

The Royal Society of Medicine

TACKLING INEQUALITIES

Tackling Health Inequalities in England
A selected chronology up to December 2022

This chronology provides a historical overview of selected reports, policies, legislation and implementation applicable to tackling health inequalities in England from the first statutory intervention in health in 1848 up to the new Health and Care Bill granted Royal Assent on 28 April 2022.

Full publication details of events cited in the chronology are provided in a [separate reference list](#).
All citation details and URL links are current to 14 December 2022.

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1842

Edwin Chadwick establishes a link between poor living standards and the spread of infectious diseases in his '[Report on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain](#)'.



1946

6 November - Aneurin Bevan publishes the [National Health Service Act 1946](#). The Act provides for the establishment of a comprehensive health service for England and Wales, that is free at the point of use and universally available to all, financed by general taxation.



1848

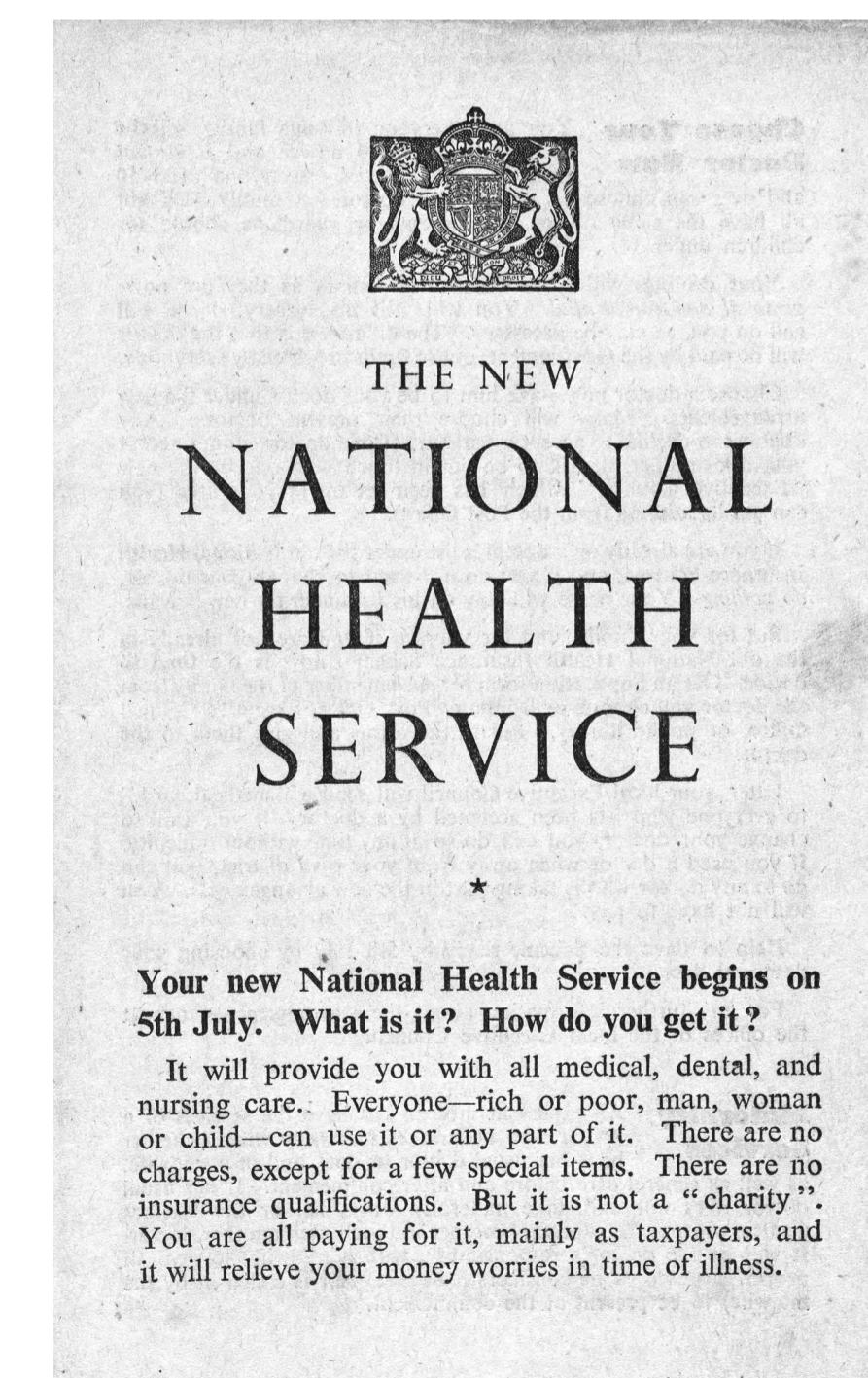
31 August - Parliament passes the [Public Health Act 1848](#) encompassing many of Chadwick's concerns and includes a requirement for regional reporting of infections and deaths to the newly established General Board of Health.

