

From: Jamie Henderson, Cabinet Member for Coastal Regeneration and Public Health

Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health

To: **Kent Health and Wellbeing Board** - 30 September 2026

Subject: Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary

This report provides an update on the establishment of the **Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group**, formerly known as the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Inequalities Sub-Committee. The report sets out the rationale for the revised governance arrangements following changes to the Integrated Care Partnership structure and outlines the role, purpose and membership of the Group.

The Health Inequalities Group provides system leadership for reducing health inequalities and improving health equity across Kent and Medway. It brings together partners from local government, the NHS, voluntary and community organisations, housing, and wider system partners to support coordinated action on the wider determinants of health and healthcare inequalities.

The Group will champion a shared ambition that everyone in Kent and Medway has a fair opportunity to live a healthy life, support the dissemination of Marmot principles and learning, and provide strategic oversight of programmes that seek to reduce avoidable differences in health outcomes.

The Group will strengthen collaboration across organisations, provide oversight of the Kent and Medway Core20PLUS5 approach, and make recommendations to the Kent and Medway Health and Wellbeing Boards and the NHS Kent and Medway

Recommendation(s)

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

NOTE the establishment of the Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group and its governance arrangements.

NOTE the role of the Group as a system-wide forum that advocates for the reduction health inequalities and improving health equity across Kent and Medway.

NOTE that periodic updates and recommendations will be brought to the Health and Wellbeing Board by the Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Health inequalities remain one of the most significant challenges facing Kent and Medway. While overall life expectancy has improved over recent decades, substantial differences in health outcomes persist between communities, places and population groups.
 - 1.2** People living in the most deprived communities experience poorer physical and mental health, shorter healthy life expectancy and greater exposure to the wider determinants of ill health, including poverty, poor housing, unemployment, environmental pressures, social isolation and adverse childhood experiences.
 - 1.3** Reducing health inequalities requires action that extends beyond healthcare services. The greatest opportunities for improvement lie in influencing the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, often referred to as the wider determinants or building blocks of health.
 - 1.4** Kent and Medway partners have a long history of collaboration on prevention, population health and health inequalities. The Health Inequalities Group provides a mechanism for strengthening this collaboration and ensuring a coordinated, system-wide approach to improving health equity.
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2. Background

- 2.1 The Health Inequalities Group was originally established in April 2023 as the ICP Inequalities Sub-Committee, reporting through the governance arrangements of the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership.
- 2.2 The Group formed one of three key strategic partnerships focused on prevention and population health, alongside the Prevention Sub-Committee and the Strategic Partnership for Health and Economy.
- 2.3 Changes to Integrated Care Partnership governance arrangements have created the opportunity to simplify reporting structures while maintaining strong place-based leadership on health inequalities.
- 2.4 To reflect these changes, the ICP Inequalities Sub-Committee has been renamed the **Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group**.
- 2.5 The revised arrangements position the Group as a collaborative partnership forum that provides advice, challenge, oversight and recommendations to:
- Kent Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Medway Health and Wellbeing Board
- 2.6 The Group does not hold delegated decision-making powers. Its function is to provide leadership, and system intelligence as well as make recommendations to support action on health inequalities.
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3. Purpose of the Health Inequalities Group

- 3.1 The purpose of the Group is to provide system leadership for reducing health inequalities and advancing health equity across Kent and Medway.
- 3.2 The Group brings together partners to:
- Develop a shared understanding of health inequalities across Kent and Medway.
 - Identify opportunities for coordinated action.
 - Build and share evidence of effective practice.
 - Influence policy and decision-making across organisations.
 - Promote action on the wider determinants of health.
 - Support the implementation of evidence-based approaches to reducing inequalities.

- 3.3** The Group champions the principle that everyone in Kent and Medway should have a fair opportunity to live a healthy life, regardless of where they live or their personal circumstances.
- 3.4** The Group also supports the dissemination of Marmot principles and learning from emerging Marmot Place initiatives across Kent and Medway.
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4. Key Areas of Focus

4.1 Wider determinants of health

The Group work collaboratively across partner organisations to influence action on the wider determinants of health.

