

## CIH response to the ONS Health Index consultation

### Introduction

CIH is the membership body for people working in and with an interest in housing across the UK. Our members work for local authorities, arm's length management organisations and housing associations across the UK. CIH believes that the right homes in decent, accessible, and well-designed neighbourhood are fundamental to supporting the health and wellbeing of people at every stage of life.

### Response to questions

*On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very happy and 5 is very unhappy, what do you think of the concept of a health index as a way to measure health?*

Rating 5

CIH welcomes the development of the Health Index. The idea of a national indicator that can track the development of a nation's overall health and whether it is improving or deteriorating is valuable. The proposal to encourage its use by governments to shape policy and investment decisions (and to be accountable for how those policies impact) alongside other key measures and concerns such as economic growth, is vital. The current pandemic has clearly illustrated that health and economic wellbeing are interlinked, shaped by and shaping the other factor at national, local, and individual levels. Therefore, it is critical that, in future, government's policies and investment decisions are focused on how both economic growth and health will be impacted.

*On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very happy and 5 is very unhappy, what do you think of the Health Index as presented in this consultation, as a way to measure health?*

Rating 4

The proposed building blocks for the Health Index incorporate the wider social determinants of health echoing the approach of Sir Michael Marmot's review of health inequalities and previous studies. These provide a balance of factors that affect health overall, and importantly are also measures that can be identified and targeted/ addressed through interventions to achieve improvements. Having a health indicator to inform interventions that support health rather than only to

address illness will help to build policies nationally and locally that shift emphasis to areas to support health and wellbeing and prevent illness.

*To what extent do you feel the Health Index as we have presented it fulfils the aims we presented? (completely, to some extent or not at all)*

To a large extent

CIH largely agrees with the factors identified and built into the Health Index; the interactive web- based tool seems very user-friendly and clear. However, as the index is refined, we would encourage the inclusion of housing conditions, and accessibility/ adaptability as key sub indicators, alongside the proposed indicators of access to and affordability of housing.

Evidence exists that housing conditions are a significant factor on health and increased costs to individuals and public services; BRE's research has illustrated that poor housing conditions costs the NHS £1.4 billion. The difficulties for households coping with lockdown whilst living in poor housing in the North of England has been vividly highlighted recently (Lockdown, rundown, breakdown, October 2020). Currently, only 9 per cent of existing homes have basic accessibility standards, but the impact for disabled people to engage with education and employment is significantly affected by lack of suitable housing; for example disabled people in inaccessible housing are four times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people ( EHRC, [Housing and disabled people: Britain's hidden crisis](#)).

As the Index is developed to enable policy and investment decisions at the local as well as national level, housing conditions will be a critical factor to consider to direct local interventions, and in planning local services to support long term planning for health (for adaptations and for types of new homes required in local areas for example). The Health index will be a valuable tool to shape local joint strategic needs assessments, local housing assessments and Local Plans, and thus to direct investment by councils, health agencies and housing partners within communities.

*On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very likely and 5 is very unlikely, how likely are you to use the Health Index as it is currently proposed for your own analysis?*

Rating 4

CIH has long argued for investment in housing and related support services to support people, and to help them to maintain health and wellbeing. The Health Index will be helpful to clarify what is working, and support calls for further

investment in housing as one of the key determinants of health, where improvements are needed. At the local level it will be useful to strengthen partnerships between councils, health bodies and housing partners and focus on shared priorities for investment and effective interventions.

*Which elements of the Health Index's data and content would you want us to improve for you to be more likely to use it?*

As above, we acknowledge the difficulties identified in the consultation paper around housing condition and specifically energy efficiency/ fuel poverty. However, given the evidence for the significant impacts that housing conditions have on health, work to refine or develop this data (drawing on CIEH's health and housing safety rating system for example) would be invaluable to enhance the effectiveness of the index.

*How would you want others to use the Health Index?*

We agree with the aim for the Health Index to be used annually at the national level by government to help to shape decision on policies and investment, alongside measures for economic growth; and to hold to account on improvements as evidenced by the Health Index over time.

As it is developed it will also be similarly useful at the local level for councils and partners across health, housing etc., to plan for appropriate housing, related services and other measures that improve the health of local communities.

## About CIH

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple - to provide housing professionals and their organisations with the advice, support, and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world.

Further information is available at: [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

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