



Welcome to the first newsletter from the Children and Young People's Health Equity Collaborative – an innovative partnership which brings together children's charity Barnardo's, the UCL Institute for Health Equity (IHE) and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) from Birmingham and Solihull, South Yorkshire and Cheshire and Merseyside.

This first-of-its-kind programme, which is sponsored by Barnardo's for a three-year period, aims to tackle physical and mental health inequalities facing children and young people today. It's well reported that today's younger generations are struggling in a post-Covid era and through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The aim of the Health Equity Collaborative is to identify and address the social determinants of health which both affect and matter most to children and young people across the key issues of Education, Home, and Community. This valuable data will form the basis of a new Children and Young People's Health Equity Framework. This will be used to identify the key factors to assess and monitor impact and performance of pilot programmes and services which will help reduce the resulting health inequalities in each region.

Throughout the process, we will share our processes, learnings, and insight with you in the hope of helping, supporting, and informing your own work too. Through these regular bulletins, we want to encourage and inspire ways in which you can tackle the health inequalities affecting children and young people in other parts of the country too.

The Collaborative has already met with over 300 children and young people to start hearing their voices, listening to what they have to say and to find out what changes they think are needed to support their health and wellbeing. **Find out more by watching our video [here](#).**

Meet the members of the Health Equity Collaborative.



Barnardo's Director of Health Rukshana Kapasi.

Children's charity Barnardo's spearheaded the early development of the Health Equity Collaborative, in partnership with the IHE. We invited ICSs throughout the country to apply to join the Collaborative as part of its work to champion the physical and mental health of children and young people.

Barnardo's legacy is providing homes for children, started by our founder Thomas Barnardo in 1845. Since then, the ways in which we help and support children, young people and families have vastly grown to

reflect the society we now live in. Whilst we will never forget our history, we're moving forward to become an integrated health and social care charity. The changes to the way local health and social care services are managed, overseen, and delivered provide the opportunity of a lifetime for the NHS and charities, such as us, to inform approaches and deliver real, vitally needed change.

Barnardo's runs nearly 160 health services, which are part of the expansive network of 800 services and partnerships the charity runs throughout the UK. Last year Barnardo's provided essential support to over 357,000 children, young people, parents, and carers across the UK. Everything we do is underpinned by listening to children and young people so that they can have a brighter future. The Health Equity Collaborative is no exception as we will involve children and young people every step of the way to ensure their views are both heard and acted upon to bring about change. Visit our website to find out more:

www.barnardos.org.uk



University College London's Institute of Health Equity Dr Jessica Allen.

The UCL Institute of Health Equity (IHE) was established in 2011, following the 2010 report Fair Society, Healthy Lives – otherwise known as the Marmot Review – and is led by Professor Sir Michael Marmot. Our mission is nothing less than a fairer, healthier society. The IHE has led work internationally and across the UK to reduce health inequalities through action on the social determinants of health. Key areas to reduce health inequalities include giving every child the best start in life,

education, fair employment, ensuring a healthy standard of living, creating healthier homes and places, and reducing discrimination and racism.

In the UK, we have worked with over 45 local authorities, regional governments, many healthcare organisations and systems, businesses and community and voluntary sector organisations. Internationally, our work has been with national and local governments, the World Health Organisation and other United Nations organisations and academics building evidence and providing analysis and practical advice on how to reduce health inequalities.

In January 2023, we launched the Health Equity Network. This innovative online platform brings together currently more than 1,400 members from across the UK who are working together to reduce health inequalities with practical and collaborative approaches in a range of organisations and settings. Interactive content includes case studies, resources, webinars, forums and online discussion groups from experts and practitioners across the sector. The network also builds momentum for a coalition of partners to promote health equity across the UK. Future content specific to child health and the Health Equity Collaborative will be added to the Network in February 2024. Sign up [here](#) to take part.



Professor Doug Simkiss, Birmingham and Solihull ICS' Senior Responsible Officer for Children and Young People's Health Equity Collaborative.

Our region is home to a hugely diverse population – more than 100 languages are spoken, up to 80% of residents are from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic groups, and more than half of the population of the city of Birmingham is under the age of 30. Yet, the neighbouring Solihull has a much older population and grapples with significant material deprivation. Child poverty is rife as our ICS covers some of the most deprived areas in the country

which negatively impacts on child obesity, mortality rates, physical and mental health.

Our partnership with Barnardo's exemplifies our commitment to utilising data-driven insights to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. We aim to provide valuable information for policymakers, educators, parents, and carers to enable informed decision-making to better support children and young people in the community.

Already, we have spoken to around 150 children and young people through schools and youth clubs about how poverty impacts on health. This revealed fascinating initial insights into the importance of safe spaces in communities, the value of learning from others and a need to feel cared for and listened to by those in positions of power in the region. It is this type of vital insight which will help shape what is to come from the Health Equity Collaborative in our region.



Dr Elizabeth Crabtree, Cheshire and Merseyside ICS' Programme Director for Beyond Children and Young People's Transformation Programme.

Our population in Cheshire and Merseyside experiences many long-standing health inequalities which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We went through longer periods of lockdown than many other regions, our children were out of formal education for longer and families have experienced intensified financial struggles during the cost-of-living crisis. In some areas, the number of children receiving free school meals is double the England average. More than 67,000 children under 16 years old in Cheshire

and Merseyside live in absolute low-income families and in some of our most deprived communities this can make up as much as 20% of the population of children and young people.

We know the significant impact this has on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Our children have poorer academic attainment, are more likely to be overweight or obese, struggle with their mental health, and are more likely to be admitted to hospital for asthma.

We have previously worked with the IHE on *All Together Fairer: Health Equity and the Social Determinants of Health in Cheshire and Merseyside*, which looked at transforming health services to improve outcomes for our communities, including giving every child the best start in life. Our work with the Health Equity Collaborative will build upon this to tackle the unfair and unjust differences that are driving the poor physical and mental health of children, young people, and families in our region.



Nicola Ennis, Programme Lead for the South Yorkshire Children and Young People's Alliance.

In South Yorkshire, we have a proud heritage of coal mining, factory workers and a rich diversity of people. However, economic and population changes now mean that 40% of our children and young people are living in poverty. We know that many children living in poverty will be diagnosed with chronic disease, such as diabetes, in later life. We also know that building back communities is essential for developing a positive healthy heritage to pass on to the next generation.

Being part of the Health Equity Collaborative allows us to better understand our population, where there is need and what good provision looks like. By viewing our services through the eyes of our children and their families, we can help to make meaningful change happen.

We're already underway with some of this – we brought children and young people together online last month to talk about what matters most to them in the places and spaces where they live, learn, work, and use health services. We know it's vital to provide a safe space, for young people to know they are loved and that they are supported to have good physical and mental health. It's these thoughts, opinions, and perspectives which we will use to help shape the services they will use.

We will bring you regular updates on the work of the Health Equity Collaborative over the coming months. If you, or one of your stakeholders, would like to sign up to receive the Health Equity Collaborative Newsletter, please email childhealthequity@barnardos.org.uk with the required details. Or, to unsubscribe, please reply to this email with the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject.