Wirral Intelligence Service

November 2023: Bulletin Supplementary Content

Contents

Adults, Children and Older People

Active mile briefings

These [Public Health England documents](#) provide guidance for public health teams, commissioners, schools, headteachers and teachers to explain the evidence on active mile initiatives. They also provide practical ideas for those considering starting an active mile initiative, and for those already delivering an initiative and searching for ideas to invigorate and refresh their programmes.

What we know about the UK's working-age health challenge

This [Health Foundation research](#) suggests that current policies have not done enough to address developments in the health of the working-age population. Promoting a healthier workforce will require long-term thinking and concerted action across sectors. In response, the Health Foundation is announcing a new, independent Commission for Healthier Working Lives to build consensus on the actions needed to address these issues.

Inquiry into the life opportunities of young carers and young adult carers

The [first parliamentary inquiry by All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers on young carers, supported by Carers Trust](#), reveals a lack of support severely affecting education, wellbeing, and future prospects. Evidence shows that 15,000 children, including 3,000 aged 5-9, spend more than 50 hours weekly caring for family members. For the estimated 1 million young carers in the UK, their caregiving hampers their education and life opportunities. The report urges a national carers strategy, a properly resourced action plan, and collaboration with young carers for improved identification and support.

Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2023: health in an ageing society

This [Department of Health and Social Care report from Professor Chris Whitty](#) recommends actions to improve quality of life for older adults and calls for prioritising areas where the numbers of older people are growing fastest. The focus is on how to maximise older people's independence, and minimise their time spent in ill health. The report is aimed at policymakers (government and professional bodies), health care professionals, medical scientists and the general public.

Policy position: childhood adversity and vulnerability

[This report by the Association of Directors of Public Health](#) discusses childhood adversity and vulnerability. It emphasises that a child's wellbeing is influenced by social determinants of health, such as poverty and inequality, and calls for a comprehensive approach involving various sectors. The report provides recommendations, including prioritizing prevention and early intervention, reducing child poverty, and increasing public health funding. It also highlights the need for a whole-family approach and better co-ordination of information on children's development.

Can you tell we care? Identifying unpaid carers using local authority and GP records

There are at least 5.7 million unpaid carers in the UK who need support from the NHS and social care services. This can range from health checks, social prescribing and community support services to breaks and practical and financial support. This [The Health Foundation report](#) looks at how many carers were known to GPs and local authorities in four areas of England and Wales.

SIREN study

[Providing vital research](#) into COVID-19 immunity and vaccine effectiveness nationally.

What we say about… Childhood adversity

[Key messages](#)
- The physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of babies, children and young people are significantly shaped by the social determinants of health in which they are born, live and grow.
- A child can be vulnerable to the impact of action or inaction by other people and their physical and social environment, including poverty, social inequalities, and structural racism.
- A whole system approach is needed to address the determinants of child health, with strong national policies and joint working between the NHS, housing, education, social services, and youth justice sectors.
- A shift towards prevention and early intervention is needed to support babies, children, and young people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives and prevent ill health in later life.
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Reducing health inequalities faced by children and young people

This [NHS Providers report](#) sets out the data and evidence of the health inequalities experienced by children and young people. It outlines the rationale for shifting attention towards this age group to prevent health inequalities later in life. It also considers the role that trusts can play in targeting interventions towards improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people who are more likely to experience inequalities. The report also highlights the existing work of trusts to reduce children and young people's health inequalities within case studies from Barts Health NHS Trust and Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Infant and early childhood mental health: the case for action

This [Royal College of Psychiatrists report](#) outlines: the importance of mental health in babies and young children under five; relevant risk factors, protective factors and higher risk groups; effective public mental health interventions to treat mental health conditions, prevent associated impacts, prevent mental health conditions, and promote mental wellbeing and resilience in babies and young children; the implementation gap for public mental health interventions; and required actions to address the implementation gap. The College is calling on the government to introduce new specialist services and ensure every family has access to the support they need, regardless of where they live.

Addressing education and health inequity: perspectives from the north of England

As well as looking at the funding of schools, this Child of the North All-Party Parliamentary Group report also highlights that children born into the poorest fifth of families in the UK are almost 13 times more likely to experience poor health and educational outcomes by the age of 17. It concludes that this poses a risk for public services in future years, as the long-term consequences of poor education can not only impact physical and mental health, but can also place great pressure on the NHS, social care and the criminal justice system in the future. It calls for an overhaul of the current school funding formula, so it takes into consideration attainment inequalities and the health burden borne by schools, to prevent these disparities continuing to increase.

The Missing Link: social prescribing for children and young people

This report from Barnardo's examines the current evidence around the benefits of social prescribing for children and young people and brings it together with new research from Barnardo's services.

