

What is the Core20PLUS5 approach?



1. What does Core20PLUS5 mean?

‘Core 20’: the 20% of people living in the poorest areas of England, identified using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). It is calculated including seven domains such as income, health, housing, and crime, capturing the broader wider determinants of health. These **communities** often have worse health outcomes and find it harder to get the care they need.

‘PLUS’: there are individuals or groups who face further barriers and as a result have some of the worst health outcomes. Each Integrated Care System is well placed to identify additional groups that may also experience poorer health outcomes. In Norfolk & Waveney for our adult population, the following PLUS groups have been identified as having the worst health outcomes:

- Ethnic minority communities
- Inclusion health groups*
 - People experiencing homelessness
 - Drug and alcohol dependence
 - Vulnerable migrants
 - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
 - Sex workers
 - People in contact with the justice system
 - Victims of modern slavery
- People with a learning disability, neurodiversity and autistic people
- People living in coastal and rural communities
- Young carers and looked after children
- Armed forces community.

* Inclusion health groups are people who may be dealing with major life challenges, such as homelessness, substance use, or discrimination linked to their background. As a result, they typically experience far worse health outcomes than the general population and often have a much lower average age of death. Read more about inclusion health [here](#).

‘5’: the five priority clinical areas requiring improvement. They are where the NHS sees the biggest differences between groups and wants to make the most improvement. For the adult population, they are:

1. Maternity
2. Severe Mental Illness (SMI)
3. Chronic Respiratory Disease
4. Early Cancer Diagnosis
5. Hypertension case-finding

For children and young people, these are:

1. Asthma
2. Diabetes
3. Epilepsy
4. Oral health

5. Mental health.



2. How does it work?

Core20PLUS5 is a national approach to support the reduction of health inequalities at both national and local level. While the overall framework is consistent nationally, the PLUS groups and implementation strategies are determined locally.

In practice, the approach works by identifying the target population, focusing on five clinical areas, implementing and tailoring actions locally, working with partners to design place-based approaches, and tracking progress. Focussing improvement efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

Although the framework is primarily aimed at ICBs, the framework makes clear that partnership working on the broader wider determinants have a role to play in local areas achieving equity in healthy life expectancy.



3. Why it matters

Health inequalities mean some people live shorter lives and spend more time in poor health. The Core20PLUS5 approach helps organisations and the people in them focus on those who need the most support, so everyone has a fair chance at good health. It does this by directly targeting the root causes and consequences of health inequalities in England, aiming to make healthcare fairer, more accessible, and more effective for those who need it most.

Here's more on why it's important:

- **Addresses deeply embedded inequalities:** people in the most deprived areas often experience poor access to care, discrimination, intergenerational disadvantage, and structural inequalities. The approach ensures these communities are prioritised in planning and delivery of healthcare.
- **Recognises local and hidden needs:** the PLUS element allows flexibility to include locally identified groups who may not be captured by national deprivation measurements, but still face significant barriers to care.
- **It encourages data-informed action** by identifying gaps, monitoring progress and evaluating impact. It makes it easier for Integrated Care Systems to track improvements and adjust strategies.
- **Promotes collaboration across sectors.** This holistic approach is essential for addressing the wider determinants of health- like housing, education, and employment.



4. How can you use the Core20PLUS5 approach in your role?

Using the Core20PLUS5 approach is in everyone's interest to consider when addressing inequalities and health outcomes. Here's a few things you can do if...

...you work in **commissioning or strategy**:

- Ensure new services explicitly demonstrate how they benefit Core20 populations or PLUS groups.
- Ensure new and existing services demonstrate how they do not disadvantage Core20 Populations or plus groups. This is known as 'unwarranted variation'
- Prioritise resources towards the five clinical areas requiring accelerated improvement.
- Be an advocate for inclusion health.
- Ask in meetings "which Core20 area or PLUS groups does this work impact?"
- Work with other services to tackle the root causes of poor health
- Use asset-based models to recognise the strengths and resources already present in communities, rather than focusing solely on needs and problems.

...you work in **service delivery**:

- Adapt pathways to improve access, experience, and outcomes for deprived communities (e.g. flexible appointments, outreach clinics, trusted community venues).
- Monitor whether Core20 groups are under-represented in uptake or over-represented in late presentation.
- Be an advocate for inclusion health.
- Track progress and listen to feedback from communities.
- Use asset-based models to recognise the strengths and resources already present in communities, rather than focusing solely on needs and problems.

...you work in **analytics**:

- Disaggregate data by deprivation, ethnicity, disability, and geography.
- Use Core20PLUS5 to justify targeted interventions rather than whole-population approaches.
- Work with other services to tackle the root causes of poor health.

...you work in a **frontline role**:

- Use established trust to connect PLUS groups with primary care services they may otherwise avoid due to past negative experiences, cultural barriers, or stigma.
- Support individuals with lived experience of health inequalities to raise awareness, educate, and support peers with navigating health services.
- Support health services to deliver interventions in trusted community settings rather than clinical environments to increase engagement.

Further reading:

- Core20PLUS5 (adults)- an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities, NHS England: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/core20plus5/>
- Core20PLUS5- Adults and Children, Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care System: <https://improvinglivesnw.org.uk/our-work/working-better-together/health-inequalities/core20plus5/>
- Core20 Plus groups, Norfolk Insight: https://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CORE20_Plus_Groups_accessible.pdf
- A National Framework for NHS- Action on Inclusion Health, NHS England: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/a-national-framework-for-nhs-action-on-inclusion-health/>
- Core20PLUS5, Suffolk & North East Essex Integrated Care System: <https://www.sneeics.org.uk/health-equality/health-inequalities-and-health-equity/core20plus5/>