

Addressing Health Inequalities in Suffolk

Local planning toolkit

Last updated:
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Background

Inequalities in health are avoidable and unfair differences in health and wellbeing between different groups of people.

At both a National and a Local level, there are considerable health inequalities, and these are only likely to get worse with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is clear evidence that reducing health inequalities improves life expectancy and reduces disability and illness across all levels of society.

For this reason, tackling health inequalities is a core part of improving access to support, quality of services, and health outcomes for the whole population.

Source: Public Health England (2020): Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT): executive summary

Purpose of the toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to support local planning and action around health inequalities in Suffolk.

It consists of a checklist which can be used by stakeholders working together across the statutory sector, voluntary sector and local communities, to develop and implement actions aimed at reducing health inequalities within a local area.

The toolkit is designed to be worked through using the principles of co-production. This means people within local communities working in equal partnership with decision makers from across the health and social care system.

The toolkit draws upon local and national research and best-practice examples to ensure any action taken is based on the best available evidence about what works to reduce health inequalities.

Guidance notes

The toolkit is formed of 4 key elements:

- Preparing for action
- Taking action
- Monitoring and evaluating impact
- Building in sustainability

Each section consists of a checklist which is aimed at providing a step by step process which can be worked through to:

- Understand local need and use this understanding to plan local action
- Ensure key processes such as evaluation and review are built in from the outset to support long-term impact on health inequalities

It is recommended that the checklists are worked through by a range of different stakeholders working together, using a place-based approach which brings together local assets and resources to drive change at a more local level

Effective co-production is key to influencing the scale of impact to reduce health inequalities going forward and section 1 provides the foundations required for this work. In this section, guidance is provided to ensure that the right people are around the table, and the right conditions for collaboration are created from the outset.

What needs to be considered when using the toolkit?

There are a number of different factors that need to be considered when thinking about how you reduce health inequalities. These include:

- The protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010:
 - Age; sex; race; religion or belief; disability; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership
- Socioeconomic differences such as employment status, income, area deprivation.
- Differences in geographical areas such as deprivation, service provision, urban vs. rural
- Vulnerability or cultural differences such as language, people experiencing homelessness, people in prison or young people leaving care



Section 1: preparing for action

Summary

This section aims to ensure the foundations for effective action are in place. This includes ensuring you have the data you need to understand need within your local area, providing the tools for effective community involvement to capture the 'stories behind the data', and helping you to think about who you need around the table to drive forward action and create lasting change.

1. Have you created the right conditions for co-production and collaborative working?

- Ensure your approach to collaborative working is informed by the principles of co-production. Once established, the project group should familiarise themselves with the Health Watch Suffolk ['A Recipe For Co-production'](#) document and should use these principles to inform their approach to working together from the outset. Further resources and useful information on how to facilitate effective co-production at a local level can be found on the [Healthwatch Suffolk Coproduction resources page](#).
- Agree principles for communication, including who you will need to keep updated, how often, and to what extent. This will ensure that those organisations or individuals who will be directly affected by any changes made, are informed of the process and are brought along on the journey. Failure to do this could result in barriers to change, so open and transparent communication is crucial for ensuring actions can be taken forwards.



2. Have you got the right people around the table to take action on Health Inequalities?

- Ensure key stakeholders with appropriate decision making responsibility around health, wellbeing and equality are engaged and invited to be part of the project planning group. (This may include the local authority, clinical commissioning groups, integrated care systems, primary care networks, service providers from health, housing, welfare or education. Think about in your local area which organisations can play a role in reducing health inequality and why it is important to have them around the table).
- Identify local community networks and consider arranging a local engagement event to understand needs and concerns around inequality. This step is really important for capturing the 'stories behind the data'. We need to understand how health inequality plays out within the context of people's lives, and this can not be achieved without working directly with those people. Consider representation from voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors; community leaders/influencers or trusted individuals from different communities within your local area. Consider using broad open questions to structure the discussion and to understand what matters most to people in terms of their health and wellbeing and inequality.
- Identify people from local communities most affected by health inequalities who are willing and able to contribute to the co-production of interventions. These will be people who in addition to sharing their experiences, will be able to contribute time to support with planning meetings, review local actions, and support links with their wider networks to ensure that whatever is put in place will be received well by local communities. This can be achieved via mechanisms such as reaching out through existing community organisations or service user groups, or using social media. For an idea of some of the people or groups you might want to consider, visit the [groups at risk of disadvantage page](#) on the [Healthy Suffolk Website](#).
- Consider join up with other local groups such as locality groups, alliances, local resilience forums, community safety partnerships or sustainability and transformation partnerships where appropriate. Linking in with forums can ensure that there is join up with wider strategy and planning at a local level and will encourage the embedding of health inequalities at multiple levels of local action.



