

GoWell is a collaborative partnership between the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, the University of Glasgow and the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, sponsored by Glasgow Housing Association, the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

A large teal speech bubble shape containing the title text.

**Housing  
Improvements,  
Housing Quality  
and Psychosocial  
Benefits from  
the Home**

A grey silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, positioned to the right of the teal speech bubble.

February 2012

*GoWell is a planned ten-year research and learning programme that aims to investigate the impact of investment in housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. It commenced in February 2006 and has a number of different research components. This paper is part of a series of Briefing Papers which the GoWell team has developed in order to summarise key findings and policy and practice recommendations from the research. Further information on the GoWell Programme and the full series of Briefing Papers is available from the GoWell website at: [www.gowellonline.com](http://www.gowellonline.com)*

This briefing paper looks at data from the GoWell study, gathered from a large survey of social renters across the city of Glasgow. It focuses on the association between housing quality and housing improvement works – mostly carried out under the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) investment programme – on residents' wellbeing.

## Key Findings

- Housing and neighbourhoods can be considered psychosocial environments: spaces in which people meet and interact, with the quality of these interactions influencing wellbeing both positively and negatively.
- Using data from the GoWell 2008 survey of 3,749 adults living in social rented accommodation, we have analysed how housing improvements and home quality relate to the psychosocial benefits of control and status derived from the home.
- 41% of social rented tenants reported receiving housing improvements in the previous two years with a satisfaction rate of 89.5%.
- The relationship between home improvement and psychosocial benefits is an indirect one, operating via the effect improvements have on perceptions of housing quality. Two types of psychological benefit were examined: 'control' and 'status'.
- Internal improvements and improvements to home security were associated with better home quality. Evidence also showed a relatively large positive relationship to perceived home quality when warmth and internal improvements were both delivered. Warmth improvements alone were associated with poorer perceptions of home quality for reasons we do not understand, although internal disruption of the home may be a factor here.
- Home security has the largest effect size in relation to psychosocial control, while a positive perception of internal space within the home showed the greatest relationship to status.
- Other internal home quality items, notably internal layout, decoration and bathroom quality, showed positive relationships with both control and status.
- Compared to houses, flats (particularly multi-storey flats) were negatively associated with perceptions of residential quality and psychosocial status.
- Neighbourhood satisfaction remains important to perceptions of home quality and to both dimensions of psychosocial benefit.

- Landlord relations had the most powerful associations in the model. Where there was dissatisfaction with being kept informed by the landlord or with the overall service from the landlord, this was negatively associated with perceptions of housing quality. It should be noted however that only a minority of respondents were dissatisfied with these two aspects of landlord relations.
- Dissatisfaction with the landlord service was also associated with lower feelings of control and status. Lower sense of status was also linked to feeling the landlord did not take residents' views into account in decision-making (also involving a minority of respondents).



## INTRODUCTION: HOUSING AS A PSYCHOSOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Historically, the relationship between housing quality and health has been understood in terms of direct impacts, where unsound structures, poor sanitation, air quality or temperature control lead to injuries, illness and disease. However, in modern western countries, where many of the worst effects of poor housing have been substantially reduced and attention has turned to the role of mental wellbeing in dividing populations<sup>1</sup>, it seems appropriate to consider that housing improvements should lead to better health outcomes in both physical and mental health terms.

Although improvements to the home environment have been associated with positive mental health impacts including reduced levels of depression and fewer damaging health behaviours, such as problem drinking or substance abuse<sup>2,3</sup>, they have also been known to have unintended consequences with negative mental health impacts. These include stress; destruction of social networks; and increased rent, council tax or fuel costs, causing dependence on benefits or forcing households to relocate.<sup>4,5</sup>

One important way in which housing and neighbourhoods may support mental wellbeing is that they provide psychosocial environments. They are spaces in which people meet and interact directly, but also relate to each other indirectly via perceptions and observations of one another. The quality of these interactions has knock-on effects which impact on wellbeing both directly, through biological responses to chronic stress, and indirectly, through mental health and health behaviours.<sup>1,6</sup>

A good residential psychosocial environment is said to be one which promotes a positive view of oneself in relation to others, for example in terms of trust, control, confidence, self-esteem or status. Conversely, a poor psychosocial environment

fosters characteristics such as an emphasis on self-interest and material success, lack of common identity, poor social relations, status competition and authoritarian values<sup>1</sup> all of which can have negative consequences for those least well-placed to succeed in such circumstances. For example, poor home quality might be considered symptomatic of lack of achievement, thereby damaging self-esteem and reducing the desire or capacity for social interaction. Therefore, it is not hard to see how the home constitutes an important psychosocial environment in the modern world.



## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The remainder of this paper presents findings from the GoWell Wave 2 survey in 2008, on the impacts of housing quality and housing improvement works on mental wellbeing associated with the home, addressing the specific questions:

- To what extent are housing improvements reflected in residents' perceptions of home quality?
- Do perceptions of home quality represent a mediating pathway between housing improvements and the psychosocial benefits of home?
- Are the relationships between housing improvements, home quality and psychosocial benefits moderated by other aspects of the residential psychosocial environment?



## THE STUDY CONTEXT: HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS IN GLASGOW

Under Scottish Government policy to modernise public housing<sup>7</sup>, and following a ballot of tenants, Glasgow City Council transferred its municipal housing stock comprising over 80,000 properties to the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) in 2003. As part of the social rented sector, GHA properties must comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2012. In line with the objectives set out for stock transfer, GHA has spent £1 billion on improving the quality of the housing stock in its first seven years, with plans to commit a further £250 million by 2013.<sup>8</sup> This investment has resulted in substantial internal improvements (e.g. 42,555 heating systems and 44,650 new kitchens by 2011), as well as significant numbers of external improvements (e.g. 39,299 homes over-clad and 37,389 homes re-roofed by 2011).

One aim of the GoWell programme is to investigate the impacts of housing and neighbourhood renewal interventions. The study neighbourhoods where respondents are located are among the most disadvantaged communities in Glasgow and Scotland as a whole<sup>9</sup>, with all falling within the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland which form the target for many area-based policy interventions. GoWell therefore enables us to examine the benefits associated with home quality and the possible impacts of housing improvements in the particular context of deprived areas. It should be noted that within these areas a range of problems external to the home itself exist, ranging from vandalism, traffic and noise to crime and social stigma and these have been shown to undermine wellbeing by increasing insecurity and social isolation and reducing people's sense of status and control.<sup>10,11,12</sup>



## WHAT WE DID

We used data drawn from the GoWell 2008 survey, which included 3,749 adults (18 years old or over), living in social rented accommodation, from 15 study areas across Glasgow (see [www.gowellonline.com](http://www.gowellonline.com)).

Using principal components extraction<sup>1</sup>, we found that people in our sample drew two kinds of psychosocial benefits from their homes: control and status. We then developed a series of statistical models and used ordinary least squares regression analysis to understand the relationships between housing improvements, housing quality and the attainment of feelings of control and status by residents.

The analysis was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, we looked at how different types of housing improvements might affect occupants' perceptions of home quality. At the same time, we controlled for other aspects of the residential environment relating to housing occupancy (overcrowding, built form and intention to move home), landlord relations, and the local neighbourhood. We also controlled for socio-economic characteristics of the respondents (which might also affect their mental wellbeing) including gender, education, citizenship and economic status.

In the second phase of analysis, we tested how housing quality and housing improvements might directly improve people's sense of control and status. Numbers included in this briefing paper refer to changes in value of the relevant index (from 0 to 100), with higher figures indicating better levels of status or control.

---

<sup>1</sup>This is a statistical variable reduction procedure used to test for correlations in responses to a series of questions in order to identify underlying constructs (see Dunteman, 1989 for further information).



## HOW WE MEASURED THINGS

### Home Improvements

Residents were asked whether their home had any housing improvements carried out over the period 2006-2008. Of the 3,749 social renters in the survey, 1,541 (41%) had received home improvements within the last two years, with around 90% of respondents being satisfied with the works provided.<sup>13</sup> These improvements were then classified on the basis of previous research about the impacts of housing improvements into five types:

- warmth / energy efficiency
- security
- external / structural
- internal
- unspecified

The unspecified category refers to cases where the respondent indicated that a housing improvement had taken place within the past two years but did not know or could not recall what specific works had taken place. Although we cannot be sure, it is likely that many of the 'unspecified' improvements relate to external works.

