation and ventilation. The NHS website www.nhs.uk includes Heatwave information.

Defective or dangerous electrics

Look out for extensive use of multiple adaptors/trailing extensions as this may indicate lack of sockets and subsequent overloading. Old style switches, sockets & light fittings indicate that wiring is out of date. Burning smells from or discoloration of sockets and appliances are also a cause for concern.

Finding solutions

Cold homes with poor or unsafe heating

ACTION:

Defective wiring increases fire risk so as an absolute minimum check that the person has a working smoke alarm (the Fire Service may help).

The electricity supplier may offer a free safety check to vulnerable customers (usually includes older people) but do consider what can be done if the system is condemned as unsafe eg the gas fire or central heating turned off. Some will offer temporary emergency heating but not all. The local HIA or AgeUK may operate an emergency heating service.

If a full rewire is needed this is expensive. The local HIA may be able to help. When having the home rewired it can be useful to consider raising sockets and lowering switches to make them more easy to reach thereby reduce falls risk.

Who can help

Contact EAC FirstStop 0800 377 70 70

Electrical Safety First www.esc.org.uk offers safety advice – leaflets, a calculator to check overloading of sockets and a free smartphone app to run a simple visual checks of home electrics.

The Fire Service's free home fire safety checks include electrical safety
www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/hfsc

The local AgeUK and home improvement agency may offer handyperson services for small jobs or run a trusted trader register to find suitably qualified electricians.

Defective gas or solid fuel appliances

Look out for black soot or stain marks on gas appliance, yellow or orange lazy flame on gas fire – it should be 'crisp' and blue. High level of particulates eg. from solid fuel & wood stoves are also a cause for concern.

ACTION:

A carbon monoxide detector is highly recommended as a minimum measure. It is best if people have gas appliances checked regularly by qualified installers who must be listed on www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

Regular sweeping & cleaning out of chimneys, flues and solid fuel appliances is also necessary to keep them safe.

CO and Gas Safety Society www.co-gassafety.co.uk/ and CO Awareness covictim.org offer further information and support victims.

Finding solutions

Home security



Home security

Fear of burglary, and worries about security, have a significant effect upon the well-being of older people, but are often hidden. Anxiety about windows and doors that are insecure can cause sleeping problems and depression. The installation of locks and security devices are often easy and relatively cheap, but people are not always aware of the help which may be available.

What to look out for

- Doors that do not close and lock
- Broken windows or windows without locks
- Broken garden fences and gates
- Unkempt gardens that can give potential burglars a clue that the householder is an older, vulnerable person.

ACTION:

Improving security through repairs or improvements to locks on doors and windows is a first stop. HIAs/AgeUKs/local police may offer advice and practical help with these. The HIA or AgeUK may also offer help to clear gardens, repair fences, gates and walls, or at least may have lists of reputable traders who can offer these services.

Finding solutions

Information into Action

Now that you have worked through this self trainer, practise using what you have learnt by applying it to a case study based upon a real scenario.

Mrs Jones Story

Mrs Jones is 78 years old and lives alone in a Victorian terraced house, which she owns. She has angina and arthritis, which makes it difficult for her to get around easily. She also seems to have a persistent cough.

She is feeling a bit vulnerable at the moment as she tripped and fell outside the back door last week and was there for several hours until a neighbour saw her.

When you visit her home you see that she is finding it increasingly difficult to get up and down the stairs to the bathroom. She is also worried about the damp in her bedroom, which is causing a nasty smell and the wallpaper to peel. Her gutters are blocked but she cannot find anyone to clear them for her.

She has a gas fire in her living room and you notice sooty marks and yellow flames. She is using a calor gas fire when it is cold in her bedroom and a small electric fire in her kitchen.

She cannot completely turn off the hot water tap in the kitchen because it is too stiff and her hands are arthritic. The constant dripping is very irritating and it is getting her down.

Although she has almost £6,000 of savings she doesn't want to spend too much of it because she only receives a retirement pension and during the conversation complains about the rise in the council tax bill.

