The health impacts of energy performance investments in low-income areas: a mixed-methods approach

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published March 2018  
DOI: 10.3310/phr06050

Plain English summary

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Public Health Research 2018; Vol. 6: No. 5  
DOI: 10.3310/phr06050

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What was the question?
Living in cold homes can be harmful to people’s mental and physical health. In this study, we wanted to see whether or not improving the energy efficiency of homes, through measures such as wall insulation and new heating systems, could improve the health of people living in them.

What did we do?
We analysed the health records of people who received energy efficiency measures to assess changes in emergency admissions to hospital over time. We also interviewed residents before and after they received energy efficiency measures, and monitored the homes of a smaller number of households.

What did we find?
We found that energy efficiency measures contributed to people’s general well-being by making homes warmer, and easier and cheaper to heat to a comfortable level. Warmer homes also made people feel less socially isolated. However, we found no evidence that energy efficiency measures improved people’s mental and physical health.

What does this mean?
Improving the energy efficiency of homes provides social and economic benefits to people living in them. However, area-based programmes may not improve chronic health conditions, reduce the number of hospital visits or reduce costs for the health service.
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This report
The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 11/3020/05. The contractual start date was in May 2013. The final report began editorial review in November 2016 and was accepted for publication in June 2017. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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