Over 300 people reported works in more than one housing improvement category. Information on the number of home improvements reported under individual and multiple headings are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Households experiencing housing improvements within the last 2 years**

Housing Improvements	Component Items	No. of Households	%
External / structural	Roof. Ceilings. Guttering. Damp-proofing. External appearance. Walls. Pointing. Stairs. Removed veranda.	57	2
Security	Doors. Locks. Windows/double glazing. Security alarm. Smoke detector.	448	12
Warmth / energy efficiency	Heating. Boiler. Insulation. Draft- proofing. Cladding.	383	10
Internal	Bathroom. Shower. Kitchen. Wiring. Electrical. Bedrooms. Painting. Flooring. Carpets. Decoration. Lighting. Toilet. Wall-papering. Plumbing. Tiling. Storage space.	576	15
Unspecified	n/a	426	11
1 of the above		1,225	33
2 of the above		285	8
3 of the above		29	1
4 of the above		2	0
None		2,208	59
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,749</b>	<b>100</b>

## Home Quality

Information was also collected about residents' perceptions of their home quality, giving ratings to 16 housing items in the survey. The items were categorised in ways similar to the groupings used for the housing improvements: external/structural; security; warmth; and internal quality. Survey responses to the questions about each category, given on 5-point Likert scales, were combined in each case to derive an index from 0 (all items of very poor quality) to 100 (all items of very good quality). The construction and properties of the four home quality indices are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Indices (0-100) of Perceived Home Quality**

Home Quality Index (0-100)	Component Variables	Mean	SD	N
External/Structural	External state of repair External appearance	67.29	21.10	3,349
Security	Front door Security of the home Windows	72.48	22.73	3,729
Warmth/Energy Efficiency	Heating system Dampness /condensation	69.22	22.29	3,609
Internal	Overall space Storage space Bathroom/shower Kitchen Interior state of repair Internal decoration Internal layout Electrical wiring	65.85	22.02	3,699



## Psychosocial Benefits of the Home

Respondents were asked eight questions specifically relating to psychosocial benefits from the home. Responses were given on a five point scale with answers ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Statistical methods were then used to analyse the structure of any relationships between the questions and generate outcome variables relating to the psychosocial benefits of home. As mentioned earlier, the eight items clustered into two groups around themes of control and status. The responses to each group of questions were then combined in each case to derive an index from 0 ('strongly disagree' to all items) to 100 ('strongly agree' on all items). The construction and properties of the two psychosocial benefit indices are given in Table 3.

**Table 3: Indices (0-100) of the Psychosocial Benefits of Home**

Psychosocial Benefit of Home Index (0-100)	Component Variables	Mean	SD	N
Control	Privacy: I feel I have privacy in my home Control: I feel in control of my home Safety: I feel safe in my home Retreat: I can get away from it all in my home Freedom: I can do what I want in my home	71.91	17.36	3,650
Status	Progress: My home makes me feel that I'm doing well in life Status: Most people would like a home like mine Identity: My home expresses my personality and values	63.19	22.53	3,367

## FINDINGS ON HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS AND HOME QUALITY

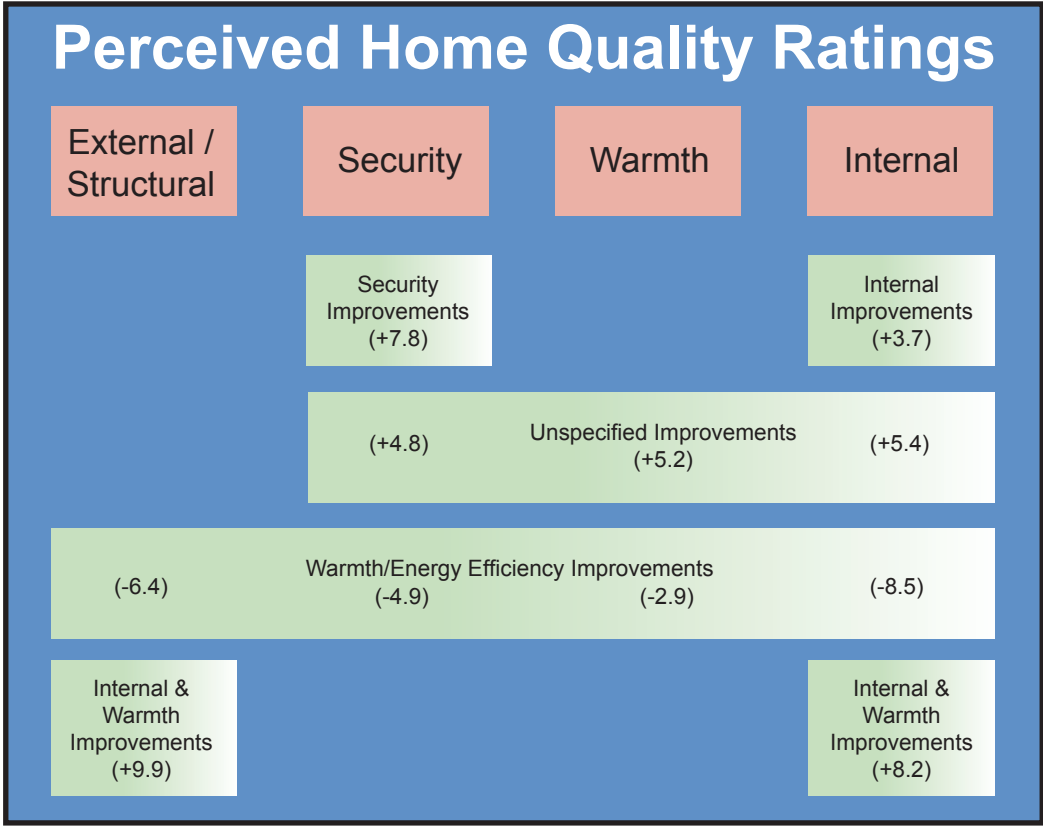
- Housing improvements are associated with differences in how people feel about their homes, but different kinds of improvement have different relationships with people's feelings.
- Home security improvements are associated with higher occupant ratings of home security (by +7.7 points on a 0-100 scale).
- Internal improvements are linked with higher occupant ratings of internal home quality (by +3.7 points).
- Warmth improvements alone are associated with lower occupant ratings on all four perceived home quality indices examined. However, when both warmth and internal improvements were reported these were associated with considerably higher occupant ratings of external/structural home quality (+9.9 points) and internal home quality (+8.2 points).