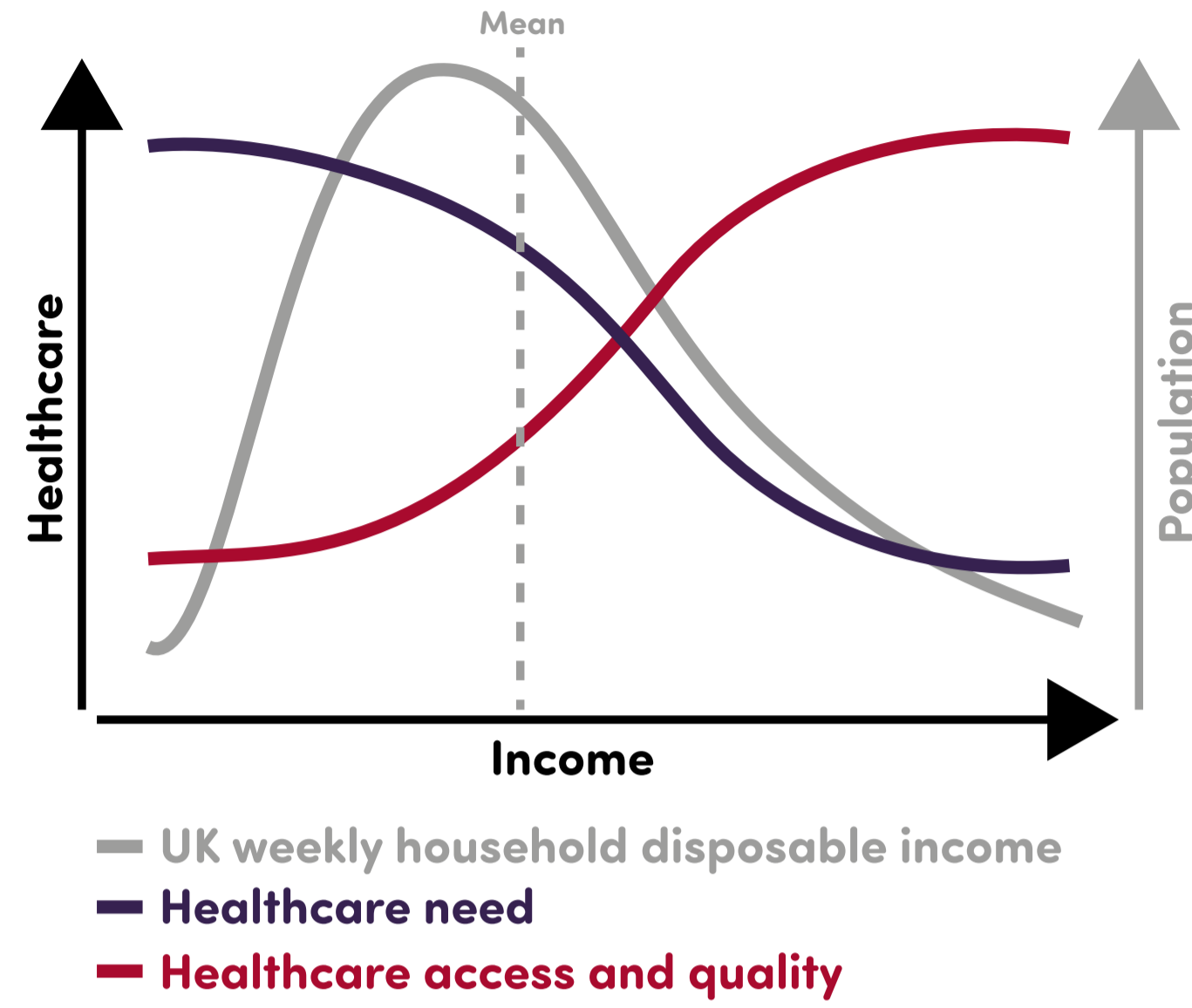
Image Credit: [Sitting of General Board of Health, Whitehall, 1846. Wellcome Collection. Public Domain Mark](#)