Policy Position: Healthy Ageing

This position statement from Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) highlights the need for a holistic approach to support the growing older adult population in the UK, emphasising prevention throughout life. It recommends reforms in social care funding, positive ageing discourse, and integrating prevention into healthcare plans. Addressing loneliness, housing, transportation, dementia prevention and community engagement are also key areas. Overall, the report calls for proactive measures to ensure the wellbeing and contributions of older people in society.

NHS Business Services Authority NEW Care Homes Report

This newly released report which gives unique insight into primary care prescribing patterns for care home patients aged 65 and over in England from 2020/21 to 2022/23. NHSBS estimate a monthly average of 301,000 care home patients aged 65 years and over received prescriptions in 2022/23. They received an estimated 37 million prescription items at a total cost of £361 million that year.

Closing the gap: actions to reduce waiting times for children and young people

Data on elective care shows that activity for children and young people is still below pre-Covid-19-pandemic levels and recovery remains behind rates seen in adult services. This guidance contains 10 actions to help reduce waiting times for children, as well as quick links to data, resources and best-practice case studies. The 10 actions address how to improve theatre capacity, increase use of operating theatres and streamline pathways of care. It also includes practical measures such as adding extra sessions or 'super events' for children's surgery, avoiding procedures of limited medical benefit by using clinical decision tools, and staggering children's admission times.

NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) Child Health Insights

[This report identifies healthcare inequalities in NHSBSA data related to children](). NHS Business Services Authority provides a range of national services to support the NHS. The report takes a closer look at NHS prescribing and NHS dental treatment among children under 18 in England. It also provides insights into take-up of maternity exemption certificates and the NHS Healthy Start scheme. It helps identify those in greatest need and supports targeted actions at national and local level through users including clinicians, Integrated Care Boards, the wider NHS and local authorities

Climate and Sustainability

Why we need to talk about health and climate: an essay collection

Climate change is here and now, impacting nearly all aspects of human health, despite progress to reduce fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions.
In this collection of essays, Green Alliance has brought together healthcare and climate experts, which sets out the broad interconnection between climate change and public health such as poor diets, racism and a struggling UK health service. The Green Alliance Trust essays promote a range of ideas and practical policies which showcase the need for health and climate change to be addressed jointly, rather than being treated in silos. The hope is that this information will inform part of the UK's necessary response to minimise the impacts of climate change as well as the need to prioritise support for public health.

Net zero travel and transport strategy

This NHS strategy describes the interventions and modelling underpinning the commitments that the NHS will have fully decarbonised its fleet by 2035, with its ambulances following in 2040, walking through each of the major components of the NHS fleet and outlining the benefits to patients and staff.

Health inequalities and climate change tool 1 - Develop your understanding

Climate change poses an existential threat to the health and wellbeing of children and young people, but this is not experienced equally. This Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health tool will help paediatricians understand how climate change impacts on children and young people's health within the UK context, including evidence of how climate change exacerbates child health inequalities.

Preserving the world for future generations: Children and young people's perspective on how to tackle climate change

The climate crisis is a child rights crisis that needs global urgent action. Its prolonged impacts on the mental and physical health, as well as on the general welfare of children and young people (CYP) stem from shifts in the environment like wildfires, droughts, and heightened exposure to air pollutants. Almost all children (>99%) worldwide are already exposed to one or more climate and environmental risks to their health and millions do not have access to their determinants of health, including clean air, safe water, sanitation, affordable and nutritious food, and shelter. These are fundamental rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This report from Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Preserving the world for future generations, offers a holistic view of how CYP - both in the UK and internationally - perceive and understand climate change.

Improving Health, Protecting the Planet: resource for Directors of Public Health and teams

This International Primary Care Respiratory Group document is intended for use by Directors of Public Health and their teams. The document describes the links between climate change, health and health inequalities, and can be used to support local conversations and action in tackling the climate crisis. The document highlights the co-benefits of action on both health and climate, as well as describing the risks to health that we need to prepare for now.

Climate change and public health indicators: scoping review

A [UK Health Security Agency review of indicators and data sources](#) relevant for public health monitoring of climate change and health in England took place from spring 2021 to autumn 2022. A workshop with local authority stakeholders to inform the research was held in May 2021 with 57 participants, including public health professionals, emergency planning leads, and sustainability and adaptation officers from local authorities across England. This report contains the results of the review.

Biodiversity, climate change and health

[This UK Health Alliance on Climate Change policy report](#) describes the impacts of biodiversity loss on land and oceans for human health and puts forward recommendations to reduce biodiversity loss, restore nature, and achieve climate goals for the benefit of health.

Communities

This must be the place: A new vision for community wealth and power

Weighing up the options when it comes to the stewardship and development of our local economies is extremely challenging for local government. Nevertheless, progressive frontiers continue to advance and [in this CLES paper](#) they draw upon insights gathered from local councils and other anchor partners from across the UK where, despite the challenges, local leaders are taking steps to build wealth. They illustrate the importance of the work they are doing to intervene to support the local economy and make a number of recommendations for local practice to continue to flourish. CLES also make recommendations for Westminster, outlining what the next government of the UK should do to empower local government to deliver change at a greater scale and pace.