Our analysis confirms the idea that different sorts of housing improvements have different relationships with perceptions of home quality. Housing improvements seem particularly important for how people feel about the inside of their home since several of the reported housing improvements were linked to a change in perceptions of internal home quality.

As might be hoped, the model showed that internal improvements were associated with higher indices of perceived internal home quality, and security improvements were associated with improved indices of perceived security in the home. The unspecified improvement category was also linked to higher indices of perceived warmth and security.

Surprisingly, although warmth improvements were associated with all four of the home quality outcomes, the relationship was negative in every case – a result we cannot adequately account for. However, it might be partially explained by looking at the results for people who had both warmth and internal home improvements: in these situations, external and internal home quality indices were higher by 9.9 and 8.2 points each. In fact, the interaction of having warmth and internal improvements over the two year period studied had the largest association with perceptions of home quality of any housing improvement intervention.

Figure 1: Housing Improvements and Perceptions of Home Quality Indices (0-100)



Other social factors also proved important to how people felt about their homes. In comparison with the reference group of adult-only households (pre-retirement age), older households rated their homes more highly on all home quality measures, while families with children gave poorer ratings. This may be a reflection of both the nature of the housing stock available for families and the allocations system, whereby longstanding (older) residents have priority of choice and therefore may be expected to occupy better dwellings. British citizens also gave higher ratings for both the security and the warmth of their homes.



## FINDINGS ON PERCEIVED HOME QUALITY AND THE PSYCHOSOCIAL BENEFITS OF HOME

- Perceptions of home quality are positively associated with psychosocial wellbeing in terms of both status and control.
- Many internal aspects of the home are associated with both status and control.
- Warmth improvements are also associated with higher scores on both indices.
- Security improvements are linked to greater sense of control.
- Good external state of repair is connected with greater sense of status.

The modelling process confirmed that housing improvements have an impact on perceptions of home quality. Up to this point, we had used the different categories of home quality (warmth etc.) as outcome variables but in the second phase of the analysis we examined the home quality variables in more detail in order to gauge which particular characteristics of perceived home quality were most strongly associated with the psychosocial benefits of status and control. The first thing to note is that once residents' perceptions of home quality had been considered, there was no evidence that housing improvements made a direct contribution to psychosocial control or status; so, the association of housing improvements with the psychosocial benefits of home in both models was entirely mediated by perceived home quality.

