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Research in Public Health

# The impact of the roll out of Universal Credit

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# Co-produced research

*For research to have impact, both knowledge producers and users need to be involved in its creation and application*  
(Marshall et al 2014)





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# Why embedded research?

Timely

Relevant & responsive

Learning together

Knowledge translation as  
part of the process

It's not all about  
publications (but we've had  
some of those as well)

**Exclusive: universal credit linked to  
suicide risk, says study**

**Research for Gateshead council finds system increases depression  
and anxiety**





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# Why welfare “reform” is a public health issue



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**We're reforming the welfare system to help  
more people to move into and progress in work, while  
supporting the most vulnerable.**

DWP Policy Statement





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# Marmot review recommendations (2010)

1. giving every child the best start in life
2. enabling all children, young people and adults to maximize their capabilities and have control over their lives
3. creating fair employment and good work for all
4. **ensuring a healthy standard of living for all**
5. creating and developing sustainable places and communities
6. strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention.





# Due North recommendations (2014)

1. **Tackle poverty and economic inequality** within the North and between the North and the rest of England.
2. Promote healthy development in early childhood.
3. Share power over resources and increase the influence that the public has on how resources are used to improve the determinants of health.
4. Strengthen the role of the health sector in promoting health equity.

## DUE NORTH

Executive summary report of  
the Inquiry on Health Equity  
for the North

# 2012 Welfare “Reform” Act

Some “principles” ....

***Benefits freeze*** – no uprating of benefits in line with inflation

***Benefits cap*** – maximum amount to households irrespective of household composition

***Increased conditionality*** for out of work benefits/  
***increased sanctions***

***Removal of spare room subsidy*** – “bedroom tax”

***Universal Credit*** ....





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# Real life reform ... tracking impact of welfare “reform” on people in social housing ....

- By 2015 fewer case study households in employment than in 2013.
- Clear evidence that being in low-paid or part-time employment has had an adverse impact on some households

<https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/files/real-life-reform/Report%206.pdf>



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**theguardian**  
website of the year

## In tenants' own words: why the bedroom tax makes you ill

The bedroom tax causes stress, depression, loneliness and and hunger, social housing tenants told an academic study



16 Mar 2015 34

According to the Newcastle University researchers, tenants were putting in a “monumental effort” to cope with the impacts of the bedroom tax. As one 72 year old male tenant told the study:

“You just exist, you just survive in the best way you can

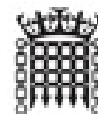
## A qualitative study of the impact of the UK ‘bedroom tax’

S. Moffatt ✉; S. Lawson; R. Patterson; E. Holding; A. Dennison; S. Sowden; J. Brown

J Public Health (Oxf) (2015) 38 (2): 197-205.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdv031>

Published: 15 March 2015



[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

House of Lords debate on the under occupancy charge (‘bedroom tax’) Baroness Quinn (Lab):-  
The Newcastle University study showed that many people had been forced into debt for the first time and that their **health and well-being, contrary to the Government’s claims, have suffered hugely** as a result.

Journal of  
**Public Health**

**NHS**

National Institute for  
Health Research



# So how does the 'bedroom tax' affect lives?

## *Remember, this is BEFORE Universal Credit*

- Difficulties affording basic needs - food, utilities, clothing
- Mental health & wellbeing
- **Family and community support**
- The meaning of home and community



I just keep myself to myself. Well, you cannot go out ... **I used to**, when I used to take the bairn out, used to be a granda ... I meant **them days have long gone** ... they go on about old people and loneliness ... **sometimes I never see anybody for a week**, you know, sometimes longer ... and like I say, **they shut the library** so you might have went to the library and met one or two people and it's just nice to get up in the morning and say hello to somebody, good morning you know ... sometimes you're just sitting there and praying the telephone rings **just so you can talk to somebody**. (58 year old man)



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“Patients in deprived areas are not hard to reach but they are easy to ignore ... the inverse care law is not a law, but the consequence of policies ...”

Watt, BJGP Dec 2018



Source:

<https://extramuralactivity.com/category/type/print/>



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# QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS?

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