A neighbourhood strategy for national renewal: the final report of the APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods' inquiry into levelling up

This [All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods report](#) makes a case for remaking the levelling up agenda to put 'left behind' areas front and centre of a new mission of national renewal. Evidence heard over the course of the APPG's inquiry emphasised that community-led change can transform a neighbourhood's fortunes.

Not just ticking boxes: four stories illustrating the power of community-led health service design

IVAR's Connecting Health Communities initiative aims to address health inequalities by bringing together people with lived experience, VCSE organisations, the NHS and local authorities to co-design solutions. The model is built around a deep commitment to listening and collaboration. [This Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) report shares learning from four partnerships](#). Their stories illustrate the progress that can be made when communities are involved in designing services; and when cross-sector groups work together to invite people in, listen, and then make changes. The four areas are: improving access to cancer screening; improving rural access to health care; reducing smoking; and asking older people what works for them.

Disabilities

A review of advocacy for people with a learning disability and autistic people who are inpatients in mental health, learning disability or autism specialist hospitals
This National Development Team for Inclusion report covers in-depth research about people's views and experiences of accessing, commissioning, working alongside and delivering a range of types of independent advocacy for people with a learning disability and autistic people who are inpatients in mental health, learning disability or autism specialist hospitals. It highlights the systemic, legislative, cultural, service level and human issues that impact on people's experiences of independent advocacy while they are in hospital, as well as sharing ideas about how these can be improved.

'We all have a voice': Disabled children's vision for change
This report from Children's Commissioner for England brings together quantitative and qualitative research conducted by the Children's Commissioner's office (CCo) as part of a commission by the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit ahead of developing its Disability Action Plan 2023-24. 1 The Cabinet Office was particularly interested in understanding children's experiences of transitions, an important theme which is explored in this report. It also discusses other key barriers that disabled children face and puts forward recommendations based on what children say they want and need for a more inclusive society. This report focuses on the experiences of disabled children – that can include children with autism and other neurodevelopmental needs, additional social and emotional needs, as well as physical needs. There is a range of language used to describe the children we focus on – disabled children, children with disabilities, or children with 'special educational needs' (SEN) and 'special educational needs and disabilities' (SEND). The office is clear that what is crucial is that no child should be defined by a label, and that there is understanding that a child is disabled by a lack of inclusion. Sometimes it is more useful to use terms such as SEND when engaging with certain policies, or existing research and statistics.

Environment and Place

Mental health benefits of green spaces strongest for poorer communities

A new study highlights the beneficial role of greenness and access to green or blue spaces in reducing socioeconomic-related inequalities in mental health. Publishing their findings in the Lancet Planetary Health, researchers found that every additional 360m to the nearest green (e.g., park, field or wooded area) or blue (e.g., lake, marina, or the sea) space was associated with higher odds of anxiety and depression. Led by the University of Liverpool, the study is said to present the largest, most comprehensive evaluation of the effect of differences in exposure to green and blue spaces on mental health over a ten-year period.

Walkable districts linked to lower rates of obesity-related cancers in women

Residing in a more walkable neighbourhood protects against the risk of overall obesity-related cancers in women – specifically postmenopausal breast cancer, but also ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, and multiple myeloma – according to a new study. In this latest study, researchers from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and NYU Grossman School of Medicine found that women who resided in neighbourhoods with higher walkability levels – as measured by average destination accessibility and population density over about 24 years of follow-up – had lower risk of obesity-related cancers, particularly postmenopausal breast cancer. Moderate protective associations were also found for endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer, and multiple myeloma. Women who had lived in areas with the highest levels of neighbourhood walkability (the top 25 per cent of walkability) had a 26-per-cent lower risk of obesity-related cancers compared with those who lived in neighbourhoods in the lowest 25th per cent of walkability.

The study was published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*. (https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/full/10.1289/EHP11538)

Health

Health at a glance 2023

This [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report](#) provides a comprehensive set of indicators on population health and health system performance across members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and key emerging economies. The indicators cover health status, risk factors for health, access to and quality of health care, and health system resources. Analysis draws from the latest comparable official national statistics and other sources.

Engaging the private sector in delivering health care and goods: governance lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic

Engaging the private sector in delivering health care and goods requires a sound understanding of how to align resources with the strategic priorities of a health system. This [European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies report](#) for policy-makers analyses governance evidence from the Covid-19 pandemic. It explores a selection of case studies that describe real-life private sector engagements in service delivery, procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE), and advance purchase agreements for Covid-19 vaccines during the pandemic.

State of the provider sector 2023

The [NHS Providers state of the provider sector survey](#) provides a yearly snapshot of the hopes and fears of leaders of hospital, mental health, community and ambulance services across England. The survey finds that: 8 in 10 leaders (80 per cent) say this winter will be tougher than last year (66 per cent said last year was the most challenging they had ever seen); 95 per cent are concerned about the impact of winter pressures; and most (78 per cent) are worried about having enough capacity to meet demand over the next 12 months – higher than before the Covid-19 pandemic (61 per cent).