**Figure 2: The effect of perceived home quality on control and status indices (0-100)**

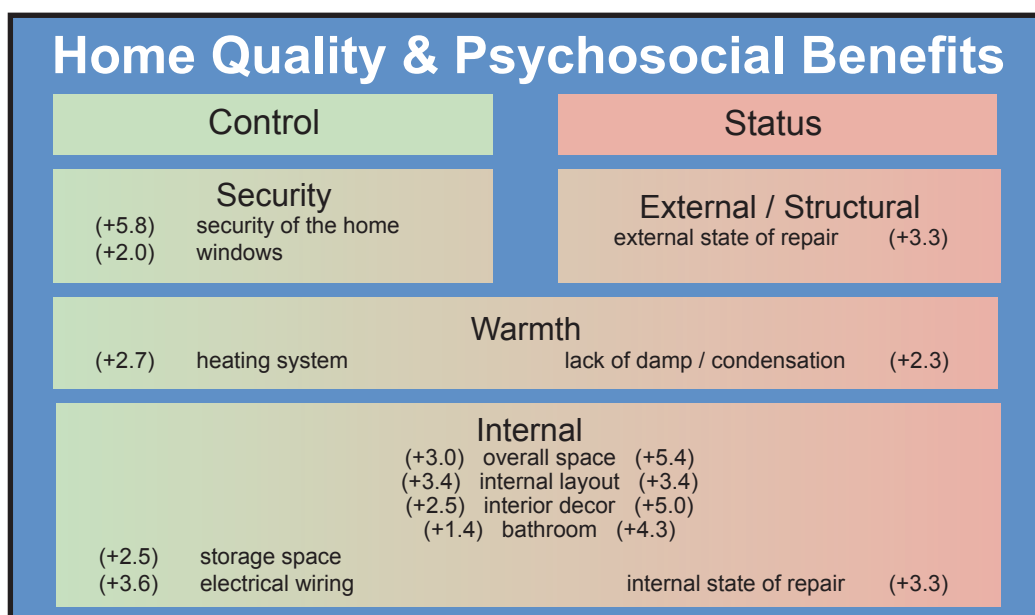


Figure 2 shows the significant links between perceived housing quality and the two psychosocial benefits. Perceptions of home quality are the most important group of variables in the case of both outcome measures: nine of the home quality variables were significant for psychosocial control and seven significant for status.

The largest individual association between housing quality and psychosocial control came from a positive perception of the security of the home variable (associated with a control index of + 5.8 points).

The largest association with psychosocial status came from a positive perception of internal space within the home (+5.4 points). There were significant links between status and other internal items, most notably from positive perceptions of internal decoration and of bathrooms (associated with a status index of +5.0 and 4.3 points, respectively).



## FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF THE WIDER RESIDENTIAL PSYCHOSOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Residence in flats, particularly in multi-storey flats, is often associated with poorer outcomes for perceived home quality, psychosocial status and control.
- Although landlord relations are generally good, where there is dissatisfaction, there are relatively large negative associations with perceived home quality, psychosocial status and control.
- Neighbourhood satisfaction is an important additional factor positively associated with perceptions of home quality and sense of control and status.
- A sense that the external reputation of the neighbourhood is improving and that people within the area think highly of it were associated with positive effects upon perceived home quality and psychosocial status.

Three aspects of the wider residential psychosocial environment were included in the modelling process: housing occupancy, landlord relations, and the local neighbourhood. In both phases of the analysis, some items relating to this wider environment demonstrated associations with home quality and psychosocial benefits of even greater magnitude than those of the housing improvement or individual home quality variables.

## Housing Occupancy

In comparison with respondents who lived in a house, people in multi-storey flats had lower perceptions of external/structural and warmth home quality (the latter including dampness and condensation) by -8.3 and -7.4 points, respectively.

The fact that living in a multi-storey flat did not have a significant relationship with perceptions of security or internal home quality, may be due to their relatively large internal size and the presence of concierge services.

Residents in other kinds of flat gave lower home quality ratings than those living in houses on all four indices, although the effect sizes were smaller than for multi-storey flats.

The intention to move home in the next 12 months was associated with lower perceived warmth and internal home quality. For every additional reason to move given, perceived security were 2 points lower and internal home quality ratings 6 points lower, suggesting some of the other possible drivers for wanting to move home.

Living in a multi-storey flat or other flat was negatively associated with status (-5.8 and -2.8 points on the status index respectively), perhaps reflecting cultural attitudes towards housing in the UK, where there is a general preference for houses over flats. Living in a flat was not associated with feelings of control however.

## Landlord Relations

Of the residential psychosocial environment variables tested, those relating to landlord relations had the greatest relevance to perceived home quality. Generally, landlord services were positively perceived: 71% of residents in the sample were very or fairly satisfied with how their landlord kept them informed about issues which might affect them; 65% felt landlords were willing to take account of residents' views when making decisions; and 65% were satisfied with the overall housing service provided. However, because dissatisfaction was associated with poorer outcomes it has been modeled here.

