

CATCH 22:

Improving Evidence

Making the Housing, Health, Care and Ageing Connections

The Evidence Dilemma

In an era of major reductions in public expenditure higher standards of evidence of intervention outcomes are now required by decision makers, particularly those that demonstrate cost benefits.

The lack of investment in high standard academic research to quantify how accessible and satisfactory housing conditions impacts on health, care and ageing policy and practice, especially in mainstream¹ housing is a recognized challenge.

The housing sector has responded by primarily using individual case studies to illustrate how their services can save money, an approach which is often rejected as inadequate proof.

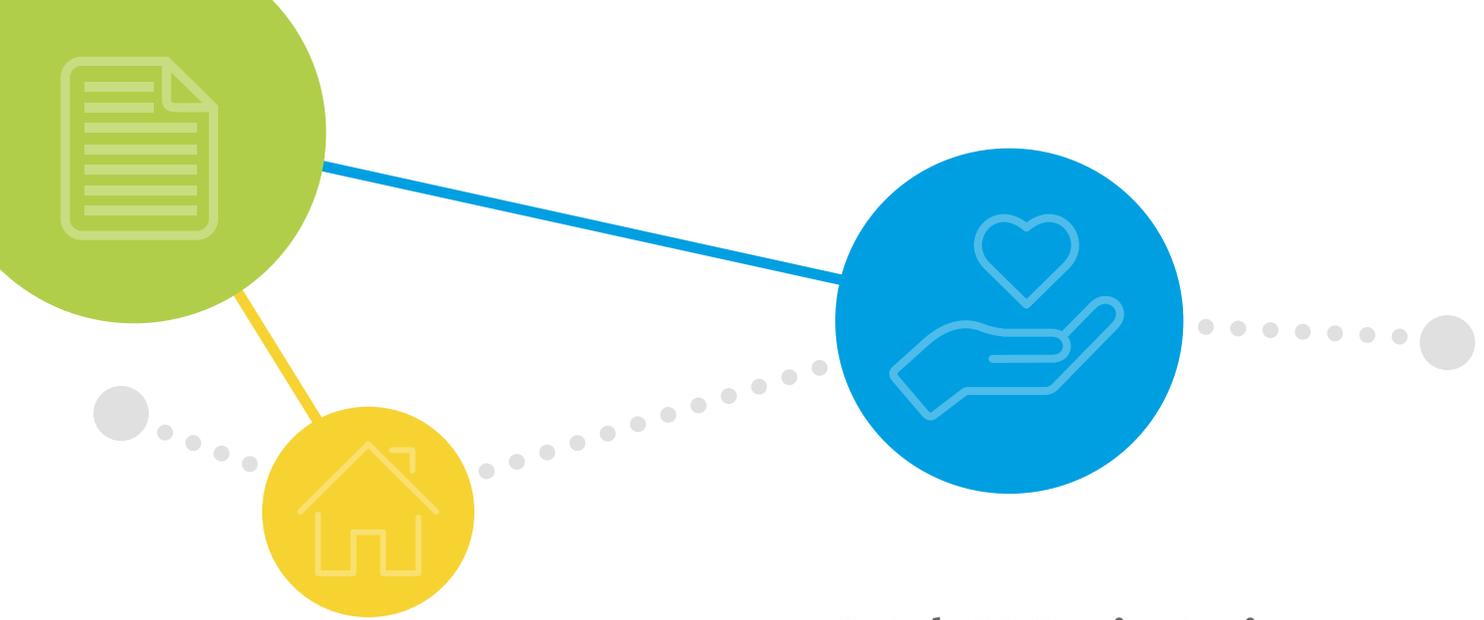
Consequently, the providers of housing services for older people find themselves in a 'Catch 22' situation i.e. being unable to provide academic standard evidence means that services may be decommissioned, further diminishing the opportunity to develop such an evidence base.

¹ Mainstream homes are any properties that have been built for anyone to live in, excluding specialist housing built specifically for older people e.g. sheltered housing.

Breaking the Cycle

Care & Repair England set up its 'Catch 22' initiative with the aim of improving evidence of housing impact, particularly for the practical housing services that can potentially help the large majority of older people who live in mainstream homes.

This brochure describes some of the work that has taken place, is in the pipeline, plus future opportunities.



The Problem

Most housing service providers do not have the resources, skills or connections to directly undertake (or commission) robust academic research.