Strengthening primary and community care services: the foundation for most care and treatment

This [Healthwatch England briefing](#) shows how people's experiences of primary care can be used to support the development of a long-term vision for the NHS to strengthen these services.

Health: the choices

The [UK 2040 Options project, run by a team based at Nesta](#), will convene a range of experts and thinkers on some of the defining issues facing the country. This report sets out nine fundamental facts about the challenges facing the NHS, social care and public health services. ([Long read of same report from The Health Foundation](#))

Hiding in plain sight: tackling malnutrition as part of the prevention agenda

This Future Health report reveals that an estimated 464,000 people who are admitted to hospital have disease-related malnutrition each year in England. This is the equivalent to more than 50 people admitted to hospital every hour. People with malnutrition are more likely to visit their GP, be admitted to hospital and recover from treatment more slowly.

Adverse Weather and Health Plan

The UK Health Security Agency Adverse Weather and Health Plan aims to protect individuals and communities from the health effects of adverse weather and to build community resilience.

The hidden waitlist: the growing follow-up backlog

This briefing paper from Reform uses data obtained via a Freedom of Information request sent to 119 acute trusts to estimate that the total number of people currently waiting for follow-up appointments stands at more than 11 million. That number has grown by 50 per cent since May 2019. Forty-seven per cent of acute trusts (56 out of the 119) claim either not to hold information about their follow-up waitlists, are unable to present it in an accessible format, or failed to respond to the FOI request within 10 weeks of receiving it (the statutory requirement is 20 days). This suggests that trusts do not see follow-up waitlist management as an organisational priority.

Dentistry in England explained

NHS dentistry is a pillar of the primary care system. But how is dentistry organised in England? This Kings Fund explainer explores the service's structure, commissioning and contracting, NHS dental appointment costs, workforce and the challenges facing this part of the health and care system.

Raising the barriers: an action plan to tackle regional variation in dementia diagnosis in England

At present there is a difference of more than 20 percentage points in the dementia diagnosis rates between the highest and lowest-performing integrated care systems (ICSs) in England. This is an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia report of an inquiry that examined how the most deprived and rural communities are particularly adversely affected by this regional disparity. The inquiry's findings show a complex picture in which issues ranging from variation in population health risk and dementia public health understanding, to the geographical spread of brain scans and transport networks all play a part in regional dementia-related health disparities. The report sets out a number of recommendations so that all who need it can receive a timely and accurate dementia diagnosis.

Addressing the leading risk factors for ill health – a framework for local government action

For us to be healthy, the building blocks of good health need to be in place in our communities – things like decent homes, good schools, and sound business practices. When these building blocks of health are weak or missing, our health can suffer; for example, when businesses promote unhealthy products like alcohol and junk food. In this gap, local authorities have continued to lead local efforts to improve health and tackle inequalities driven by risk factors such as tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food. This Health Foundation briefing aims to support local authorities in England to work across their teams and address these risk factors. They do this by setting out a framework for population-level actions, including examples of approaches taken by different councils and linking to relevant legislation.

Health and wellbeing at work 2023

This Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report delves into the state of employee health and wellbeing, revealing a significant increase in sickness absence rates, particularly in the public sector. It highlights the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on employee absences and emphasises the prevalence of mental health issues and musculoskeletal injuries. The report also discusses organisations' efforts to support employee wellbeing, including training for line managers and the implementation of wellbeing strategies. The report examines employee perceptions of their own health and how work affects it, shedding light on the challenges faced as well as areas for improvement in promoting a healthier, more balanced work environment

Pregnant women's attitudes and behaviours towards antenatal vaccination against Influenza and COVID-19 in the Liverpool City Region, United Kingdom: Cross-sectional survey

Influenza poses a serious health risk to pregnant women and their babies. Despite this risk, influenza vaccine uptake in pregnant women in the UK is less than 50%. Little is known about how COVID-19 affects pregnant women, but its management may affect attitudes and behaviours towards vaccination in pregnancy. The study, in Vaccine: X, set out to establish attitudes and knowledge of pregnant women towards influenza disease and influenza vaccination and to compare these to attitudes and knowledge about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccination

Saving your breath

Lung disease, including COPD, asthma and pneumonia, is the third leading cause of death in the UK, and places a huge burden on individuals, the NHS and the UK economy. We have the worst death rate from lung disease in Europe, and hospital admissions for lung conditions have doubled in the last 20 years. Lung conditions, and their burden on the NHS, hit the headlines each and every year as winter pressures mount. But year after year not nearly enough is done to prevent these pressures building up in the first place. The good news is that we know what works. A significant amount of this burden could be avoided with better prevention and a more effective healthcare response.