Dissatisfaction with being kept informed by the landlord was the moderator with the largest magnitude in the home quality model series, associated with lower perceptions of warmth home quality (-11.9 points), of internal home quality (-10.4 points) and the remaining two home quality indices (both - 6.5 points). Dissatisfaction with the overall service from the landlord was further associated with lower home quality scores of between 5 and 9 points. A perceived lack of willingness on the landlord's part to take account of residents' views was a significant negative moderator for two of the home quality indices, associated with lower external home quality (-6.6 points) and lower internal home quality (-7.7 points).

Our modelling also indicated that poor landlord relations had direct negative associations with feelings of both status and control. Dissatisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord was associated with a decrease of 7.1 points on the control index and 9.9 points on the status index, while dissatisfaction with the landlord's willingness to take account of residents' views was associated with a decrease of a further 5.5 points on the status index.

## Neighbourhood

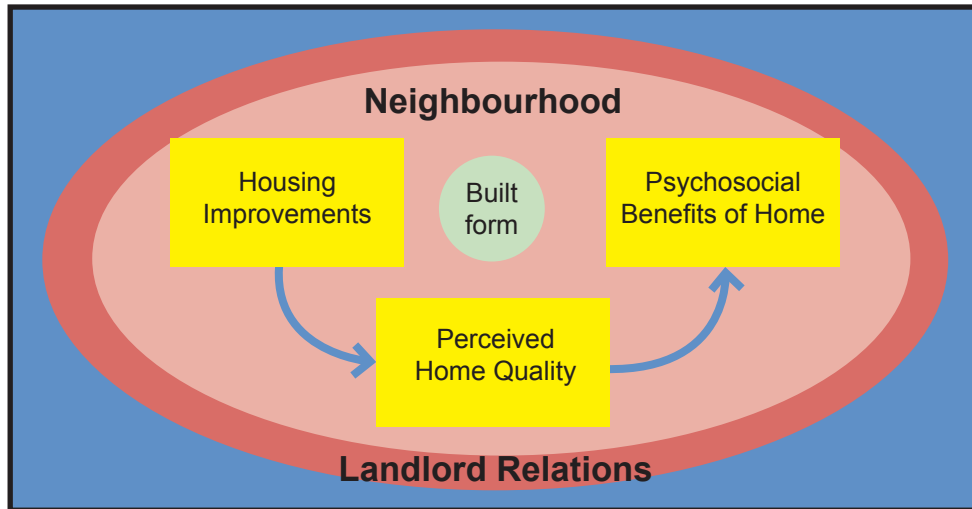
Neighbourhood satisfaction had a positive moderating connection with all four home quality indices. Perceived warmth was the relationship with smallest magnitude (+4.8 points) and internal home quality (+7 points) the largest. Internal area reputation (the perception that people in the neighbourhood think highly of it) was positively related to perceptions of security, warmth, and internal home quality. External area reputation (the perception that the reputation of the area was improving among the people of Glasgow) was also a significant factor in relation to perceived external/structural and security quality ratings, perhaps reflecting the fact that appearance and safety are two key attributes that affect an area's wider reputation.

However, there was a surprising negative association between the perception that the area has become better to live in and ratings of security home quality; potentially this may be due to the unsettling effects of changes or of incomers to the area as a result of regeneration efforts. Unexpectedly, for every reason given in relation to the desire to move from the area, perceived warmth home quality increased by nearly 5 points; however, for every one point increase on the problems with neighbourhood index, it dropped half a point. These results may reflect the investment programme's willingness to invest in improved heating systems in very deprived areas.

In relation to feelings of control associated with the home, there was a significant positive association between the psychosocial benefit index and satisfaction with the neighbourhood (+6.8 points) and perceiving that the area had a good reputation among the people who lived there (+3.6 points).

Neighbourhood satisfaction was also linked with a higher status index value of 5 points. Agreeing that the area had improved over the past two years was also associated with a higher status index value of 2.7 points. On the other hand, neighbourhood problems were connected with lower feelings of status. Figure 3 summarises our findings.

**Figure 3: Conceptual Model of Findings**



## STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

GoWell data provided an opportunity to analyse psychosocial benefits relating to the home in a level of detail previously impossible, offering insight into the complex inter-relation of benefits to status and control, considering both housing improvements and home quality in four categories. Sample size was a further strength, drawing on a relatively large number of respondents from the social rented sector in Glasgow (n=3,749).

Limitations were: causality cannot be inferred in the associations; research was based on subjective recall of which housing improvements had taken place; some housing interventions could have been categorised in alternative ways; and absence of independent measures of housing improvements and housing quality for comparative purposes. However, subjective data is appropriate to the topic and so also a strength of the research. Furthermore, respondents may have experienced housing improvements before the specified two-year time period, so this could never be a 'pure' treatment versus non-treatment study.

