

Tackling Health Inequalities through Investing in Housing

Brussels January 2013



Case Studies from Northern Ireland

- 1. Investing in Social Housing to reduce Fuel Poverty**
- 2. Investing in housing to reduce health-related expenditure**

Background

Northern Ireland Housing Executive – a regional housing organisation with a number of key strategic roles including:

Research into housing conditions.

Case studies based on secondary analysis of House Condition Surveys undertaken in 2009 and 2011. Modelling work undertaken in partnership with the Building Research Establishment (BRE)

Reducing Fuel Poverty

Government's (Dept for Social Devt's) new Fuel Poverty strategy for Northern Ireland: *Warmer Healthier Homes* – published in March 2011

Vision – people live in a warm, comfortable home and need not worry about the effect of the cold on their health

Key figures from the 2009 HCS showed 44% of households in Fuel Poverty (51% in social housing)

Fuel Poverty - Definition

UK wide definition:

a household is in FP if in order to maintain a satisfactory level of heating it is required to spend 10%+ of its income on household fuel (including space, water heating, lighting and appliances)

Government approved model developed by BRE applied to NI HCS data

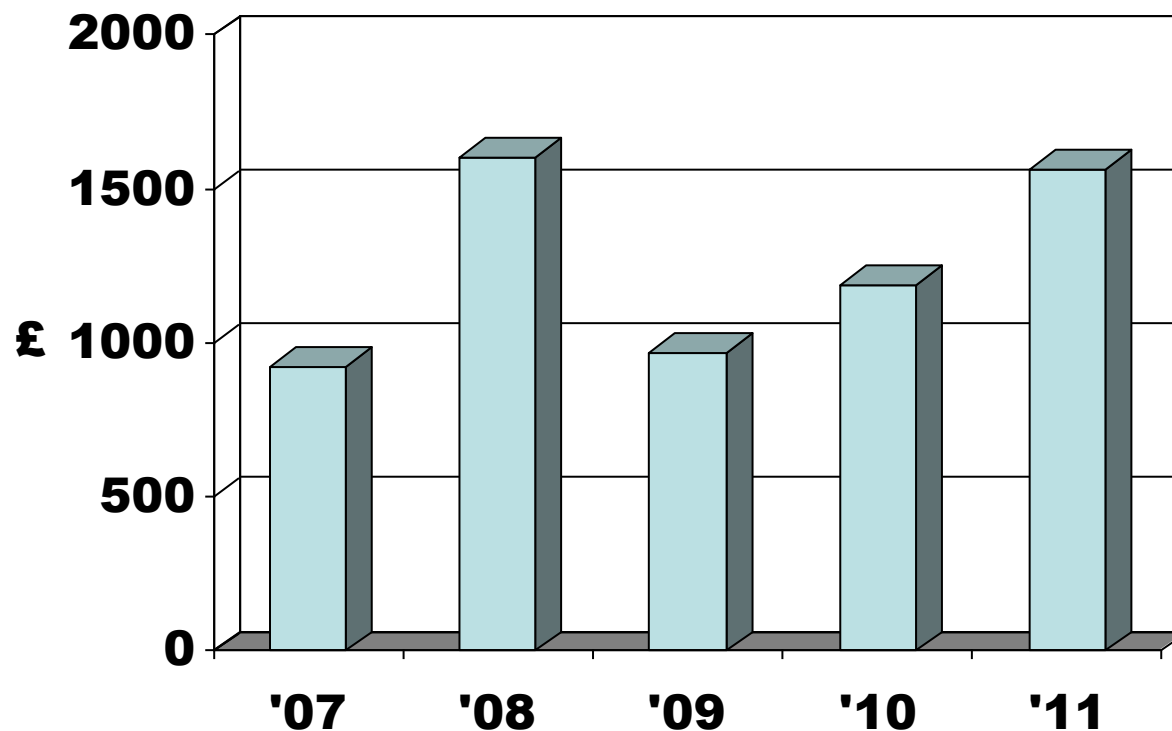
Key FP Statistics

		2006	2009	2011
Total		34%	44%	42%
Social Sector		37%	51%	40%

Addressing Fuel Poverty

- **Household incomes – generally drifting up – but disposable income - in real terms reducing – in addition unemployment rising**
- **Energy prices rising steeply: by 65% from 2006-11; by 61% 2009-11**
- **High dependency on oil (75%) and even solid fuel / electricity (7%)**

Rising Oil Prices in NI



Reducing Fuel Poverty in Social Housing

- **Little can be done about the price of fuel or incomes**
- **Strategy addresses fuel source and insulation**
- **Total social housing stock: 120,000**
- **2009-2011:**
 - **10,000 heating conversions (solid fuel/electric to oil/gas)**
 - **3,000 new properties – Code 3 standard**
 - **25,000 properties insulated/double glazing**

Cost of Poor Housing in NI

- **Separate piece of work undertaken by Building Research Establishment**
- **Estimates the cost of poor housing to the health service**
- **‘Poor Housing’ defined as having one or more Category 1 hazards (as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating – e.g. excessive damp or cold, food safety or sanitation, falls on stairs.**

Cost of Poor Housing (2)

- **2009 House Condition Survey estimated that approximately 20% of the total stock had category 1 hazards.**
- **Using a model developed originally by the University of Warwick based on estimating the potential effect of hazards on occupants, visitors and neighbours – in terms of degree of seriousness and likelihood**

Cost of Poor Housing

- **Estimated cost of reducing Category 1 hazards to acceptable level: £470m (nearly E600m)**
- **Estimated annual savings to Health Service of £33m (E40m) per annum**
- **Pay back period of 13 years**
- **Only includes 40% of cost to society as a whole**

Conclusion

- Investment in social housing and indeed all housing can make very significant differences to the health and well-being of particularly households
- There can be direct savings to the public purse
- As well as more indirect ones through higher education standards and greater social inclusion
- If investment in social housing had not taken place – more than 50% in Fuel Poverty!