Health Inequalities

Checklist of Health Inequalities Sensitive Work

NHS Highland

Health inequalities are the unjust health experiences faced by different groups of individuals.

To make a difference it will take a collective approach across many organisations and services.

Use this checklist to identify if you are working in a way most likely to reduce health inequalities.

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Key Points about Health Inequalities

**Fundamental Cause:**
- Distribution of power, wealth and resources driven by high level policies.

**Social, Economic & Physical Environment:**
- People who experience difficult life circumstances do not only live in areas of disadvantage.
- There are a range of ways to make a difference locally: income maximisation, employment options, education & skills, housing, social connections, community empowerment.
- Services and support should be targeted and delivered in ways that reach the most in need.
- Strong local communities support better health and wellbeing

**Individual experiences:**
- A whole complex range of factors can affect people’s health and wellbeing and limit their choices.
- Life circumstance differ on the way they impact individuals.
- Targeted interventions and support for those most at risk will help to reduce inequalities.
- There are protective factors that support health and wellbeing.
To reduce health inequalities we need to be working across 3 themes which are:

1. Changing the way organisations work
2. Creating healthier places and communities
3. Supporting healthier lives for individuals and families.

This checklist is a means of assessing whether you are working across all 3 themes. Ideally work should encompass as mainly of the bullet points as possible but may not cover all.

**Change the way organisations work**

We are:
- Looking for opportunities and taking action to reduce inequalities in life circumstances – e.g. education, employment, housing, income.
- Sensitive, flexible and responsive in meeting the diverse needs of individuals, groups and communities.
- Collaborating with communities in planning and delivering services
- Tailoring services and making them easier to access, so people get the type and level of support they need.
- Developing staff skills and knowledge around the issues that affect health and wellbeing.
- Working in partnership across sectors, services and organisations.
- Ensuring workers’ health, safety and wellbeing through good quality work.
- Considering the impact of our policies, plans and services on health inequalities

**Creating healthier places & communities**

We are:
- Enhancing the social and physical environment where children and adults live, work and play.
- Support people to build connections and supportive networks.
- Identifying and using existing assets – skills, knowledge, resources and connections within communities.
- Making services and opportunities available locally.
- Encourage communities to identify health and wellbeing issues and participate in developing solutions.
- Encourage people in decisions about what happens locally.
- Reducing exposure to things that harm health and wellbeing.

**Supporting healthier lives for individuals & families**

We are:
- Aware of the range of social, economic and environmental factors impacting on the health of individuals and families.
- Building skills and resources to enable people to improve their own health and wellbeing.
- Creating opportunities and reducing barriers for people to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring people have information and support to access services and opportunities that will improve their life circumstances – e.g. money advice, housing, employment support.
- Ensuring workers and individuals are aware of key risk factors for poorer health outcomes.
- Ensuring people most at risk have access to preventative health interventions and other appropriate support.