3. Do you have a good understanding of the needs and assets within your local area?

- Explore existing data on the distribution of health across different population groups. Some useful sources include:
 - your local place-based needs assessment for your area. The needs assessments can be found here: www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/jsna/pbna
 - [Suffolk Corona Watch](#) – provides a wealth of data on the impact of Covid-19 in Suffolk
- Develop a good understanding of the assets within your local area by undertaking a community asset mapping exercise. This will help you balance the needs identified in an area, with the skills, commitment and opportunities within the community to support work undertaken alongside local people. The [Suffolk Infolink](#) page provides an extensive directory of services and support at a local level. However, it is also important to understand the assets that exist in the communities themselves such as skills, knowledge and relationships which can be built upon to improve health and wellbeing. Advice and support on Community Asset Mapping is available via the Localities & Partnerships Communities team in public health, email: colin.baldwin@suffolk.gov.uk

- Review local strategic priorities and use these alongside the data, and the voice from community organisations and members of the public to identify key areas of focus. Some suggestions to consider include:
 - The Suffolk [Joint Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy](#)
 - The recommendations from the 2020 Annual Public Health Report [published on the [Healthy Suffolk Website](#) in December 2020]



Section 2: taking action

Summary

This section aims to provide guidance on how to plan targeted interventions around health inequality. Examples of effective interventions which have been implemented elsewhere will be provided, and useful tools and templates are presented to ensure the processes are in place for delivering and monitoring impact on health inequalities.

Use the priorities for action identified in Section 1 to inform the development of interventions that can be delivered to reduce health inequalities at a local level.

Useful tools to support this include:

- [Place-based approaches for reducing health inequalities](#) – this document provides useful insight into the importance of a place-based approach, but of particular use is the population intervention triangle which is included in this document. The biggest impact on health inequality is achieved if you develop interventions at a civic level, service level, and a community level. Evidence shows that this is the most effective way to reduce inequality at a population scale.
- The LGA '[Suggestions for mitigating the impact on health inequalities at a local level](#)' document contains a comprehensive list of examples of interventions and actions that can be taken to address different needs or cross cutting themes.



Consider the range of community approaches that can be drawn upon to inform action at a local level using Public Health England [‘Family of community-centred approaches’](#).

Draw upon mechanisms for community engagement identified in section 1 to ensure those who find it most difficult to access services and interventions are involved in planning of any new initiatives/developments.

Once you have used the above tools, and have ensured the community have fed into shaping your proposed actions, complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for any new intervention, service or policy development. If you do not already have a template to use for this, the [Suffolk County Council EIA](#) template may be helpful.

Please note: An EIA should be carried out at an early stage of the planning discussions so impact on inequality is considered from the outset. This will ensure the range of potential outcomes are considered (both positive and negative), and where possible mitigation is put in place.

Develop a framework for monitoring impact as part of your planning process.

Clarify from the outset what will be measured, how it will be captured, and the mechanisms for feeding back outcomes to stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement. It is also useful to consider how information on cost and resource requirements are built into the framework and fed into the overall understanding of impact. The [health inequalities project evaluation slide set](#) may be useful in helping you to think this through. Overall, the key questions to consider are:

- What outcomes have you set out to achieve?
- What quantitative or qualitative evaluation processes can you establish to check you have achieved the outcomes you set?
- What output or process measures can you use to capture impact and effectiveness of intervention delivery?



Section 3: monitoring and evaluating impact

Summary

This section aims to outline the key elements that will need to be considered when capturing information throughout the duration of the intervention(s), and ensuring this provides you with a clear picture of impact against the outcomes you set out to achieve.

- Ensure that the organisations or people you are working with are aware of what they need to be reporting to support the evaluation of projects or plans you have put in place. Make sure that the mechanisms for understanding impact on health inequalities and data categories required to do so are considered
- Organise monitoring meetings to share data and review progress and impact at set intervals following the implementation of any new projects or plans. This will ensure that any tweaks that need to be made to delivery or the monitoring itself are picked up early, and will also allow you to reflect on what is working well.
- Use mechanisms for community engagement to capture feedback as the work progresses to understand how it is being received by communities, and whether there are any emerging barriers to meeting the outcomes you set out to achieve.
- Ensure there is a process for sharing of best practice across different organisations, including a feedback loop between local communities and planning groups. Public Health England have produced a short slide set with [guidance on writing good case studies](#).



Section 4: building in sustainability

Summary

This section aims to prompt thinking about how your interventions may be embedded into the wider delivery of health, wellbeing and social care services and how you can ensure longer term delivery of elements of the intervention that are providing to have a positive impact on health inequality.

- Consider who you need to engage to take your intervention upstream i.e. what strategic groups exist within your local area? What mechanisms are there for sharing learning and impact from your intervention with these groups?
- Understand the available funding sources to support with the ongoing delivery of interventions. Support with identifying funding can be obtained by visiting community action [Suffolk Funding 4 Suffolk portal](#) if funding will be predominantly for voluntary sector organisations.
- Consider the use of tools for calculating return on investment to help with understanding of wider system benefits and support with making the case for future investment. [Further information and a range of tools can be found here.](#)

Have you found this toolkit useful?

This toolkit is a working document and for it to be useful and effective it is important it is shaped and informed by the people that will be using it.

For further information or to offer feedback, please get in touch, email:
healthandwellbeing@suffolk.gov.uk



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Read the 2020 Annual Public Health Report
A Time to Change: Working Towards Better Health For All in Suffolk
at: www.healthysuffolk.org.uk