Asthma + Lung UK commissioned PwC to provide an updated analysis to quantify both the impact of lung conditions, and the positive impact of specific interventions to improve the diagnosis and care for those with asthma and COPD.

A national framework for NHS – action on inclusion health

This NHS England report describes Inclusion health as an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded, who typically experience multiple interacting risk factors for poor health, such as stigma, discrimination, poverty, violence, and complex trauma. People in inclusion health groups tend to have poor experiences of healthcare services because of barriers created by service design. These negative experiences can lead to people in inclusion health groups avoiding future contact with NHS services and being least likely to receive healthcare despite have high needs. This can result in significantly poorer health outcomes and earlier death among people in inclusion health groups compared with the general population. Extremely poor health status among inclusion health groups is driven by severe disadvantage and clusters of social risk experienced when people are socially excluded. For example, someone who is alcohol dependent may also be homeless resulting in vulnerability, limited opportunities, extremely poor health and a reduced life expectancy. Risks may also build up over the life course. For example, adverse experiences in childhood may be associated with social exclusion, vulnerabilities and health needs both in childhood and later in life.

Saving lives, improving mothers' care

MBRRACE-UK is pleased to announce the publication on the 12th October 2023 of the MBRRACE-UK Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care report for 2023. This year, as requested by NHS England, we have three shorter forms of the report containing limited surveillance and confidential enquiry results which are available below as the "State of the Nation" surveillance and themed reports. The full materials are available in the compiled report including the supplementary material.

Health Behaviours

Policy position: healthy weight

This [position statement from the Association of Directors of Public Health](#) outlines key national and local recommendations which, if implemented, could help to reduce the number of people living with obesity in the UK and create a healthier environment where people are able to live longer, healthier lives.

Policy position: alcohol

This [position statement from the Association of Directors of Public Health](#) highlights a concerning rise in alcohol consumption and related mortality in the UK, emphasising the associated social and financial costs. Recommendations include a shift from treatment to prevention, establishment of an independent body for regulation, a minimum alcohol unit price of 65p, reintroduction of a 2% per annum alcohol tax escalator, mandatory health labelling, and measures to reduce children's exposure to alcohol.

Policy position: health protection

The Covid-19 pandemic and the recent monkeypox outbreak brought to the forefront the need for health protection measures and for sustained funding and effort to protect people from communicable diseases and environmental threats to health. [In this document the Association of Directors of Public Health](#) lays out its local and national recommendations for a whole system approach to health protection.

Tackling Inequality Commission report

This [Diabetes UK report](#) sets out the findings of the Diabetes UK Tackling Inequality Commission, which was established earlier in 2023. The Commission looked at the multiple factors that contribute to health inequalities among people with diabetes, particularly people living in deprivation and people from Black and South Asian communities. The report concludes with a series of broad recommendations addressing the changes needed at all levels, from the individual to government.

Holding us back: tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food and drink

[Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA) and the Alcohol Health Alliance (AHA) have joined forces](#) to outline the scale of harm caused collectively by tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy food and drinks, which are major causes of death and chronic disease.

Reducing the harm from illegal drugs

The distribution, sale and consumption of illegal drugs causes significant harm to individuals, families and communities. The government has estimated that around 3 million people in England and Wales take illegal drugs at a cost to society of approximately £20 billion a year. It is almost two years since the government introduced its latest drugs strategy. [This National Audit Office report](#) examines whether the government is well positioned to achieve the strategy's 10-year ambitions.

Supporting the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector to evaluate social prescribing

This [National Academy for Social Prescribing briefing](#) and rapid scoping review helps identify and collate existing resources that aim to support the evaluation of social prescribing activities.

A total of 74 potential resources were identified and reviewed, with 61 meeting the inclusion criteria for this scoping review.

- The review did not find strong demand for another evaluation toolkit, given the large number of existing resources.
- The review did find a need for clear signposting to trusted resources and identified potential solutions to shared challenges when evaluating social prescribing activities.

Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation

[This is a Department of Health & Social Care policy document](#). Smoking damages and cuts short lives in extraordinary numbers. From increasing stillbirths, through asthma in children, to dementia, stroke and heart failure in old age, it causes disability and death throughout the life course. It drives many cancers, especially lung cancer which is the most common cause of cancer deaths in both women and men in the UK. It causes and accelerates heart disease, the biggest single cause of deaths overall. Large numbers of people are confined to their homes by heart failure or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease caused by smoking, unable even to climb the stairs. Non-smokers, including children and pregnant women are exposed to the risks of second-hand passive smoking. The NHS has a huge burden of smoking-related disease to attend to, along with all its other work.

Health Inequalities

RCP view on health inequalities: a call to action for a cross-government strategy

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) has published a new policy paper reiterating calls for a cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities. The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) brought together the Inequalities in Health Alliance (IHA) and launched its campaign for a cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities in October 2020. Three years on, there is an even greater need for bold action to tackle the unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population.

