

# THE COST OF POOR HOUSING IN WALES

Maggie Davidson, Simon Nicol, Mike Roys and Adele Beaumont



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Adele Beaumont



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- a more efficient and sustainable construction sector, with
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Registered Office: Bucknalls Lane, Garston, Watford, Herts WD25 9XX

BRE Trust  
Garston, Watford WD25 9XX  
Tel: 01923 664743  
Email: [secretary@bretrust.co.uk](mailto:secretary@bretrust.co.uk)  
[www.bretrust.org.uk](http://www.bretrust.org.uk)

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or  
IHS BRE Press  
Willoughby Road  
Bracknell RG12 8FB  
Tel: 01344 328038  
Fax: 01344 328005  
Email: [bpress@ihs.com](mailto:bpress@ihs.com)

Requests to copy any part of this publication should be made to the publisher:  
IHS BRE Press  
Garston, Watford WD25 9XX  
Tel: 01923 664761  
Email: [bpress@ihs.com](mailto:bpress@ihs.com)

Printed on paper sourced from responsibly managed forests

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# FOREWORD

Shelter Cymru campaigns for the right of everyone in Wales to a decent home and we regularly assist people whose lives and futures are blighted as a consequence of living in poor and unhealthy housing. We were therefore delighted to work in partnership with the BRE Trust to commission this significant study that, for the first time, quantifies in detail the ongoing economic costs of poor housing to the NHS and society in Wales.

Decent homes are the foundation of people's lives and, as such, a key determinant of health and well-being. Although there is extensive literature on the relationships between poor housing and both physical and mental ill-health, it remains difficult to translate this recognition into coordinated and concerted action on housing as a priority for public health.

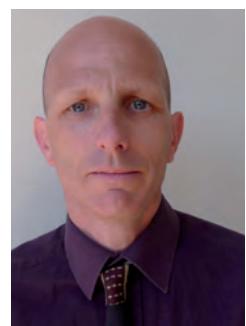
This study should have considerable resonance for both national and local policy and decision makers. Firstly, it is essential reading for local authorities and health boards to inform the development of their public health strategies. The cost-benefit modelling underpinning the research is a practical tool that should be used to target interventions at poor housing as one of the key causes of illness. Secondly, and crucially, the research again demonstrates that it is imperative for the Welsh Assembly Government to make decent homes a higher budgetary priority. Healthy housing makes a key contribution towards better health and well-being and, ultimately, improves the life chances of people in Wales. It also makes economic sense by reducing the ongoing and growing cost burden to the NHS and wider society.

Finally, the study clearly indicates the need to forge a cross-cutting approach to social policy in Wales and to improve the housing stock for both social and economic reasons. On a national level, it may well be time for the Welsh Assembly Government to develop a comprehensive public health service that incorporates housing.

John Puzey, Director,  
Shelter Cymru



John Pritchard,  
Policy Manager,  
Shelter Cymru



Shelter Cymru is Wales' people and homes charity. Our vision is that everyone in Wales should have a decent home. We believe a home is a fundamental right and essential to the health and well-being of people and communities.

For further information visit  
[www.sheltercymru.org.uk](http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk)

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the results of a research project commissioned by Shelter Cymru and BRE Trust to apply a methodology developed to calculate the cost of poor housing in England to the Welsh housing stock. A full description of the original methodology is contained in *The Real Cost of Poor Housing*<sup>[1]</sup>. A summary of its findings are contained in the Information Paper: *Quantifying the Cost of Poor Housing*<sup>[2]</sup>.

The research demonstrates the continuing health and societal impacts of poor housing in Wales. Proportionately, there is considerably more poor housing in Wales than in England, and there is a particular over-representation of potential health and safety problems caused by dangerous stairs and steps, and cold and damp

homes. However, if works are targeted to reduce the worst health and safety hazards in these homes to an acceptable level, it is estimated that there will be a benefit to the NHS of around £67 million per year. This figure doubles if our definition of poor housing is widened to include all homes with a SAP (energy efficiency rating) of 40 or less and basic heating and insulation improvements are targeted towards these homes. In addition to the direct costs to the NHS, poor housing also results in broader economic consequences for society in Wales – including poorer educational attainment and life chances – which can be estimated at a further £100 million per annum.





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This report summarises the results of a research project commissioned by Shelter Cymru and BRE Trust to apply a methodology developed to calculate the cost of poor housing in England to the Welsh housing stock. The research found that reducing the worst hazards of poor housing in Wales would save the NHS about £67 million per year.



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IHS BRE Press, Willoughby Road  
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 8FB  
[www.brebookshop.com](http://www.brebookshop.com)  
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ISBN 978-1-84806-176-7



9 781848 061767



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