

Chair Jim Eadie MSP

Minutes Approved from December Meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Speaker – Clare Beeston Principal Public Health Advisor
NHS Health Scotland

Title- Health Inequalities and Where They Come From

Health inequalities are:

- **Unfair** differences in health within the population across social classes and between different populations

These unfair differences:

- Are **not random**, or by chance, but largely socially determined
- Are **not inevitable**.

What is most and least effective in reducing health inequalities?

- **Least likely to be effective**
- Interventions reliant on people opting in; information based campaigns; written materials; messages designed for the whole population; interventions that involve significant price or other barrier
- **Most likely to be effective**
- Structural changes to the environment; legislation, regulatory and fiscal policies; income support, reduced price barriers; accessibility of public services, prioritising disadvantaged groups and individuals; intensive support for disadvantaged population groups; starting young.

What does the evidence say?

- Most cost-effective - societal perspective, fiscal/regulation/legislation-based
- Many *potentially* cost-saving
- Individual-based prevention – often cost-effective
- But the evidence is more mixed...
- ...and less likely to reduce His
- Socio-economic inequalities have economic costs

Best preventative programmes

- ensure adequate incomes and reduce income inequalities
- reduce unemployment in vulnerable groups or areas
- improve physical environments
- target vulnerable groups by investing in more intensive services and other forms of support for such groups, in the context of universal provision

- early years programmes
- policies that use regulation and price to reduce risky behaviours

Summary

- Health inequalities are not inevitable
- They are rooted in social inequalities
- Action across all policy areas (not just health) required
- To address inequalities in economic and social outcomes (e.g. income; education, participation in decision making etc)
- Need action across all levels: Individual (mitigation); environmental (prevention) and fundamental (undoing)

Next Meeting AGM 4th June 2015

Action –VHS Scotland to be invited to speak about their most recent report-
Living In The Gap.