

Media information

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SNAPSHOT OF REGION'S HEALTH TO HELP TARGET SERVICES

Health profiles for every local authority and region across England are published today (24 June) by the Department of Health and the Association of Public Health Observatories.

The profiles are intended to give the NHS, local authorities and other partners an insight into the health of their residents, to enable resources and initiatives to be better targeted in order to improve the nation's health.

The profiles show that the health of people in the north east is generally worse than for England as a whole. The region has the worst levels of life expectancy and the highest rate of early deaths from cancer.

The north east continues to make rapid progress in addressing health inequalities. Death rates from heart disease and cancer have reduced substantially over recent years, falling faster than for England overall.

Compared with England, the region has a high rate of physically active children.

The north east's rates of smoking during pregnancy and of breastfeeding initiation are the worst in England.

The region has the highest estimated levels of adult binge drinking and adult smoking in England. However, NHS stop smoking services in the north east are the most successful in England.

"The good news is that the region is already making rapid progress in addressing the very issues highlighted in the profiles," said Tracey Sharp, acting deputy regional director, public health delivery.

"The regional *Better Health, Fairer Health* strategy we launched in February aims to make people living in this region the healthiest in the country within a generation.

"Actions in the strategy include setting up a regional office for the safe consumption of alcohol, extending campaigns to highlight the dangers to babies of smoking during pregnancy and using special health trainers to help people to develop better eating habits and take part in more physical activity."

Public health minister, Dawn Primarolo said:

“Inequalities around the country are stark, but the NHS and local authorities can use the health profiles to target local hotspots with effective measures to make a real difference. We recently renewed our commitment to tackling these issues with the *Health Inequalities: Progress and Next Steps* report. I am confident that we can confront the issues facing communities head on and make health inequalities everyone’s business.”

The Association of Public Health Observatories, with the Department of Health, has also published a "Health inequalities intervention tool" that helps every English local authority to model the effect of four high impact interventions on life expectancy. The four interventions are: smoking cessation, treating undiagnosed high blood pressure, statin prescribing to reduce blood cholesterol and reducing infant mortality.

For more media information please contact Ayesha Tahir on 0191 210 6482.

Notes to editors

1. The health profiles are presented in an easy-to-read format, comparing an area’s health against the national average for each indicator. They are all available online at <http://www.apho.org.uk/default.aspx?RID=49802>
2. The Health Inequalities Intervention tool:
 - was originally designed for primary care trust spearhead areas and was first launched in August 2007. Feedback was very positive with requests for a similar tool for all areas. In response DH commissioned the Association of Public Health Observatories to develop this new national web-based modelling tool.
 - The tool is designed to help primary care trusts, practice-based commissioners and local authorities to implement simple, effective, evidence-based measures to affect the life expectancy gap of their local populations. It can be used as part of a comprehensive local strategy to reduce health inequalities.
 - The tool is available at:
http://www.lho.org.uk/HEALTH_INEQUALITIES/Health_Inequalities_Tool.aspx