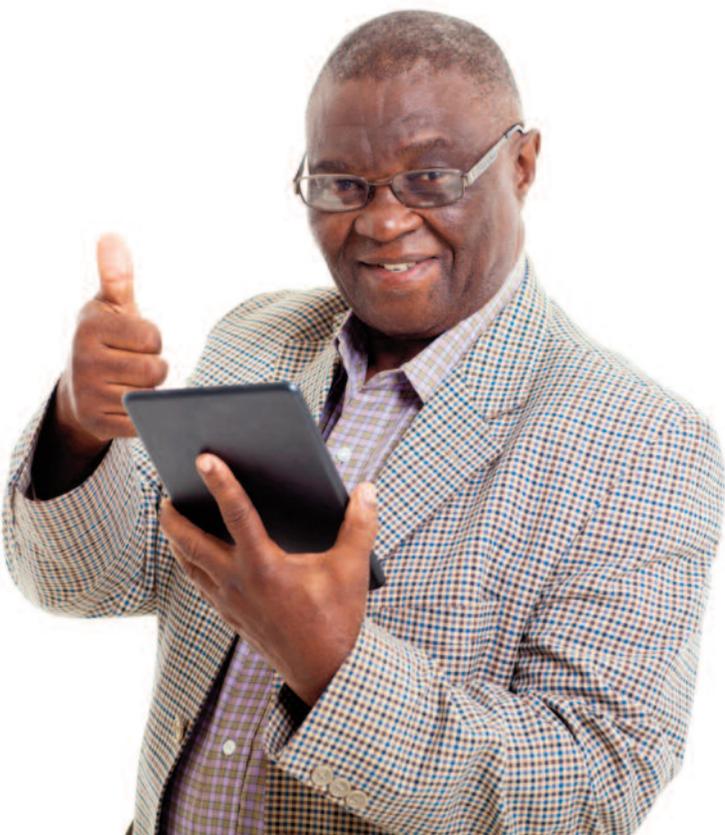
Task

What can you tell her that might help to improve her health, housing and living situation?

***HINT** – based on what you have read in this self trainer, think about the building defects that might be affecting her, what possible remedial measures may be available and who might help.*

Appendix A

Answers to Task 1



- 1 How many older people (aged 65 and over) were admitted as an emergency to hospital with potentially avoidable conditions (eg. fractures, respiratory infections & dehydration) last year, many of which would have been avoided through housing related improvements & better care at home.
5000 50,00 500,000 1 million 3 million

Answer to Q1

More than half a million people aged 65 and over were admitted as an emergency to hospital with potentially avoidable conditions which are affected by housing conditions eg fractures, respiratory infections & dehydration.

- 2 What percentage of older people (over 65yrs) live in ordinary housing (ie. not specialist such as sheltered, retirement or residential care)?
30% 60% 90%

Answer to Q2

90%

- 3 One in three people over the age of 65, and one in two over 80's, fall each year. About how many falls take place in the home?
Most About a quarter About half

Answer to Q3

About half

- 4 A cold home increases the risk of an older person having a stroke.
True False

Answer to Q4

True. The risk of heart attack or stroke increases as blood pressure rises and blood pressure increases when temperatures fall below 12°C. According to the NHS between 18°C and 21°C is a healthy room temperature - 9°C poses the risk of hypothermia and death.

Appendix A

Answers to Task 1

- 5 How many vulnerable older people over 75 yrs live in homes which are officially categorised as 'non-decent'?
10,000 500,000 1 million 2 million

Answer to Q5

About 1 million

- 6 Which of the following health problems are caused or made worse by housing conditions (tick each one that you think applies):
Asthma Arthritis COPD Heart disease Depression

Answer to Q6

All

Data Sources

2012-3 NHS Performance Data

ONS Census Data

Survey of English Housing (Annual) Dept for Communities & Local Government

www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/air-quality/publications/2009/damp-and-mould-health-risks,-prevention-and-remedial-actions2

Appendix B Housing & Health Links: Practitioners Checklist

Health Risk	Housing Link	Possible action	Who may help?
ACCIDENTS	Home accidents caused by environmental hazards are most common amongst older people and very young children, especially in low income households.	Many areas have accident prevention, home safety check or falls prevention schemes. People are usually visited in their home and major hazards identified. Some offer free or low cost remedial help, eg. small repairs or adaptations.	HIA AgeUK (see codes below on page 27)
GENERAL	Burns, scalds, falls	Safety check with installation of remedial measures.	HIA AgeUK
FALLS	Most falls are on stairs/steps & amongst people 75yrs+	Falls services may make improvements to the home, suggest exercise programmes and check use of medication.	HIA AgeUK CCG
FIRES	Fires are largely caused accidentally, with most injuries resulting from smoke inhalation.	Fire services and some voluntary organisations give out free smoke alarms to vulnerable households.	FS HIA AgeUK
CARBON MONOXIDE	Low level CO poisoning symptoms may be mistaken for viral infection eg. nausea, headaches, chest pain. Faulty gas fires and blocked chimneys are the main cause.	Carbon monoxide detectors can be installed by some safety check schemes. Contact the landlord or fuel utility company for a gas safety check/to arrange servicing of equipment, cleaning of chimneys and flues.	HIA AgeUK LL
ELECTRICITY	Risk of injury caused by electric shock or fire, trip hazard from trailing wires where sockets are overloaded.	Fuel utility safety check. Landlord requested to act. Obtain help to organise rewiring.	LL HIA HAC
INFECTIONS	Inadequate, old and un-hygienic food preparation and washing facilities can add to risk of infections and gastric illness, particularly amongst older people and children.	Improve kitchen and bathroom facilities. Landlords responsible for this in case of rented homes.	HIA LA LL
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION	Worry about crime, harassment, vandalism, Overcrowding Worry about home repairs or managing at home Money/Debt	Install security measures Re-housing Repair/adapt/move home Financial advice	HIA LA HAC HIA AgeUK CAB

