

Topic Brief

Topic Title: Health Inequalities

Officer Lead: Dr Ifeoma Onyia - Director of Public Health HBC

Planned Start Date: June 2023

Target PPB Meeting: 20th February 2024

Topic Description and Scope:

The 2023/24 scrutiny review for health policy and performance board will look at health inequalities across Halton and approaches to reduce them. It will look at the current epidemiological distribution of health inequalities, recent trends, and the impact of external forces such as the cost of living crisis and COVID-19, it will examine approaches that are being used to address health inequalities through contracts, partnership working and direct provision of services.

Why this topic was chosen:

Health inequalities are avoidable, unfair and systematic differences in health between different groups of people. They are rooted deep within our society and they are widening, leading to poor outcomes for some as well as varied access to services and sub-optimal care. This results in earlier death, lost years of healthy life, inter-generational effects from traumatic experiences and has significant economic costs for society. Yet health inequalities are often preventable or the impacts can be reduced.

Sir Michael Marmot produced the 'All Together Fairer: Health Equity and the social determinants of health in Cheshire and Merseyside' in 2022 to highlight the work required to tackle inequalities worsened by the COVID- 19 pandemic. The IHE 2020 report 'Health Equity in England 10 years on' demonstrated that improvements in inequalities had stalled since 2010. The LGA (Local Government Association) developed a health inequalities hub to shine a light on action taken by local councils.

Whilst health inequalities lead to poor health outcomes it is not possible for health services alone to address the issue. The wider societal drivers, many of which are influenced by local councils, can play a much stronger role. The Equality Act 2010 applies to all local authorities and includes a general duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equal opportunities for all
- Foster good relations between all individuals

The public sector Equality Duty requires that councils consider how policies and decisions might affect people with protected characteristics. NHS partners have an even more focused duty to reduce health inequalities in relation to patient's access to services and outcomes achieved for them, as part of integrated approaches to deliver care.

From a local perspective, Halton Borough Council has delivered a number of innovative approaches to tackling health inequalities, a result of more systematic working resulting from the COVID-19

pandemic and an awareness of the cost-of-living challenges effecting the local population. The board aims to better understand the council's and partnerships responsibilities and actions, as well as develop a contextual understanding of local drivers that contribute to health inequalities in Halton.

Key outputs and outcomes sought:

- To understand the drivers of health inequalities in Halton Borough Council
- To understand the causes and consequence of health inequalities
- To understand the local position in relation to health inequalities, trends and outcomes
- To highlight innovative work taking place to improve people's opportunities and reduce unequal access
- To understand any barriers in place that are preventing progress against health inequalities
- To appreciate the Councils position in relation to the Equality Duty
- To evaluate whether any further action can be taken to reduce the impact of health inequalities further

Which of Halton's 5 strategic priorities this topic addresses and the key objectives and improvement targets it will be a help to achieve

- A Healthy Halton – Our overall aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of Halton people so that they live longer happier healthier lives.

The topic group intends to gain knowledge and understanding of the issues leading to health inequalities across Halton. It will develop an oversight of the key duties, as well as the pathways and practice in place to reduce the impact.

The topic group will hear from across various partners who will be invited to cover how they are responding to the challenge of health inequalities.

Nature of expected/desired PPB input:

Member led scrutiny of health inequalities across Halton and the impact this has on our ability to deliver quality services to local residents.

Preferred mode of operation:

- Meetings with/presentations from relevant officers from within the Council and partner agencies to examine current services
- Visit to community-based intervention sessions
- Interviews with those that have accessed services
- Desk top research in relation to outcome measures and best practice delivery methods

Agreed and signed by:

PPB chair

Officer

Date

Date