Maintaining our momentum: public health in local government

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the transfer of public health from primary care trusts to local government. This Local Government Association publication is made up of interviews with key figures closest to the reforms on what they think has worked well, what can be improved on and learnings to take forward for the future.

Access denied? Socioeconomic inequalities in digital health services

The UK's health and social care system increasingly relies on digital services and the flow of patient data to deliver care to tens of millions of people. Digital transformation is intended to fuel innovation and efficiency and improve patient experience.[1] [2] However, there is a risk that digital healthcare can exacerbate existing health inequalities. For people involved in commissioning, developing and deploying digital health services, it is important to identify practical ways to mitigate inequalities and ensure the benefits of this technology are felt by all. Failing to do so can prevent people from accessing the care they need and widen health gaps between those who are able and those who are unable – for a variety of reasons – to use these services effectively. Over the last three years, the Ada Lovelace Institute, in partnership with the Health Foundation, has explored how the accelerated adoption of data-driven systems and digital health services interact with health inequalities in the UK.

Building Bridges - Social Prescribing with people with learning disabilities and autistic people

As part of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, this small research project, led by National Development Team for Inclusion, gathered the experiences of people with learning disabilities and autistic people who had experienced social prescribing and those working as social prescribers or link workers. We have found a breadth and depth of ways that social prescribing can benefit people and their local communities. Social prescribing has the potential to reduce health inequalities and build social capital by connecting people to community groups, and support services in their area, to help with both mental and physical wellbeing.

Inequalities in mental health care for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. Identifying best practice

In this Race & Health Observatory report they suggest the term 'Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers' describes a range of long-established ethnic groups with nomadic ways of life, either historic or still practised. These groups include Romany Gypsies, Welsh Gypsies, Irish Travellers, and Scottish Gypsy Travellers, all of whom have protected ethnic status under the Equality Act (2010). Eastern European Roma migrants have been present in England in significant numbers since the 1980s. Although many Roma are employed across a range of contemporary industries, many of the trades which were traditional to Gypsy and Traveller communities have disappeared in an increasingly digitalised and regulated age. These occupations might have included agricultural labour, landscaping, tree felling, and tarmac laying. Changes in the socio-economic environment also brought with them a worsening mental health crisis across Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. Attitudes towards these communities have been describes as 'the last acceptable form of racism' (Traveller Movement, 2017). 'The majority of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers shared negative experiences. These experiences were present across society: in education examples were provided of being made to feel inadequate; in health people spoke of being turned away by frontline health services and in criminal justice Gypsies and Travellers spoke of having their complaints dismissed by the police and legal professionals.' (Traveller Movement 2017, p. 9) Greenfields and Rogers' (2020) report on Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers highlighted the 'ripple effect' of hate crime experiences on mental health in a report entitled 'Hate as Regular as Rain', wherein participants repeatedly stressed the persistent demoralising effect of hate crime and hate speech on their lives. The data from this report reinforced that being a victim of hate crime has a greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of victims than non-hate crimes, with potentially devastating effects which may increase the risk of suicide. An All-Ireland study (2010) had previously found that suicide prevalence is six times higher for Irish Traveller women than women in the general population, and seven times higher for Traveller men. The review found little evidence that families reached out to preventive services and concluded that, more often, they 'reached out for the rope'.

Identifying evidence to support action to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in health

What is known from equity-focused umbrella reviews and systematic reviews about which public health interventions, programmes and policies show evidence of reducing socioeconomic inequalities in health? There has been considerable progress in the two decades since the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health was established in building an evidence base for action on health equity and identifying entry points for policies, programmes, and interventions. Different policy approaches have been proposed to reduce health inequalities but it is recognised that actions will be most effective if they are targeted at the level of the structural determinants. These reflect the social, economic and political mechanisms that influence the social position of different groups and individuals within society based on factors such as wealth, income, education, and occupation. The focus of this Public Health Wales & Liverpool John Moores University report is on inequalities in health between different socioeconomic groups ('socioeconomic inequalities in health'), which are one of the most important challenges for public health.

Inequalities

Reducing health inequalities faced by children and young people

This NHS Providers report sets out the data and evidence of the health inequalities experienced by children and young people. It outlines the rationale for shifting attention towards this age group to prevent health inequalities later in life. It also considers the role that trusts can play in targeting interventions towards improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people who are more likely to experience inequalities. The report also highlights the existing work of trusts to reduce children and young people's health inequalities within case studies from Barts Health NHS Trust and Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust.

The economic cost of health inequalities in England

Oxera's report, commissioned by The Times, estimates the economic costs of health inequalities in England, focusing on the financial impact of avoidable deaths due to deprivation-related health disparities. Health inequalities reduce workforce productivity, decrease tax revenue, and increase health care spending. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue, and the report calls for a review of government policies on health, education, and social spending.