Future research will ideally use landlord data to understand discrepancies between actual improvements and residents' recall of improvements. Furthermore, longitudinal analysis may be used to examine impacts of housing improvements on psychosocial benefits of home over time.



Returning to our three research objectives stated earlier:

- ***To what extent are housing improvements reflected in residents' perceptions of home quality?***

We found that housing interventions supporting home security had the largest positive association with occupants' perceptions of home quality, followed by cases where both warmth and internal improvements had taken place. Counter-intuitively, warmth interventions on their own showed a negative association with home quality, along all of the four home quality dimensions. However, in cases where both warmth and internal improvements had taken place, the interaction of these two interventions offered a strong positive benefit in terms of perceptions of structural and internal dwelling quality, suggesting that although warmth interventions might cause unintended disruptive, invasive or otherwise negative impacts, additional internal home improvements can more than mitigate these effects.

- ***Do perceptions of home quality represent a mediating pathway between housing improvements and the psychosocial benefits of home?***

Housing improvements have an indirect rather than direct relationship with the psychosocial benefits that occupants derive from their homes. They do this via their impacts upon perceptions of home quality, which mediate the relationship between housing improvements and psychosocial benefits.

The internal quality of the home proved particularly important for psychosocial benefits: internal decoration, bathroom quality, overall space and interior layout contributed to occupants' feelings of both status and control. We were also able to identify that the two most important aspects of dwelling quality were 'security of the home', for feelings of control, and 'overall space within the home', for feelings of status.

Again, security was found to be particularly important, with the largest single impact coming from the positive effect of perceptions of home security upon feelings of control.

- ***Are the relationships between housing improvements, home quality and psychosocial benefits moderated by the wider residential psychosocial environment?***

We found that all three aspects of the wider psychosocial environment moderated the relationships studied. In relation to psychosocial benefits, we found that both status and control were boosted by satisfaction with the neighbourhood and by a positive internal area reputation (i.e. among the residents). On the other hand, feelings of status and control were both reduced by dissatisfaction with a landlord's service. Furthermore, feelings of status were reduced by feeling disempowered in relation to one's landlord (the landlord not taking residents' views into account), and by living in a flat, especially a multi-storey flat.

## POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Our findings suggest a number of messages relevant to policy-makers and practitioners:

- ***For residents to derive psychosocial benefits from works to their homes, they need to be able to recognise improvements in housing quality that derive from those works;*** the fact of having works done to their homes does not in and of itself confer these benefits. ***This requires that works are of high quality and that their benefits are brought to the attention of occupants.*** Furthermore, housing providers may be missing an opportunity to have positive impacts upon occupants where residents are not aware of the nature of works to their homes, for example, external and structural or fabric works. ***Keeping individual residents and the local community informed about improvement works could be beneficial.***
- Security works have a significant impact upon residents' perceptions of the safety of their homes, and in turn this aspect of the home contributes to feelings of control. ***It is important, therefore, to establish with residents what security-related works they feel they need.*** It is possible that some warmth-related items, such as windows, are considered more as security interventions by occupants.
- ***To have maximum beneficial impact upon occupants, warmth, heating and energy efficiency works need to be combined with other internal improvements, rather than being done alone.***

- The internal design of the home is important. Our findings that occupants' perceptions of overall space and internal layout contribute significantly to feelings of both control and status have implications for the future design, development and allocation of social housing. ***The extent to which space and layout can be adjusted during refurbishment and improvement works should also be considered. Development of a better understanding and closer monitoring of internal layout and space occupancy within the social housing sector would also be useful for future policy-making.***
- Living in a flat (particularly a multi-storey block) was generally associated with lower ratings of external quality and warmth by occupants, and poorer psychosocial status. Given that many observers expect that most multi-storey estates will remain in existence for some time, there is a case for housing providers to seek to enhance the psychosocial benefits of status for multi-storey occupants by attempting to shift the public narrative and image of multi-storeys in the UK to a more positive one. This would be more achievable if attempted alongside real improvements in quality, achieved through refurbishment schemes. Therefore, ***there is a case for refurbishment programmes for multi-storey blocks to include positive image strategies.***
- The neighbourhood context within which housing improvements occur is important on two counts: how residents feel about their neighbourhood, and how they perceive others to view their neighbourhood are related to their perceptions of home quality, and their feelings of status and control. Being satisfied with the neighbourhood was a positive factor in relation to all of the outcome variables. Where respondents considered that the area had become better to live in over the previous two years, psychosocial benefits were increased in terms of status. Similarly, the belief that other people in the neighbourhood rated the locality highly provided a boost for psychosocial control. ***For housing improvement works to have greatest impact, therefore, they should be combined with wider neighbourhood renewal programmes, including effective communication strategies so that residents are well informed about changes to the area.***
- Dissatisfaction with landlord relations had large negative associations with ratings of home quality and psychosocial benefits, potentially eclipsing the positive associations with improvement works. Landlords' overall service performance, how they keep tenants informed and how they take tenants' views on board, all make a difference to ratings of home quality and to psychosocial status and control. One implication of these findings might be that the way in which home improvement works themselves are carried out may be highly significant for the impacts they have on occupants' wellbeing. Additionally, landlord relations in general may be influential. Therefore, ***to have maximum impact, housing improvement programmes require to be delivered in the context of empowering landlord relations, otherwise a lot of the good that may come for residents' mental wellbeing, from significant amounts of investment, may be undermined.***

