Health Inequalities

NHS Health Scotland

Equally Well Policy Review

The Scottish Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities has recently been re-convened to review its recommendations. It is led by the Minister for Public Health and aims to foster political engagement and build political leadership on the inequalities issue in Scotland. It will also build on the work of the Community Planning Review which has aimed to provide much clearer guidance and support for Community Planning Partnerships, the main local mechanism for coordinating cross-sector action on health inequalities.

This is an important window of opportunity to mobilise the existing evidence and learning to influence the future direction of inequalities policy in Scotland. NHS Health Scotland is a member of the Task Force and has offered to support its work by coordinating a policy review in order to ensure its recommendations and future policy directions are informed by up-to-date evidence and learning from the implementation of Equally Well and other related initiatives.

The Policy Review

The policy review process has been developed by the NHS Health Scotland over a number of years. It is an attempt to introduce a systematic and transparent Knowledge Into Action (KIA) process of evidence gathering, synthesis and stakeholder engagement at a time when health improvement policies are due to be ‘refreshed’. The aim is to generate system-wide support for future policy direction and to provide a route map for further stages of implementation.

The remit for this policy review, agreed with Scottish Government, is to assess whether the current approach to addressing health inequalities in Scotland (as set out in Equally Well) is working. This will involve addressing four key questions:

1. **Outcomes** – To what extent are the policy outcomes being achieved? Are inequalities narrowing?

2. **Strategy** – Is the current strategy right? Are we focusing on the right things? What else is needed?

3. **Implementation** - What are we doing in Scotland that’s good/successful? What have we learned? Are there problems with how the strategy is being implemented (leadership, will, ways of working, infrastructure, etc)? What can we learn from other countries?

4. **Learning** – Do we have the right approach to data gathering, evaluation and sharing learning across Scotland to inform the change process?
A core part of the review process will be stakeholder engagement with a number of relevant individuals, groups, and organisations (e.g. Scottish Government officials, national agencies, Community Planning Partnerships and the implementation workforce) to incorporate practice-based knowledge of progress and change, to reflect on areas of success/challenge and lessons learned and to agree key priorities for the future.

There is also an appetite for the Task Force to hear about the lived experience of health inequalities from individuals and communities and Health Scotland is currently considering possible approaches to this element of the review.

The Review Panel

The policy review will be guided by a Review Panel with a wealth of expertise in the health inequalities field. The Panel will conduct the policy review and lead the deliberative and analytical processes and report back to the Inequalities Task Force at its final meeting in June 2013. The panel members are:

**Professor Sally Macintyre** (Chair), Director of MRC/CSO Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow

**Professor Carol Tannahill**, Director of Glasgow Centre for Population Health

**Andrew Fraser**, Director of Public Health Science, NHS Health Scotland

**Fergus Millan**, Policy Lead for Health Inequalities, Directorate for CMO and Public Health, Scottish Government

**Janice Hewitt**, Assistant Chief Executive, String Council

Jane Ford
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