Lost opportunities: A decade of declining national investment in repairing our homes

This Centre for Ageing Better report highlights the decline in national investment in home improvement and its adverse consequences. It emphasises the importance of safe, warm homes for wellbeing and outlines how inadequate housing contributes to health problems, financial insecurity and unnecessary public spending. With the Healthier Housing Partnership, this report reveals that a lack of investment over the past decade, including the removal of £2.3 billion in home improvement grants by the government, has exacerbated the housing crisis, resulting in fewer homes being repaired.

Mental Health

A life less lonely? Building connected communities

This [International Longevity Centre UK briefing](#) shines a light on what it describes as a worrying fragmentation of communities across the UK, with those living in the most deprived communities at greatest risk of falling into a trap of long-term loneliness. It highlights the link between loneliness and numerous physical and mental illnesses, ranging from depression and dementia to cardiovascular diseases. ([Press Release](#))

Impact of Parental Mental Health and Poverty on the Health of the Next Generation: A Multi-Trajectory Analysis Using the UK Millennium Cohort Study

Exposure to parental mental ill-health and poverty in childhood impact health across the lifecourse. Both maternal and paternal mental health may be important influences, but few studies have unpicked the complex interrelationships between these exposures and family poverty for later health. [Read article in Journal of Adolescent Health (11 Oct 2023)](#).

The maternal mental health experiences of young mums

This [Maternal Mental Health Alliance briefing](#) explores the mental health experiences of young mums. Findings from a rapid review of the literature and focus groups from across the UK show that young mums aged 16–25 are at higher risk of experiencing mental health problems during pregnancy and after birth. It also finds that they face barriers in accessing support and, where they do access support, experiences of services can be poor.

A mentally healthier nation

[This report, from Centre for Mental Health](#), describes that many of the UK's biggest organisations with an interest in mental health have come together to develop and promote this plan to address worsening mental health. Ahead of the UK general election, they will campaign for these policies to be adopted as part of a 10-year, cross-government mental health strategy, ideally to begin in the first year of the next parliament. Given this focus on UK general election policies, there is a concentration on England's health and other systems because the Westminster parliament has much more influence on them than in the devolved nations. The broader recommendations, on welfare reform for example, would benefit the whole UK and all three devolved nations have long-term mental health strategies which we have drawn inspiration from. Signatories of this document believe that a long-term, cross-UK government plan is essential to protect and promote the whole nation's mental health. It is necessary because mental health problems affect millions of people in every aspect of their lives. It is necessary because action across government could help to turn the tide of rising levels of mental ill health in our society today. And it is necessary because we cannot become a healthier, more equitable and productive nation without better mental health for us all.

Poverty

The Money Statistics (October 2023)

UK families are bearing some of the heaviest brunt of the ongoing cost of living crisis, with many resorting to drastic measures, according to the October 2023 Money Statistics, produced by The Money Charity.

Make it local: local government's vital role in addressing economic activity

While unemployment is low, economic inactivity in the UK, defined as people aged 16-64 not in employment or actively seeking work, remains at around 8.7 million in 2023. This has caused labour shortages in various sectors, hindering their ability to meet customer demand and contribute to growth. Given the local government is working with partners on employability programmes to address this issue, the Local Government Association has commissioned research to explore national and local initiatives tackling economic inactivity.

What protects people from very deep poverty, and what makes it more likely?

Hardship is intensifying in our country. Around 6 million people face very deep poverty, nearly 1.5 million more than 20 years ago. This should concern us all, as going without essentials like enough food or warmth and facing the stress and anxiety of how to make ends meet harms people's physical and mental health, their social connections and their ability to get on in life. In this context it is essential to understand what can protect people from, and increase their risk of being tipped into, very deep poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) analysis of Understanding Society – a large, nationally representative data set that has tracked the lives of the same households over more than a decade – enables them to look at this in detail. It also gives them further insight into the groups most likely to move into very deep poverty. These include families with children, especially lone parents, large families and young families, households headed by a single adult, disabled people, carers and both social and private renters. But that is not to say the group of people in very deep poverty is fixed – many people move in and out as their circumstances change. Between 2017–18 and 2020–21, an average of around 2.5 million people moved into, and a similar number moved out of, very deep poverty each year. Across this four-year period, 10.4 million people in the UK (around one in seven) experienced very deep poverty in one or two years. A smaller, but still sizeable group, experienced persistent very deep poverty, with 1.9 million living in very deep poverty in at least three out of these four years. So what are the events and circumstances that protect people from very deep poverty and make it more likely people experience it?

Cost of Living Research Group - The York Policy Engine, University of York

The University of York has a long tradition of ground breaking research on poverty, inequality, social justice, social policy and politics. In this report, the University have brought together their expertise to focus on the drivers of the cost of living, and its impact on the wellbeing of people and communities.