 REFERENCES

1. Wilkinson R G. *The Impact of Inequality: How to make sick societies healthier*. London: Routledge; 2005.
2. Thomson H, Petticrew M, Morrison D. Health effects of housing improvement: systematic review of intervention studies. *BMJ* 2001; 323 (7306):187-190.
3. Thomson H, Thomas S, Sellstrom E, Petticrew M. The Health Impacts of Housing Improvement: A systematic review of intervention studies from 1887 to 2007, Supplement 3. *American Journal of Public Health* 2009; 99 (53): S681-S692.
4. Thomas R, Evans S, Huxley P, Gately C, Rodgers A. Housing improvement and self-reported mental distress among council estate residents. *Social Science and Medicine* 2005; 60: 2773-2783.
5. Thomson H, Morrison D, Petticrew M. *Housing Improvement and Health: Report to local housing providers and tenants*. Glasgow: MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit; 2006.
6. Marmot M. *Status Syndrome: How your social standing directly affects your health and life expectancy*. London: Bloomsbury; 2004.
7. Scottish Executive. *Code of Practice for Tenant Participation in Stock Transfers*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive; 2000.
8. Glasgow Housing Association. *Our Three Year Investment Plan*. Glasgow: GHA; 2010.
9. GoWell. *Health and Wellbeing in Glasgow and the GoWell Areas: Deprivation based analyses*. Glasgow: GoWell; 2008.
10. Evans G, Wells NM, Moch A. Housing and mental health: a review of the evidence and a methodological and conceptual critique. *Journal of Social Issues* 2003; 59 (3): 475-500.

11. Gibson M, Thomson H, Kearns A, Petticrew M. Understanding the psychosocial impacts of housing type: qualitative evidence from a study of housing relocation. *Housing Studies* 2011; 26 (4); 555-573.
12. Macintyre S, Ellaway A, Hiscock R, Kearns A, Der G, McKay L. What features of the home and the area might help to explain observed relationships between housing tenure and health? Evidence from the West of Scotland. *Health and Place* 2003; 9:207-218.
13. GoWell. Progress for People and Places: Monitoring change in Glasgow's communities. Glasgow: GoWell, 2010.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper has been produced on behalf of the GoWell team. The current GoWell team is as follows:

Sheila Beck (Ecological Monitoring Team)  
Lyndal Bond (Principal Investigator)  
Julie Clark (Researcher)  
Jennie Coyle (Communications Manager)  
Fiona Crawford (Ecological Monitoring Team)  
Matt Egan (Researcher)  
Ade Kearns (Principal Investigator)  
Kenny Lawson (Health Economist)  
Louise Lawson (Researcher)  
Mark Livingston (Researcher)  
Phil Mason (Researcher)  
Kelda McLean (Programme Administrator)  
Jennifer McLean (Ecological Monitoring Team)  
Joanne Neary (Postgraduate Research Student)  
Carol Tannahill (Principal Investigator)  
Hilary Thomson (Researcher)  
David Walsh (Ecological Monitoring Team)

**This Briefing Paper may be cited as:** Clark, J. GoWell Briefing Paper 17: Housing Improvements, Housing Quality and Psychosocial Benefits from the Home. Glasgow: GoWell, 2012.





**Housing  
Improvements,  
Housing Quality  
and Psychosocial  
Benefits from  
the Home**

February 2012

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

For further information, please contact:

*Dr Julie Clark  
Department of Urban Studies  
University of Glasgow  
25 Bute Gardens  
Glasgow  
G12 8RS*

*Email: [julie.clark@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:julie.clark@glasgow.ac.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0)141 330 7660*