1948

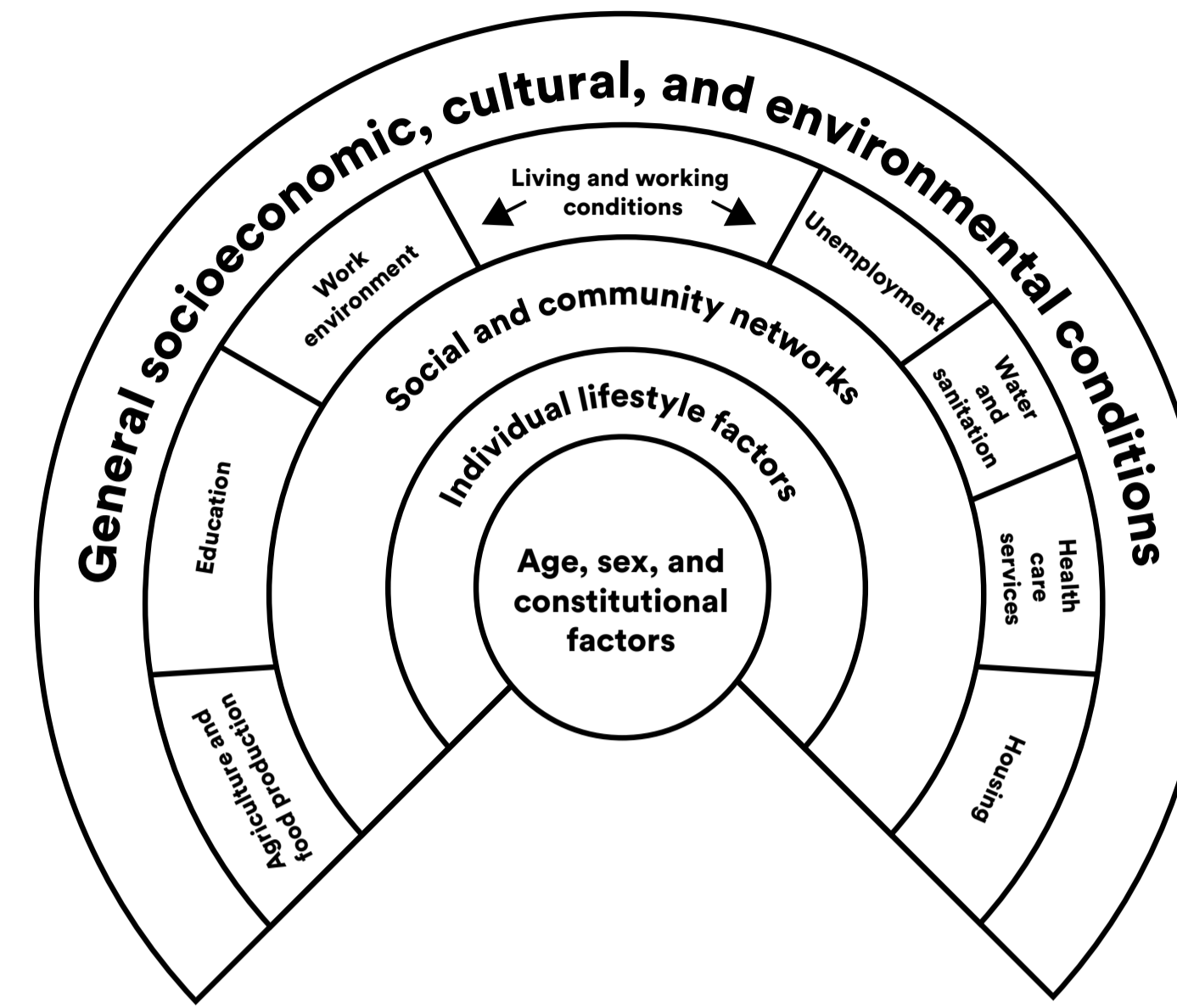
5 July - The [National Health Service \(NHS\)](#) is established, when the [National Health Service Act 1946](#) comes into force.