Social Care

Reforming adult social care in England

This [National Audit Office report](#) looks at how the Department of Health and Social Care is responding to the challenges facing adult social care in England, and its progress with delivering the reforms set out in the 2021 White Paper. This report examines: key pressures and challenges in adult social care in England; the Department's response to increasing pressures in adult social care during 2022; and how the Department is delivering reform and progress against its commitments. The report concludes that the Department of Health and Social Care has much to do if it is to achieve its 10-year ambition for reforming adult social care, and must manage significant risks.

Caring for adults with learning disabilities in acute hospitals

The aim of this [Health Services Safety Investigations Body report](#) is to help improve the inpatient care of adults with a known learning disability in acute hospital settings. A person with a learning disability has a reduced ability to understand new or complex information, learn new skills and live independently. In the UK, it is estimated that approximately 2% of adults have a learning disability. Providing equitable care to people with a learning disability is a priority for the NHS.

The transitions that matter

The language of 'transitions' in social care is often used when talking about how people move from children's care services into adult support. Yet the concept of transition is much wider than this: it is about the changes that disabled people, older people and people using mental health services want to make (and are facilitated to make) in their lives. As part of exploring transitions for a broader research theme around care trajectories and constraints[, the Centre for Care undertook a scoping review of the literature, focusing on how researchers in social care conceptualise and research transitions](#).

Support for care leavers

This [House of Commons Library briefing paper](#) provides an overview of the UK Government's policies to support care leavers.

Adult social care and the NHS: two sides of the same coin

Understanding how trends in the social care market shape demand for integrated health and care services across the country is a key challenge for emerging integrated care systems. [This NHS Confederation analysis](#) brings together demographic trends with data on workforce, Care Quality Commission-registered services and funding, to provide an overview of total capacity and national trends across the health and care sector, as well as significant variation across the country.

The annual assessment of health care and social care in England

[State of Care](#) looks at the trends, shares examples of good and outstanding care and highlights where care needs to improve.

Wider Determinants

Social prescribing: what's strong and what's wrong – lessons from the Wirral

This [briefing note from University of Liverpool](#) explores social prescribing and Wirral's options that an asset-based foundation for social prescribing can cultivate relationships of mutual understanding, trust, and support for sustaining 'what's strong': a rich texture of local assets for community wellbeing. Its Community of Practice nurtures a continued focus on community assets across VCFSE, health, and public service organisations. Yet, it also reveals that the sustainability of social prescribing can be threatened by the lingering of 'what's wrong': structural issues with collaborative relationships. Structural inequalities in participation, influence, and funding support make it difficult to sustain the very initiatives on which social prescribing depends.

Local authority marketing sustainability plans: insights report

This [Department of Health and Social Care report](#) details a number of important themes identified by local authorities (LAs) when developing strategic approaches to market sustainability. These include greater involvement of providers, service users and their friends and family; expanding domiciliary care markets and securing greater supply; and stabilising and adapting care home markets to the changing needs of local populations.

Damp & Mould in Homes guidance

[OHID have published the 'Damp and mould: understanding and addressing the health risks for rented housing providers' guidance](#). The guidance primarily aimed at social and private rented housing providers, but other professionals with an interest in understanding the health risks of damp and mould and how to address them may also find this guidance helpful. This may include public health teams, primary and secondary healthcare professionals, environmental health practitioners, social care and voluntary sector professionals, contractors and other professionals going into tenants' homes who may have concerns for their wellbeing.

Health hazards of renting associated with faster biological ageing, study finds

Renting a private sector home, falling repeatedly into arrears, and exposure to pollution in the vicinity are linked to faster 'biological' ageing, new research has found – but these effects are also reversible, underlining the importance of housing policy in health improvement. That's the message of new research from the University of Essex in the UK, and the University of Adelaide, Australia. Biological ageing is defined as the cumulative damage to the body's tissues and cells, irrespective of actual age. The biological impact of renting, as opposed to owner occupancy, is nearly double that of being out of work compared with having paid employment, the findings suggest. Numerous aspects of housing are associated with physical and mental health, including cold, mould, crowding and injury hazards, stress, and stigma. But exactly how they might exert their effects isn't entirely clear, say the researchers. Published online in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, the research paper, ['Are housing circumstances associated with faster epigenetic ageing?'](#), was written by Professor Meena Kumari, from the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, with Dr Amy Clair and Professor Emma Baker, from the University of Adelaide.

Performance tracker 2023: public services as the UK approaches a general election

This Institute for Government annual report, produced in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), assesses the health of nine key public services as the UK approaches a general election: general practice, hospitals, adult social care, children's social care, neighbourhood services, schools, police, criminal courts and prisons. It finds almost all performing worse than before the pandemic – and much worse than in 2010 – and that tight spending plans, to which both main parties have committed, will mean very difficult choices face whoever wins the election.

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If you have any local information, research or reports you think useful to share then get in touch wirralintelligenceservice@wirral.gov.uk or if the bulletin has been passed onto you and you would like to subscribe please complete this form.

Thanks, John