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## Conclusions: progress in health improvement for London as a whole – but inequalities within London persist

This report shows that much has been achieved in London in recent years in increasing our understanding and raising awareness of health inequalities and determinants and securing the commitment, and more concerted action of a wide range of organisations to partnership action on health in London. In particular, progress has been made in health intelligence, in moving from policy to action and in achieving increased and more concerted action across LHC partner organisations.

Our update on our high-level indicators and report on trends (Section 4) shows that, overall, Londoners' health is continuing to improve, as evidenced by increases in life expectancy for both males and females and a decrease in infant mortality. Within London, however, there remains considerable inequality for both male and female life expectancy and infant mortality.

On the indicators of the wider determinants of health that this report series considers, the capital as a whole has witnessed improvements in all except unemployment, where the gap between white and BAME groups remains.

The trends relating to the housing, education, crime, road traffic accidents, and air-quality indicators in London are also broadly positive, and there is a narrowing of the inequalities gap on these indicators for London.

On the housing and crime indicators, the picture of London trends is more mixed, and the direction of trends less clear.

However, it is encouraging to note that for both these indicators there has been a considerable narrowing of the inequalities gap within London.

## Implications for action

These findings point to important 'implications for action' for a range of organisations and sectors in London on key determinants of health that are highlighted by our range of indicators.

### Focus efforts on the needs, including perceived needs, of disadvantaged communities and groups

This year's report and previous reports in this series have highlighted the need for all organisations to:

- focus efforts to meet the needs of BAME communities, disabled people, children, young people and families living in disadvantaged circumstances, and older people
- use equalities legislation (including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Disability Discrimination Act 2005) to influence and drive organisations at all levels to focus on health inequalities, and to more effectively address the needs of diverse groups.

There is an ongoing need, highlighted throughout the *Health in London* report series – as an 'implication for action' for all organisations across all sectors – to:

- continue to improve collection and application of information on access to the determinants of health and on health outcomes for ethnic minority groups, disabled people, and others who may be adversely affected by health inequalities, including recently arrived groups
- make better use of information to influence policy and practice
- standardise different methods of collecting information

- make more use of qualitative as well as quantitative information, at Londonwide and local levels, to provide the fullest possible picture of health issues and to influence policy and practice.

In particular, and again highlighted throughout the *Health in London* report series, is the importance of:

- valuing and making better use of community intelligence in planning and evaluating interventions
- increasing efforts to actively engage London's diverse and disadvantaged communities and representative organisations, to identify priorities for action, making use of their own experience and expertise in dealing with health issues.

### **Maintain focus on determinants of health and health inequalities**

We need to maintain the focus on wider, social determinants of health and health inequalities and redouble our efforts to:

- reduce unemployment, with particular focus on BAME groups, disabled people and other disadvantaged groups
- maintain and further improve educational attainment
- improve housing quality
- maintain and further improve road safety
- reduce crime and improve community safety
- build health impact and equalities impact assessment as a major consideration into the development and implementation of all policies and strategies relevant to determinants of health, at all levels and across all sectors and organisations. The Mayor has set a good example on this front by subjecting all of his statutory strategies to robust HIA and equalities impact assessment.

All organisations in all sectors should:

- ensure maximum impact is achieved through new drivers for change from the national, regional and local levels, including, for example, the new smoke-free workplace legislation, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Thames Gateway, Local Government Bill, LAAs.

Earlier *Health in London* reports have also highlighted the importance of:

- promoting action that takes into account a range of determinants, rather than attempting to deal with individual factors in isolation, or focusing too narrowly on individual lifestyle factors and health behaviors.

### **Increase understanding and share learning**

The update on indicators and report on trends (Section 4) has also shown that important progress can be made in narrowing the gap in the experience of determinants of health between different communities and groups in London. However, we need to understand more and share learning about:

- why the experience of some groups and/or certain areas seems better or worse than others' experience in London
- what is working to narrow such gaps and thus improve the experience of disadvantaged communities and groups in London.

We, therefore, need to continue to:

- find ways of measuring impact to show what difference is being made, including investing in more rigorous evaluation and action research
- develop models and mechanisms for change, for promulgating learning and for informing wider debates about how to address social determinants to make populations healthier.

### **Time for all organisations to 'take stock'**

The development of the Mayor's new Health Inequalities Strategy for London provides the opportunity for all organisations across all sectors in London to:

- take time to consider and be clear about what needs to be done within their organisations and sectors, and in partnership – and therefore where to concentrate their efforts to maximise impact on determinants of health
- further strengthen and, where needed, forge new strategic alliances. The Well London Alliance is a good example of development of an exciting new partnership for health in London
- synchronise tools and levers for change
- maximise the use of existing and combined resources for measuring and understanding health inequalities and their wider determinants, and to build capacity and leadership
- identify and secure new, mainstream investment for health inequalities interventions to improve sustainability.

For example, there are particular opportunities for:

- the NHS in London to ensure that the opportunities to strengthen commissioning for health improvement are realised through ongoing NHS changes and strengthening of commissioning functions. It is also vital that the NHS in London continues as a key player in partnerships for health improvement at local and regional levels
- PCTs and local authorities to ensure that they address health improvement and the wider determinants of health are addressed at local level through LAAs
- the LHC to take stock of its achievements across the board over

the last five years, and to critically review its mandate, and the way it functions to best serve as a regional hub for action to reduce health inequalities in London.

## Final conclusions

This report demonstrates some encouraging trends on health determinants and outcomes in London, summarises future opportunities for action at regional and local levels, and highlights the value of effective partnership action in actively supporting change. There is enormous potential across all London organisations, the LHC and local partnerships to build on past experience and apply our collective learning and commitment to the ongoing challenge of reducing health inequalities.

This needs to include a redoubling of efforts to:

- 1 engage with and improve the health of our most disadvantaged communities: BAME communities; disabled people; children and families; and others living in poverty
- 2 strengthen commissioning and mainstreaming, across all sectors, of health-promotion interventions and particularly interventions that impact on wider determinants of health, including all agencies identifying and securing existing and new mainstream resources for health inequalities interventions
- 3 innovate and evaluate – to generate and disseminate learning about what works in reducing health inequalities
- 4 maximise the new opportunities that face us in London over the coming years including the new Mayoral powers, the 2012 Games and the development of the new London NHS.

The Mayor and LHC remain committed to facilitating further action on health and working with a wide range of partners to develop creative, effective interventions for London. We will continue to make best use of regional opportunities to achieve change, and particularly welcome the

government's proposals to enhance the Mayor's powers in a number of key areas related to health. We look forward to working with existing and new partners to meet the exciting challenge to develop the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy, to provide an ambitious, long-term partnership vision for our capital city.