1971

27 February - In a seminal Lancet article, Julian Tudor Hart publishes [‘The Inverse care law’](#), in which he claims that the use of and need for healthcare are inversely related, implying that the relatively poor are facing disproportionate barriers to NHS access.



1991

January - The [‘layers of influence’ model for determinants of health](#) is proposed in a discussion paper by Göran Dahlgren and Margaret Whitehead and will be examined in the [Acheson Report](#) 7 years later.

1980



30 August - The [‘Inequalities in health’ \(Black Report\)](#) is published, the first major independent review of health inequalities in Britain. It was commissioned by the Labour Government in 1977, following concerns that socioeconomic

differentials in health had widened since the introduction of the NHS. The report’s recommendations are not implemented by the new Conservative government due to the proposed scale of public expenditure.



26 November - The seminal [‘Independent inquiry into inequalities in health’ \(Acheson Report\)](#) is published, the second major independent review of health inequalities in England and one of the first actions commissioned by the new Labour Government in 1997. The report informs

development of the government’s public health strategy, and its three crucial recommendations are cited in several official policy documents, including the [‘Saving lives: our healthier nation’ white paper](#) (July 1999) and [‘Reducing health inequalities: an action report’](#) (July 1999).

Image Credit: [History of Modern Biomedicine Research Group](#) licenced under [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](#).

2000

1 July - [The NHS Plan](#) is published as a 10-year modernisation programme of investment and reform of the NHS, emphasising the importance of tackling health inequalities.

2001

February - For the first time in the UK, the government announces [national targets to reduce inequalities](#) in infant mortality and life expectancy at birth by 10% by 2010.

11 May - The [Health and Social Care Act 2001](#) formalises [The NHS Plan](#).



2009

May - '[Tackling health inequalities: 10 years on](#)' is published, taking stock of developments in health inequalities in England from the publication of the [Acheson inquiry report](#) in November 1998 to November 2008 when the post-2010 strategic review was announced.



Image Credit: Health Inequalities Unit
Department of Health

2003

The WHO Regional Office for Europe publishes a summary of evidence on the [social determinants of health](#) to provide a deeper understanding of health disparities in a global perspective.

Image Credit: [United States Mission Geneva](#) licenced under [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic](#)

2 July - '[Tackling health inequalities: a programme for action](#)' sets out the delivery of the national health inequalities 2010 target and supports a long-term sustainable reduction in health inequalities. This cross-government strategy will end with the change in government in 2010.

2010

February - The influential '[Fair society, healthy lives](#)' ([Marmot Review](#)) is published, the third major independent review of health inequalities in England. It was commissioned by the Labour Government in 2008 to contribute to the development of a post-2010 health inequalities strategy.

