

# Watford Borough Council – Improving Private Sector Housing and Promoting Health & Wellbeing

## Challenges

**Watford is a popular place to live with growing demand for housing of all types.** With the borough's relatively small size, high population density and urbanised built environment, the task of maintaining an excellent housing offer to support sustainable growth and to maintain high quality of life in the town is a formidable challenge.

Housing is a key determinant of health, and poor housing conditions continue to cause preventable deaths and contribute to health inequalities. In Watford (and nationally) 'Falls' and 'Excess Cold' are by far the most common housing-related defects in the home that affect health.



Advisory



Data



Research



Tools

## Solution

Using BRE's 2004 stock condition survey information and a Stock Modelling and Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Watford Borough Council developed a policy to improve and maintain private sector housing standards, promoting health, wellbeing and sustainability in which available resources are targeted at those most in need.

With resources tight, the policy seeks to provide added value and greater impact by making use of external and other sources of funding, in conjunction with exploiting the opportunities to work with partners. The Council already has an excellent track record in this area such as using Energy Company Obligation funding and government grants and initiatives to improve housing conditions. Current financial assistance is limited in its reach and ability to help large numbers of residents. Therefore, to broaden the number of people it can help, the policy will use a proactive project-based approach for some of the financial assistance. The Council now has more information available on housing conditions in the borough and can specifically target projects based on housing characteristics and household need. Alongside this project-based approach, other individual grants and loans will be targeted at our most vulnerable residents with applications for assistance via a referral from a housing or health based professional.

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# Trusted expertise you can build on

## Benefits

**As well as making substantial savings to the NHS and to society, Watford's policy has the potential to improve economic prosperity and also reduce the demands for services provided by the Council.**

Another use of the data provided by the stock modelling was to complete a targeted mail-out to residents. The data enabled the Council to specifically target dwellings of certain age bands, with poor EPC's as well as likely properties that had low or no insulation. The mail-out promoted the Hertfordshire wide [Herts Warmer Homes](#) insulation scheme and following the targeted mailing there was a huge spike in referrals with Watford receiving over a third of the total referrals between the 10 district authorities. Watford were also able to target our low-income housing.

For more detailed information, please download Watford's [Private Sector Renewal Policy](#).

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**£2.4 million**  
saving to NHS, reducing  
excess cold hazards

**10% increase in  
dwellings**  
Over 10 years



**£39,157**  
dwellings  
56% owner occupied,  
28% private rented,  
16% social rented

### Get in touch

For more information on BRE's services in housing and health go to [www.bregroup.com/housingstock](http://www.bregroup.com/housingstock)  
Email: [housingandhealth@bre.co.uk](mailto:housingandhealth@bre.co.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)330 321 8811