COVID-19 Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT) for local areas

There are clear reasons for giving priority consideration and support to those segments of the population that experience health inequalities. COVID-19 is likely to affect certain groups of the population more than others and some of those will disproportionally suffer from worse outcomes. This document can be used by public health and other teams in local authorities to help shape communication, inform commissioning cycle, engagement with and delivery of services and may be used as evidence of meeting the public sector equality duty.
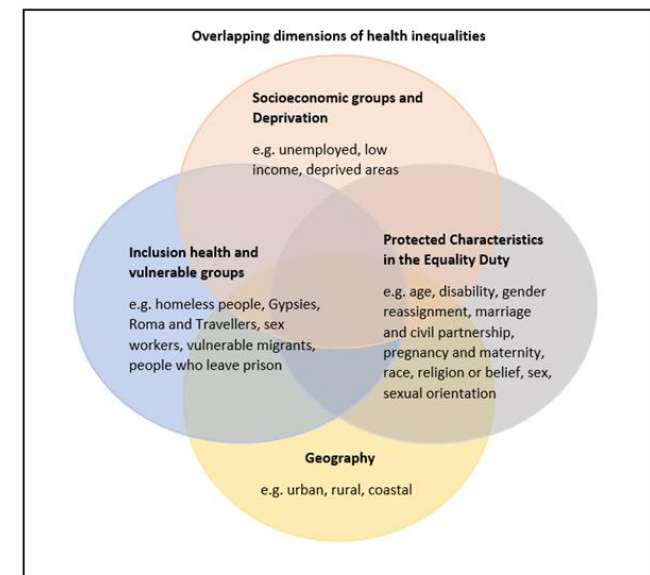
Specifically, HEAT for COVID-19 will:
1. Support local areas in considering how their work has an impact on health inequalities, protected characteristics and inclusion health groups explicitly as part of the incidence response
2. Raise awareness among colleagues of the importance of health inequalities and prepare targeted action(s) in supporting the outbreak locally
3. Collect information about how health inequalities/equity are being taken into account as part of the response risk management.

This tool has been adapted from PHE's Health Equity Assessment Tool for place based approaches and consists of a set of questions that enable assessment of programme or service interventions for their current or future impacy on health inequalitiesPlease note that NHSEI have produced a similar resource to support the response of health services It can be used to help shape systematic action, communication, engagement with stakeholders (or providers) and planning delivery of services to those in deprived areas or those who are extremely vulnerable.

When using this tool, it may be helpful to consider:

- The various dimensions of health inequalities that relate to COVID-19 (see figure 1 on right)
- The benefits of completing this assessment in collaboration with partners and stakeholders

Overlapping dimensions of health inequalities

Socioeconomic groups and Deprivation
e.g. unemployed, low income, deprived areas

Inclusion health and vulnerable groups
e.g. homeless people, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, sex workers, vulnerable migrants, people who leave prison

Protected Characteristics in the Equality Duty
e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation

Geography
e.g. urban, rural, coastal

Area of assessment:		
Date completed and contact person		
Question	Issues to consider	Response/ next steps/actions
1. **What are the top 3 ways that the work you do can impact** (positively or negatively) **inequalities ?** or different groups or communities that share protected characteristics? Think about whether outcomes vary across groups, and who benefits most and least	a) Protected characteristics (e.g. do we have advice/comms for these groups?)	
	b) Socio-economic status or geographic deprivation (e.g. do we know which areas are more exposed and the impact on local communities and services?)	
	c) Specific socially excluded or extremely vulnerable groups e.g. people experiencing homelessness, prison leavers, young people leaving care, migrants; people with severe or enduring mental health issues; vulnerable children and young people; those in receipt of free school meals	
2. Next steps: Can any potential negative impact be justified? If not, what will you do to mitigate or reduce inequalities locally?	• What specific actions will you take to address HI and protected characteristics? • Is there anything that can be done to shift your work 'upstream' to make it more likely to reduce HI? • How do you ensure that disadvantaged groups have equal access to information and/ or services, settings (e.g. food, medication, tax relief etc) during the outbreak? • How do you communicate and engage on HI/protected groups with key partners and stakeholders?	
3. How will you monitor and evaluate the effect of your work?	• What factors will you measure to determine if your work on HI is effective?	
4. Review stage – **during Incident DEBRIEF/Review**	• What will you do differently? Identify actions and changes to processes and protocols of outbreak management to drive improvements	

PHE: The Health Equity Assessment for COVID-19 – support for local areas

Feedback

If you have any comments, updates to add, or examples of work that you are doing to address any of the areas highlighted and would be happy to share with others, please contact the Health Equity Team at Public Health England: health.equity@phe.gov.uk

We are keen to learn how useful these resources have been and in what way and will take the opportunity to ask for feedback over the coming months.

PHE: The Health Equity Assessment for COVID-19 – support for local areas