Appendix B

Housing & Health Links: Practitioners Checklist (continued)

Health Risk	Housing Link	Possible action	Who may help?
CANCERS	Radon gas exposure increases lung cancer risk.	Increase underfloor ventilation	LA HIA
CIRCULATORY ILLNESS	Cold homes with inadequate insulation and heating can cause cold related medical problems, particularly in older people. Mortality from ischaemic heart disease and cerebrovascular disease accounts for about half of all excess cold related deaths.	Improve heating and ventilation Financial advice (to increase income to pay for heating)	HIA AgeUK LL LA CAB
DISABILITY	Mobility problems around the home can increase accident risk and depression.	Home Adaptations	FS HIA AgeUK
RESPIRATORY ILLNESS	Damp homes and condensation may promote mould growth and dust mites, causing respiratory problems, especially among young children, older people and allergy sufferers. Restricted ventilation can increase health damage by pollutants, is linked to increase in eye and nasal infections, headaches and tiredness. Overcrowding is associated with increased risk of disease.	Improve heating and ventilation. Deal with cause of damp Reduce moisture level in home Re-housing	HIA AgeUK LL CAB HAC

Appendix B

A-Z of who may help



EAC FirstStop

www.firststopadvice.org.uk

Advice Line: 0800 377 70 70

Offer free advice & information about all aspects of housing, care & support via tel advice, factsheets, website and personalised housing & care options reports. Can put you in touch with a range of local service providers including those listed below.

AgeUK

National information and fact sheets

www.ageuk.org.uk Advice Line: 0800 169 6565 .

Local AgeUKs may offer financial advice and practical services.

CAB Citizens Advice Bureau

Local CAB provide free advice on wide range of subjects. On-line Advice Guide:

www.adviceguide.org.uk/

DLC Disabled Living Centres/ Disabled Living Foundation

Some areas have display centres where disabled people can see & try out equipment. DLF gives advice about equipment, adaptations & services to make living independently at home safer

www.dlf.org.uk 0300 999 0004

FS Fire Service

Local Fire Service can give advice about most fire safety matters, sometimes including installation of smoke alarms and related practical help.

HAC Housing Advice Centres

Local HACs can give advice about most housing matters but most often deal with landlord and tenant problems, homelessness and re-housing.

HIA Home Improvement Agencies

These are the main source of housing help for owner occupiers. May be know as Care & Repair or Staying Put, these local services help older and disabled people with home repairs and adaptations. Many run small repair, adaptation, security, safety and falls check schemes. To find your local HIA Tel: 0845 864 5210
www-foundations.uk.com

LA Local Authority

Responsible for repair and adaptation of council housing. Environmental health department usually administers grants for adaptations, occasional help owner occupiers with repairs and enforce law concerning private landlords and disrepair.

LL Landlords

The way that you can help people with their housing problem will usually be different for tenants and owner occupiers. The landlord is responsible for maintenance of most aspects of the properties that they rent out and will usually be the first organisation to contact about disrepair.

CCG Clinical Commissioning Groups

May be the commissioners of falls prevention services. Also have wider public health responsibilities.

SS Social Services

Social Services occupational therapists are usually the main route to obtaining help with, advice about and grants for adaptations.

Appendix C

Answer to Mrs Jones situation

As the fall has been the trigger for the visit, it may be useful to start by offering information about possible services that she might find helpful in relation to the fall but aiming not to further alarm and worry her.

Try to work out whether she is keen to remain living in her current home – most older people are, but it could be that she is finding the home too much to manage and would like to move somewhere she would feel safer such as sheltered housing.

If this is the case referral to EAC FirstStop to talk through the pros and cons and her possible options would be a useful suggestion.

Nevertheless, even if she is thinking about moving, in most cases this will not happen very quickly so it is still important to take action to do something about the most pressing housing problems.

Assuming that she wishes to stay put, try opening up the conversation to find out if she has had any other falls, near misses or if there are times that she has worried about something (eg. you may find that she no longer uses the bath because of a past incident when she struggled to get out of the bath).

In order to tackle the issue of feeling safe and avoiding the problem of another fall like the previous week and not being able to get help offer the following suggestions:

- She might wish to consider using an alarm service ie. the scheme whereby you wear a pendant or other sort of device so that if you fall or have an emergency you press this and help is summoned.