30 November - The Coalition government's response to the [Marmot Review](#) is embodied in their first public health white paper, '[Healthy lives, healthy people](#)'. The main structural change for public health is the transfer of health improvement functions from primary care trusts to local authorities, the creation of Public Health England and a new public health outcomes framework.





2011

The [UCL Institute of Health Equity](#) is established, led by Professor Sir Michael Marmot. It leads and collaborates on research to address the social determinants of health and improve health equity.

2013

1 April - Following the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#), a new NHS, public health and adult social care structure comes into effect.

20 November - The first meeting of the [NHS Equality and Diversity Council](#). Its purpose is to help improve the healthcare access, experiences and health outcomes for all patients and communities, and to support the NHS to become a more inclusive employer.

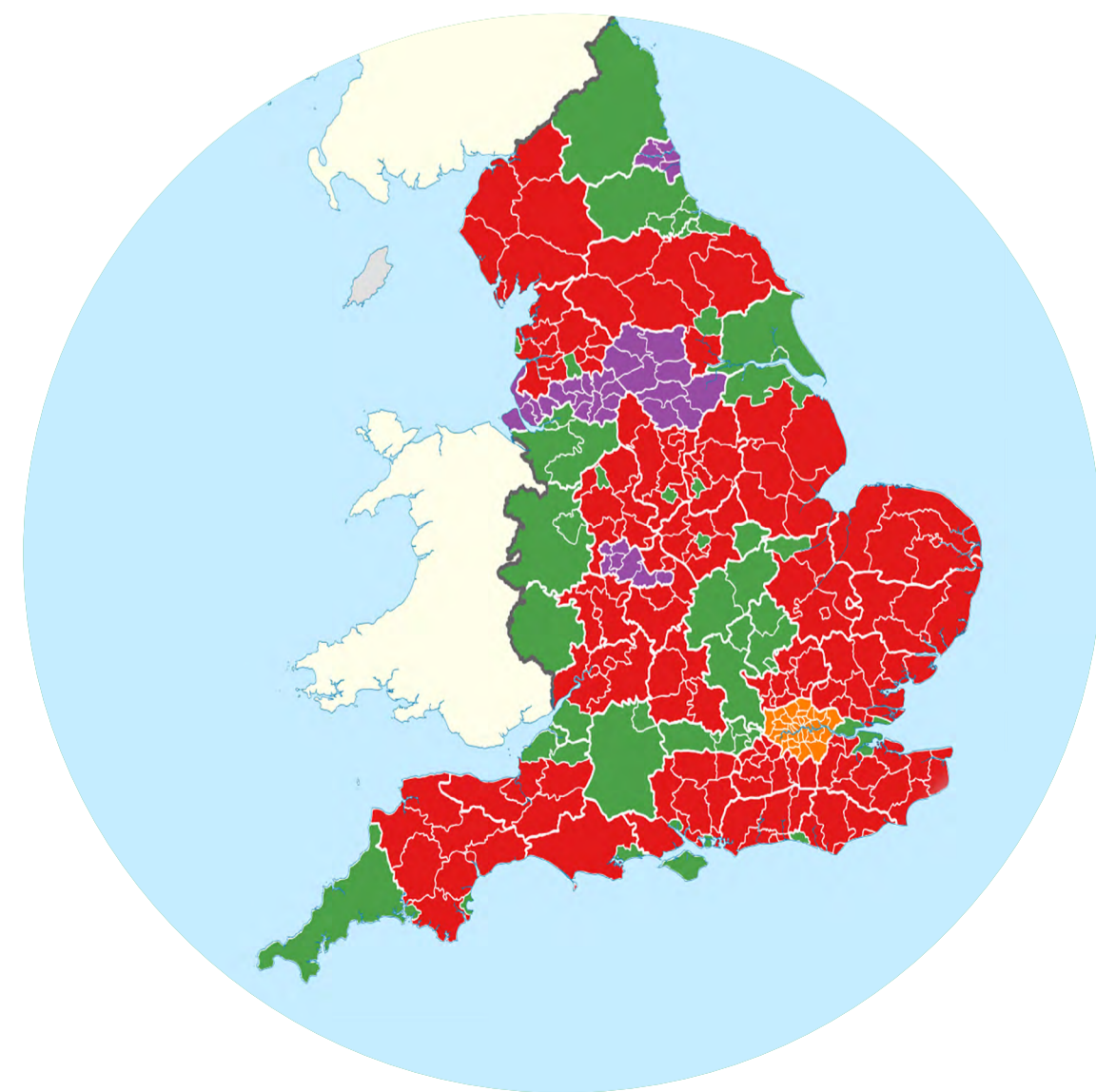


2012

February - The first publication of '[Health indicators for local authorities in England](#)' ([Marmot Indicators](#)) to support monitoring the overall strategy in reducing health inequalities.

27 March - For the first time in England, key national and local NHS decision-making bodies are required by law to address inequalities in access and outcomes under the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#).

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2019

7 January - NHS England publishes [The NHS Long Term Plan](#) setting the direction of the health service across 10 years to 2028. The plan sets out to establish a 'more concerted and systematic approach to reducing health inequalities' alongside a number of specific inequalities initiatives such as supporting ethnic minorities.



