Poor Beginnings
Health inequalities among young children across England

@ncbtweets
#PoorBeginnings
NCB’s mission

To be a strong voice for children and young people, championing their rights and reducing the impact of inequalities, so that every child, especially the most vulnerable, can grow up safe, happy and healthy
Why focus on the early years?

The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood

Four key outcomes

- **Obesity** in 4-5 year olds (9.5%)
- **Tooth decay** in 5 year olds (25%)
- Hospital admissions due to **injury** (48,000 cases)
- Good level of **development** (40% NOT reaching)
Regional variations: tooth decay

Figure 2: Proportion of five-year-olds with current/active tooth decay, by region

- North East
- North West
- Yorkshire & the Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East
- London
- South East
- South West

Local authority variations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obesity</th>
<th>Tooth decay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barking and Dagenham</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leicester</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5x likelihood of obesity</td>
<td>5x likelihood of tooth decay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A child in Reception class in Barking and Dagenham is over *two and half times* more likely to be obese than a child of the same age in Richmond upon Thames, only 18 miles down the road.

A five-year-old in Leicester is over *five times* more likely to have tooth decay than a child of the same age in West Sussex.
Local authority variations

**Injuries**

- Isle of Wight
- Westminster

4x likelihood of hospital admission

A young child on the Isle of Wight is over four times more likely to be admitted to hospital with an injury than one of their peers in Westminster.

**Development & ‘school readiness’**

- Leicester
- Lewisham

2x likelihood of achieving a good level of development

A child in Lewisham is nearly twice as likely as a child in Leicester to achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception.
What about here?

Lower than average:
• early childhood obesity (7.8%) – lowest in Y&H early childhood tooth decay (21.8%)
• early childhood injury (134 per 10,000)
... and higher than average reaching a good level of development (64.5%)

Although this hides variations within local authority areas, often linked to deprivation
Impact of deprivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most deprived</th>
<th>Least deprived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>8%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of 4–5-year-olds in the most deprived local authorities are obese</td>
<td>of 4–5-year-olds in the least deprived local authorities are obese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of five-year-olds have tooth decay in the most deprived authorities</td>
<td>of five-year-olds have tooth decay in the least deprived authorities</td>
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</table>
Impact of deprivation

Most deprived

157 per 10,000 under five-year-olds are admitted to hospital for injury in the most deprived authorities

Least deprived

125 per 10,000 under five-year-olds are admitted to hospital for injury in the least deprived authorities

Most deprived

55.5% of children reached a good level of development by Reception age in the most deprived authorities

Least deprived

62.2% of children reached a good level of development by Reception age in the least deprived authorities
But some areas buck the trend

Despite high levels of deprivation:

• **Bradford** has average obesity rates
• **Hartlepool** has low rates of tooth decay
• **Liverpool** has low hospital admissions due to injury
• **Waltham Forest** has high rates of children achieving a good level of development
Our recommendations

National government
• Action on early childhood inequalities in the forthcoming Life Chances Strategy
• Effective monitoring of transfer of 0-5 public health to LAs
• Ensuring LAs have data and resources they need – focus on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
• Support for local authorities to protect early intervention services
• Investigations of factors underlying geographical variation in early years outcomes

Local authorities and their partners
• Use local data to understand young children’s health and development and put in place long-term strategies for improving outcomes
• Use opportunity of transfer to coordinate services
If all local authority areas had the same outcomes as the least deprived fifth, across England there would be:

**Obesity**

16% reduction in cases of obesity in Reception class

The equivalent of nearly 10,000 fewer obese children

**Tooth decay**

26% reduction in the number of five-year-olds with tooth decay

Amounting to nearly 35,000 fewer children with poor dental health
If all local authority areas had the same outcomes as the least deprived fifth, across England there would be:

**Injuries**

- 11% reduction in the number of children under the age of five admitted to hospital with an injury

  The equivalent of over 5,000 fewer cases of early childhood injury

**Development & ‘school readiness’**

- 3% increase in children achieving a good level of development

  Amounting to nearly 12,000 more children better prepared for school
Thank you

Zoë Renton, Head of Policy and Public Affairs
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