This includes supporting improvements in areas such as:

- Housing
- Employment and good work
- Education and skills
- Transport
- Financial hardship and poverty
- Environment, climate and sustainability
- Access to community assets
- Mental wellbeing
- Social connectedness

The Group seeks to strengthen alignment across programmes and partnerships working on these issues and identify opportunities to maximise population benefit.

4.2 Core20PLUS5

The Group provides strategic oversight of the Kent and Medway Core20PLUS5 approach to reducing healthcare inequalities. Core20Plus5 is the main inequalities framework of the NHS.

This includes reviewing progress and identifying opportunities to improve outcomes for:

- The most deprived 20% of the population.
- Locally identified PLUS groups.
- Health inclusion populations experiencing multiple disadvantage.

The Group maintains oversight of national clinical priority areas for adults and children and young people and support system-wide efforts to reduce inequitable outcomes.

4.3 Health Equity and Marmot Approaches

The Group will support the adoption of evidence-based approaches to reducing inequalities, including:

- Proportionate universalism.
 - Prevention-focused approaches.
 - Trauma-informed and healing-centred approaches.
 - Community-centred public health.
 - Anchor institution approaches.
 - Marmot principles and social determinants of health frameworks.
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5. Governance and Reporting

5.1 The Health Inequalities Group is accountable through its reporting arrangements to:

- Kent Health and Wellbeing Board
- Medway Health and Wellbeing Board

5.2 The Group will provide regular updates, recommendations and assurance reports to these bodies.

5.3 Where barriers, risks or opportunities requiring wider system action are identified, the Group will escalate these through its reporting arrangements.

5.4 The Group will seek to maintain a system-wide overview of health inequalities activity across Kent and Medway and support alignment between major programmes where this adds value.

6. Membership

6.1 Membership will comprise senior representatives from NHS organisations, local authorities, Health and Care Partnerships, voluntary and community sector organisations, housing, population health and wider system partners.

6.2 Membership includes:

- Director of Public Health, Medway Council (Chair)
- Deputy Director of Public Health, Kent County Council (Co-Chair)
- VCSE Co-Chair (Co-Chair)
- ICB Strategy and Population Health representative
- NHS Provider Alliance representative

- Public Health consultant and specialist representatives from Kent County Council and Medway Council, with attendance aligned to meeting agenda items and professional portfolios
- Kent Housing Group
- Kent County Council Financial Hardship Programme

6.3 Members may nominate appropriately briefed deputies where necessary.

7. Meetings

7.1 The Group meets monthly.

7.2 Meetings provide a forum for:

- System intelligence sharing.
- Strategic discussion.
- Review of health inequalities data and evidence.
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration.
- Development of recommendations for partner organisations and reporting bodies.

7.3 The Group may establish task and finish groups or other sub-groups to support delivery of specific priorities.

8. Opportunities and Future Direction

8.1 The establishment of the Health Inequalities Group creates an opportunity to strengthen collaboration across Kent and Medway and ensure a consistent focus on reducing avoidable differences in health outcomes.

8.2 The Group supports greater alignment between work on healthcare inequalities and action to address the wider determinants of health.

8.3 The revised governance arrangements will create a direct relationship with both Health and Wellbeing Boards, strengthening democratic oversight and place-based leadership for health equity.

8.4 The Group will continue to support major strategic programmes including Marmot Place development, Core20PLUS5 implementation, prevention initiatives and broader work to improve the social and economic conditions that shape health outcomes.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- **NOTE** the establishment of the Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group and its revised governance arrangements.
 - **NOTE** the role of the Group as a system-wide forum that advocates for the reduction health inequalities and improving health equity across Kent and Medway.
 - **NOTE** that periodic updates and recommendations will be brought to the Health and Wellbeing Board by the Kent and Medway Health Inequalities Group.
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10. Contact details

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