2020

February - The ['Health equity in England'](#) report is published, commissioned by the Health Foundation to examine progress in addressing health inequalities in England, 10 years on from the landmark [Marmot](#)

[Review](#), and to propose recommendations for future action. It highlights differences in healthy life expectancy of 12 years between the most and least deprived local authorities and confirms an increase in the North/South health gap.

30 May - NHS England and the NHS Confederation launch the [NHS Race and Health Observatory](#), an independent body to investigate and provide practical support to the NHS in eradicating ethnic health inequalities.

2 June - Public Health England publishes a descriptive review on the ['Disparities in the risk and outcomes from COVID-19'](#) based on surveillance data. It confirms that the impact of COVID-19 has replicated existing health inequalities and, in some cases, has increased them.

7 August - In response to [COVID-19 inequalities data](#), NHS England and NHS Improvement publish [8 urgent actions to address inequalities in NHS provision and health outcomes](#).

December - The [COVID-19 Marmot Review 'Build back fairer'](#) is published examining inequalities in COVID-19 mortality, effects of the pandemic and the societal response to contain it on health inequalities and setting out recommendations moving forwards.

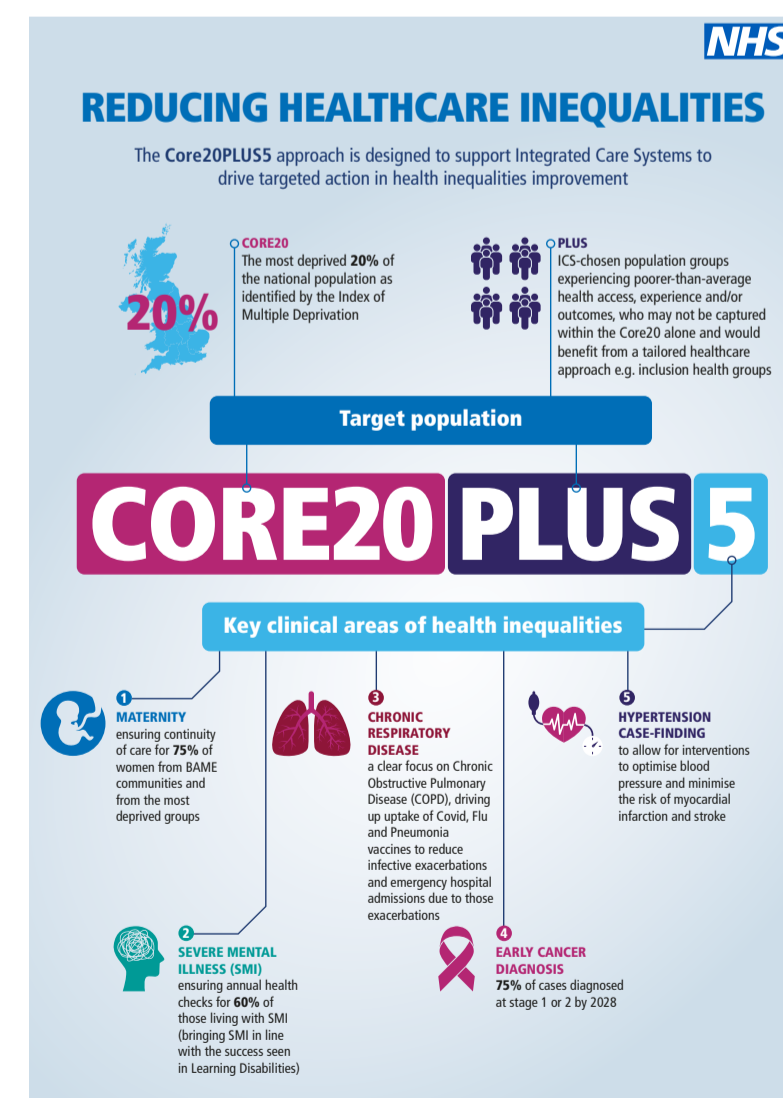
Dr Bola Owolabi is appointed in the new role of [Director, Health Inequalities](#) at NHS England and NHS Improvement.



