

Housing

Headlines

Decent, affordable and appropriate housing is increasingly needed to meet the current and longer term needs of people in Kirklees. There is also a significant shortfall in the number and suitability of homes needed for local residents, particularly given the rising number of elderly residents and people of all ages with a disability. There are 5,000 empty homes in the area, mostly in the private sector, that need bringing back into use.

1 in 6 (16%) homes were in poor condition and often occupied by people who were most vulnerable – elderly, economically inactive, socially isolated - and who were unable to bring their homes up to a decent standard and maintain that standard. Overall, 1 in 6 (16%) householders felt their house was not suitable for their needs; older people were more likely to feel it was too large and families with children were more likely to feel it was too small.

In areas of Kirklees where high deprivation levels existed there were corresponding high levels of non-decent, poor quality housing, especially in the private rented and owner-occupied sector within central Huddersfield and Dewsbury.

Young adults are at particular risk of homelessness as levels of unemployment amongst young people increase along with limited suitable affordable accommodation and difficulties in accessing credit.

Why is this issue important?

To be classed as decent, a house must have reasonably modern facilities, be warm and weatherproof. People who live in clean, warm, safe and affordable homes are less likely to experience ill health as a consequence of their housing. Bad housing conditions include homelessness, temporary accommodation, overcrowding, insecurity, and housing in poor physical condition that constitutes a risk to health. Children in bad housing conditions are more likely to have [mental health](#) problems, have respiratory problems, experience long-term ill health and [disability](#), experience slow physical growth and have delayed cognitive development.

Creating a physical environment in which people can live healthier lives with a greater sense of wellbeing is hugely important in reducing health inequalities. Living close to areas of green space including parks, woodland and other open spaces can improve health, regardless of social class. Mental health may be particularly affected by the amount of local green space. The more deprived the neighbourhood, the more likely it is to have social and environmental characteristics presenting risks to health. These include poor housing, higher rates of [crime](#), poorer air quality, a lack of green spaces and places for children to play and more risks to safety from traffic.

What significant factors are affecting this issue?

Fuel [poverty](#), where a household cannot afford to keep warm, damages people's health and affects their quality of life. A fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel (see also climate change section). The old, children and those who are disabled or have a long-term illness are especially vulnerable. Extreme cold is believed to be the main explanation for the extra winter deaths occurring each year between December and March.

1 in 6 (16%) of all homes in private ownership and private rent were in poor condition².

Housing needs change for people as their circumstances change, especially as people age or become more vulnerable. Insufficient affordable housing in Kirklees limits housing choice and impacts on health. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment highlighted the local key issues for affordable housing²:

- Population growth of over 50,000 people by 2029 with 34,000 of this growth in those aged over 65 years.
- By 2029, 1 in 5 adults will be aged over 65 years, an estimated 45% increase and the largest growth will be among people aged over 85 years.
- Ageing populations will mean increased need for adaptations and support for households with long term health conditions. New developments should build 'homes for life' that are easily adapted as household needs change.
- There were more than 170,000 households, with an additional 32,400 households projected by 2026.
- The greatest increase (45%) will be single person households, especially in the 45-54 and over 75 years age bands.

- Black and minority ethnic households could account for between 56% and 67% of household growth to 2021.
- There was a need for an estimated 1,540 additional affordable homes each year, including particularly high demand for three bedroom/ larger properties.

Best use of existing stock is also necessary². Kirklees had a high number of homes (approx 1,370, or 0.9% of the local housing stock) that have been empty for over six months. Most were within the private sector. Many people also believed their existing home was not suitable for their needs. Overall, 1 in 6 (16%) households believed their home was not suitable for their needs. 1 in 6 (16%) of householders who felt that their home was not suitable believed their home was too big. Of this group, over 1 in 3 (38%) were pensioner households. Black and minority ethnic householders who felt their home was unsuitable were more likely to say their home was too small (almost 1 in 2, 47%) compared with 1 in 3 (36%) white householders.

Homelessness, although reducing in Kirklees, still affected more than 1,000 households every year. The recession put more people at risk of losing their home and made it less likely that people were in a position to make alternative, permanent, satisfactory housing arrangements. Young people in Kirklees was particularly affected by lack of suitable, secure housing and people aged 25 and under and were the largest group of applicants by age².

Views of local people

Residents wanted homes that met their housing need in successful communities that were socially inclusive.

What could commissioners and service planners consider?

- Prioritise building/converting/facilitating homes that were clean, warm, decent and affordable.
- Reduce the number of vacant properties and increase the availability of appropriately sized homes for families and single person households
- Support for people to live as independently as possible as they age
- Shift the focus of housing related support towards prevention and intervention to reduce the need for intensive interventions such as hospital admission or residential or nursing care.
- New developments should consider the future needs of residents as they age and households change.

References

1. Marmot, M. *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010*. 2010. <http://www.marmot-review.org.uk/>
2. Kirklees Council. Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2009). <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/business/regeneration/ldf/pdf/strategicHousingMarketAssessment2009.pdf>

Kirklees Council Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012 is now available from: <http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/business/regeneration/ldf/pdf/strategicHousingMarketAssessment.pdf>

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