Few academic bodies are undertaking general housing research, partly because it has not been a priority area for research council funding.

The resulting lack of independent, quantified evidence about the impacts of housing quality, accessibility and suitability on older people's health and lives jeopardises the future of housing services.

Particularly at risk are the practical housing services that older and disabled people (including carers) tell us they value so highly i.e. home adaptations, repairs & maintenance, handyperson services and home improvement agencies.

How much do adaptations save the NHS?

Catch 22 Project Aims

It was established to:

- Stimulate interest in undertaking research in the housing/health/care/ageing fields, particularly the impacts of mainstream housing adaptations and repairs by:
 - *Forging new partnerships between researchers and stakeholders, including housing practitioners*
 - *Encouraging research proposals that include the 'voice' of older people themselves*
- Make the case for the need for such evidence to potential funders, including Research Councils, related NGOs, national government and other stakeholders
- Influence national policy & practice through better application of housing related evidence through:
 - *Disseminating findings from relevant research to a broad audience*
 - *Organising events which bring together academic researchers, policy makers, commissioners and practitioners in order to stimulate innovation and joint working*
 - *Participating in related policy/practice groups and forums to ensure that the impacts of housing are more widely recognised*

The initial project focus was on the impacts of home adaptations, but the scope has been broadened to other housing, health, care and ageing interconnections, including housing hazards and disrepair.



Action to Date

This includes:

- **Virtual Research & Practice Network** – continuously expanding as fresh contacts are made with academics and practitioners across the country. To join email info@careandrepair-england.org.uk
- **Bringing people together and supporting new partnerships, including:**
 - **Falling Through the Gaps: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice in the Fields of Ageing, Falls Prevention and Housing Interventions** (London in 2015) organised in partnership with the British Society of Gerontology (BSG) to bring together academics, policy makers and stakeholders.
 - **The Right Prescription, Small but Significant and other seminars** – joint ventures with BSG and Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) which explored how practical housing interventions can impact on health, especially on use of NHS resources.
 - **Decent Homes for Ageing** – a new partnership with the Centre for Ageing Better to work together to reduce the number of older people living in non-decent homes, including building a related evidence base.

- Contributing to development of research and producing publications e.g.
 - **Home Adaptations Systematic Review of Evidence, Homes that Help primary research and Adapting for Ageing good practice** – all commissioned by Centre for Ageing Better with C&RE involvement in planning and/or delivery
 - **Dementia & Home Adaptations PhD Studentship** – non-academic sponsor/mentor
 - **Digital Health and Care** – partnered with University of Bristol for a project related to EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training
 - **Dunhill Medical Trust Collaboration** – funding awarded to two research projects on cost effectiveness and health impacts of home adaptations (University of Northumbria and Universities of Leeds/Swansea)
 - **Impact of Bathing Adaptations on Health and Wellbeing of Older People** – Universities of Nottingham & Northumbria feasibility study progressing bid for full trial.

Do decent homes cut care costs?

Do stairlifts reduce falls?





Evidence into Practice

The Catch 22 project contributes to a range of research related working/advisory groups & related networks, including Public Health England, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Royal College of Occupational Therapists, [genHOME](#), Home Adaptations Consortium, All Party Parliamentary Groups, government advisory committees, LGA and NHSE.

Resulting publications include:

- ***Off the Radar: Housing disrepair and health impact in later life*** – a joint project with data analysis undertaken by the Building Research Establishment and report production by Care & Repair England (2016)
- ***Small but Significant: The impact and cost benefits of handyman services***
- ***Integration in Action*** – evaluation of a Housing Options Service identifying NHS savings
- ***Infographic about ageing, housing, health and care*** – plus ***infographic/manifesto***

Getting Involved

Care & Repair England continues to work with a wide range of academics (experienced plus emerging researchers) and stakeholders to support research projects, facilitate new groups & initiatives, grow the research network and make representations to policy makers, funders and commissioners concerning the importance of new research in this field.

If you are interested in joining the virtual network or have ideas for projects you consider would be relevant to Catch 22 and would benefit from our involvement please contact Martin Hodges, the programme lead.

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About Care & Repair England

Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation (Reg 25121R, est. 1986) which aims to improve older people's housing. It innovates, develops, promotes and supports practical housing initiatives & related policy and practice which enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they wish, particularly for older people living in poor or unsuitable private sector housing.

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