



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT): Full version

About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, research, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific and delivery expertise and support.

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Published September 2020
PHE publications
gateway number: GW-1167

PHE supports the UN
Sustainable Development Goals



About HEAT

What is HEAT?

HEAT is a tool consisting of a series of questions and prompts, which are designed to help you systematically assess health inequalities related to your work programme and identify what you can do to help reduce inequalities. It will also help you to consider the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

When and why should I use it?

HEAT has similarities to other health equity assessment tools, but is unique in providing a lightweight yet still systematic framework for assessing and driving action on health inequalities.

It provides an easy-to-follow template which can be applied flexibly to suit your work programme. Its specific prompts ensure consideration of multiple dimensions of health inequalities.

How is it structured?

The tool has 4 stages:

1. Prepare
2. Assess
3. Refine and Apply
4. Review.

It is designed to be completed at the start of a work plan to help you consider its potential effects, but it can be used retrospectively. In practice, your assessment is likely to be iterative and will help you continuously improve the contribution of your work to reducing health inequalities.

Because tackling health inequalities at scale is likely to require 'buy-in' from senior leaders in your organisation or the system you work in, we recommend that the use of the HEAT process is sponsored by a senior leader.

What should be considered when completing it?

There are a number of different dimensions or characteristics to consider when completing HEAT.

1. The protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 are as follows:
 - age
 - sex
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - disability
 - sexual orientation
 - gender reassignment
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - marriage and civil partnership
2. Socio-economic differences by individual socio-economic position. For example, National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, employment status, income, area deprivation.
3. Area variations by deprivation level (Index of Multiple Deprivation), service provision, urban/rural or in general.
4. Vulnerable and Inclusion Health groups, for example people experiencing homelessness, people in prison, or young people leaving care.

What should be considered when completing it?

Health inequalities are unjust differences in health and wellbeing between different groups of people (communities) which are systematic and avoidable. Health inequalities in England exist across a range of dimensions or characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, socio-economic status, geographic deprivation, or being part of a vulnerable or Inclusion Health group.

Health inequalities may be driven by:

- 1 Different experiences and distribution of the wider determinants of health or structural factors. For example, the environment, community life, income or housing. In other words, the social economic and environmental conditions in which people live, work and play.
- 2 Different exposure to social, economic and environmental stressors and adversities. These affect states of mind from an early age and throughout life. Stress and psychological wellbeing directly affect resilience, health conditions and health behaviours.
- 3 Differences in health behaviours or other risk factors between groups, for example smoking, diet, and physical activity levels have different social distributions. Health behaviours may be influenced by wider determinants of health, like income.
- 4 Unequal access to or experience of health and other services between social groups.

People who share protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, may experience poorer health outcomes as a direct result of discrimination or due to different experiences of the factors described above.

The tool

Programme or project being assessed	
Date completed	
Contact person (name, Directorate, email, phone)	
Name of strategic leader	

Steps to take	Your response – remember to consider multiple dimensions of inequalities, including protected characteristics and socio-economic differences
A. Prepare – agree the scope of work and assemble the information you need	
<p>1. Your programme of work What are the main aims of your work? How do you expect your work to reduce health inequalities?</p>	
<p>2. Data and evidence What are the key sources of data, indicators, and evidence that allow you to identify HI in your topic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider nationally available data such as health profiles and RightCare • Consider local data such as that available in JSNA, contract performance data, and qualitative data from local research 	

B. Assess - examine the evidence and intelligence	
<p>3. Distribution of health Which populations face the biggest health inequalities for your topic, according to the data and evidence above?</p>	<p>Socio-economic status or geographic deprivation:</p> <hr/> <p>Inclusion health and vulnerable groups (for example, people experiencing homelessness, prison leavers, young people leaving care):</p> <hr/> <p>Experience related to protected characteristics:</p>
<p>4. Causes of inequalities What does the data and evidence tell you are the potential drivers for these inequalities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which wider determinants are influential? E.g. income, education, employment, housing, community life, racism and discrimination. • What aspects of mental wellbeing are affected? Consider risk and protective factors. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which health behaviours play a role? • Does service quality, access and take up increase the chance of health inequalities in your work area? <p>Which of these can you directly control? Which can you influence? Which are out of your control?</p>	
<p>C. Refine and apply – make changes to your work plans that will have the greatest impact</p>	
<p>5. Potential effects In light of the above, how is your work likely to affect health inequalities? (positively or negatively)</p> <p>Could your work widen inequalities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requiring self-directed action which is more likely to be done by affluent groups? • not tackling the wider and full spectrum of causes? • not being designed with communities themselves? • relying on professional-led interventions? • not tackling the root causes of health inequalities? 	
<p>6. Action plan What specific actions can your work programme or project take to maximise the potential for positive impacts and/or to mitigate the negative impacts on health inequalities?</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you act on the specific causes of inequalities identified above? • Could you consider targeting action on populations who face the biggest inequalities? • Could you design the work with communities who face the biggest health inequalities to maximise the chance of it working for them? • Could you seek to increase people’s control over their health and lives (if appropriate)? • Could you use civic, service and community-centred interventions to tackle the problem – to maximise the chance of reaching large populations at scale? • Who else can help? 	
<p>7. Evaluation and monitoring How will you quantitatively or qualitatively monitor and evaluate the effect of your work on different population groups at risk of health inequalities? What output or process measures could you consider?</p>	
<p>Set a health equity assessment review date, recommended for between 6 and 12 months from initial completion. Review date:</p>	

D. Review – identify lessons learned and drive continuous improvement	
Date completed (should be 6-12 months after initial completion):	
Contact person (name, directorate, email, phone)	
1. Lessons learned Have you achieved the actions you set? How has your work: a) supported reductions in health inequalities associated with physical and mental health? b) promoted equality, diversity and inclusion across communities and groups that share protected characteristics? What will you do differently to drive improvements in your programme? What actions and changes can you identify?	