Housing and health inequalities – how can data help?

Background

- Housing affects health, but it is not always clear what action could and should be taken locally.
- Using data and information better could be useful to guide local action.
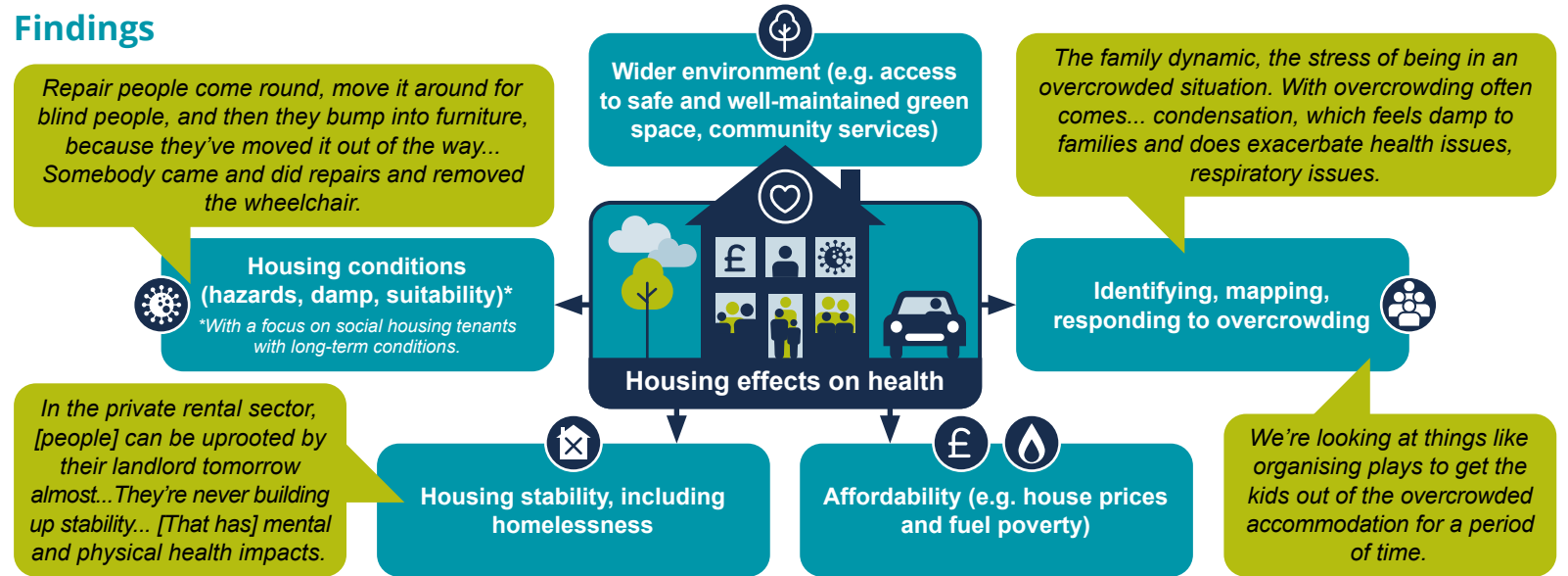
Aim of this project

We wanted to explore with councils how information could be used better to identify housing problems affecting health and guide local action.

What did we do?

- We interviewed 15 council staff and five people that could represent people with lived experience of housing problems.
- We asked: *"How do housing problems affect health in your borough?"*, and *"Where could local levers and data address any problems?"*
- We discussed interview findings with five council representatives to come up with ideas of how information could be used better to address housing problems affecting health.

Findings

Repair people come round, move it around for blind people, and then they bump into furniture, because they've moved it out of the way... Somebody came and did repairs and removed the wheelchair.

Wider environment (e.g. access to safe and well-maintained green space, community services)

The family dynamic, the stress of being in an overcrowded situation. With overcrowding often comes... condensation, which feels damp to families and does exacerbate health issues, respiratory issues.

Housing conditions (hazards, damp, suitability)*

With a focus on social housing tenants with long-term conditions.

Housing effects on health

Identifying, mapping, responding to overcrowding

In the private rental sector, [people] can be uprooted by their landlord tomorrow almost...They're never building up stability... [That has] mental and physical health impacts.

Housing stability, including homelessness

Affordability (e.g. house prices and fuel poverty)

We're looking at things like organising plays to get the kids out of the overcrowded accommodation for a period of time.

- Interview participants raised five broad ways in which housing affected health in their area (see figure)
- Interviewees described activities they used or were considering to identify and address **overcrowding** and **housing conditions**.
- Discussions focused on ideas for improving the collection or access to data that may improve the effectiveness of local strategies focusing on these two areas.

Next steps

Why don't we instigate something where people call in for their repairs and we use it as an opportunity to update the system?

Councils may take forward ideas to:

- Improve the use of social housing residents' health information to improve council responses to housing repairs
- Mitigate the effects of overcrowding on health, e.g. through making more use of community spaces

Future work may aim to:

- Combine data to identify areas where overcrowding for households with children is likely
- Evaluate the effects of using community spaces on residents' wellbeing

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