2021

1 October - Following the decision to [dismantle Public Health England](#) (March 2021), the [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) is launched responsible for public health functions along with NHS England and to tackle health disparities across the UK.

1 November - NHS England and NHS Improvement's new [Core20PLUS5](#) approach to support the reduction of health inequalities at both national and system level goes live. It aims to deliver [The NHS Long Term Plan](#) commitments to reducing healthcare inequalities in England.



25 November - A national [Health Inequalities Improvement Dashboard](#) is made widely available as a central tool for measuring, monitoring and informing action on health disparities based on ethnicity and deprivation.

3 December - The cross-government ['Final report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities'](#) is published.



Image Credit: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

2 February - The government publishes the ['Levelling up' white paper](#) which explicitly refers to addressing significant regional inequalities including health.

17 March - The government launches their landmark ['Inclusive Britain'](#) strategy setting out 70 practical actions including addressing longer-term health inequalities in ethnic minorities, in response to the 24 recommendations included in the independent ['Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities'](#) (March 2021).

28 April - The [Health and Care Bill 2022](#) receives Royal Assent to establish a legislative framework for new integrated care system structures including measures to tackle health disparities.

2022



8 March - The Royal Society of Medicine announces the launch of a new multi-year education programme ['Tackling inequalities'](#) in partnership with NHS England and NHS Improvement, to begin with an inaugural conference on 11 January 2023 focussing on [Core20PLUS5](#).



24 May - Secretary of State Sajid Javid states in [his speech at the Onward Social Fabric Summit](#) that a new white paper on tackling health disparities will be published later in 2022. It will focus on prevention and disparities by ethnicity, socioeconomic background and geography with an opportunity to set out more detailed plans.

12 July - A coalition of 47 organisations and charities issue a [Health Disparities White Paper Consensus Statement](#) urging the Government to take immediate action in implementing policies to tackle health inequalities.

30 September - The Inequalities in Health Alliance (IHA), a coalition of over 155 health organisations sign a [letter](#) urging the Health and Social Care Secretary to commit to publishing the Health Disparities White Paper by the end of 2022, following media reports suggesting its withdrawal.

11 October - The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities publishes guidance on ['Health disparities and health inequalities: applying All Our Health'](#).



21 July - NHS England publishes ['Tackling inequalities in healthcare access, experience, and outcomes: actionable insights'](#) to support NHS services in reducing healthcare inequalities and compliments the [Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Dashboard](#).

3 November - NHS England issues their ['Health and injustice framework for integration 2022-2025: Improving lives - reducing inequality'](#).