- She might consider referral to a Falls Prevention Service – they could have a look around her home with her and explain what can be done to reduce the risk of falling again. For example, she could consider grab rails or perhaps seeing if it is possible to improve the back door access by levelling the step. Could refer either for occupational therapy assessment or obtain help via local Handyperson Service or home improvement agency

If it seems appropriate, raise the issue of the difficulty with the stairs:

- Has she thought about a stairlift? Given her limited financial resources she would have to apply for Occupational Therapy Assessment and probably a disabled facilities grant (again, home improvement agency could advise on local availability).

Dripping tap, gutters and gas fire problems

Sometimes a person's confidence can be gained by offering practical help which can be delivered quickly. If you know that the local home improvement agency offers a handyperson service to do small repairs point out that the dripping tap is wasting money through loss of hot water and also that by clearing out the gutters this may help with the damp in the bedroom. Then refer to HIA to have these jobs done.

It would also be important to do something about the gas fire and the risk of low level carbon monoxide poisoning. Free safety checks and CO detectors may be offered by the gas supply companies for older people. However, if the fire is condemned as unsafe it will be disconnected - knowing what AgeUK and/or

Appendix C

Answer to Mrs Jones situation

the home improvement agency can offer in terms of help with repairs/a new gas fire in this eventuality is therefore important.

If it seems possible to suggest more also consider:

Short term: When fixing dripping tap in kitchen does she want new lever taps fitted at the same time to make it easier for her to turn them off and on? If the service is on offer, ask the handy person to do a home safety and security check and fit any locks that are required to windows and doors at the same time.

Damp: Given the use of calor gas in the bedroom, it may not be possible for you to immediately spot whether the damp is due to condensation or penetrating damp from the blocked gutters. It may be necessary to undertake more extensive repair work than that offered by a handy person, in which case further help from the home improvement agency may be needed to find the money for this.

Heating & insulation: She may be able to apply for grants to help with improved heating and insulation measures (though this may be linked to her claiming welfare benefits and who her supplier is).

Maximise income: It seems almost certain that she is not receiving the welfare benefits that she is entitled to, including help with the council tax and pension credit (which may passport her to other services and help listed above).

Does she receive her lump sum winter fuel payments?

Refer her to local services eg AgeUK to make benefits claims if outside your remit.

How this case illustrates housing and health links

Through providing this information and advice you are:

- Reducing the chance that Mrs Jones will have a further, and perhaps more serious fall. (*Do you recall from the first section of this kit – falls are a major cause of injury and death amongst older people?*)
- Potentially improving her cough, arthritis and angina through making her home warmer and dryer, as well as reducing worry.
- Possibly avoiding a serious health problem through removing the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from the gas fire
- Enabling her to live more comfortably through the improvement of her financial situation – again, possibly reducing stress and worry of financial hardship.
- Giving her the confidence to continue to live independently despite the fall, both possibly through the alarm call system, but also through the sense that there are services that can help that are focussed on empowering a person to live in their own home.

Appendix D

A-Z of Sources of help



Home Repairs & Adaptations

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) www-foundations.uk.com 0845 864 5210

HIAs offer help to organise & carry out home repairs, adaptations and related practical work on home eg. home safety, handyvan. **Foundations** can put you in touch with your local HIA.

Disabled Living Foundation www.dlf.org.uk 0300 999 0004

Advice about equipment, adaptations & services to make living independently at home safer.

Which? www.which.co.uk Run a Trusted Trader scheme.

TrustMark www.trustmark.org.uk is a government endorsed Trusted Trader scheme.

Your local Trading Standards/HIA or AgeUK may also run a Trusted Trader scheme.

Energy Advice

The Energy Saving Trust 0300 123 1234 or 0800 512 012

Provides advice and information on energy efficiency programmes and financial support.

Neighbourhood Energy Action www.nea.org.uk/advice

Aims to eradicate fuel poverty. Range of practical information available on website.

General Advice for Older People

AgeUK www.ageuk.org.uk Advice Line: 0800 169 6565

Wide range of free information - Tel advice, website, factsheets and via local AgeUK groups.

Independent Age www.independentage.org.uk Advice Line: 0800 319 6789

Free tel advice, factsheets & website on home care, care homes and many related matters.

Turn2Us www.turn2us.org.uk Advice Line: 0808 802 2000

Help to access welfare benefits, charitable grants & financial help online, by phone via partners.

Citizens Advice (CAB) On-line Advice Guide: www.adviceguide.org.uk/

Local CAB provide free advice on a wide range of subjects via website and local bureau.

Housing & Care Options Advice

EAC FirstStop www.firststopadvice.org.uk Advice Line: 0800 377 70 70

Free advice & information about all aspects of accommodation, care & support via tel advice, factsheets, website and personalised housing & care options reports.