

The Marmot Review: A Summary

THE Marmot Review was requested in 2008 by Secretary of State for Health Alan Johnson with the aim of developing the most effective strategies for reducing health inequalities in England from 2010.

The Review follows a report by the Global Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH), entitled Closing the Gap in a Generation, which was published by the World Health Organisation in 2008, and which indicated a need for nation-specific strategies in combating health inequalities in the quest for good global health.

The CSDH argued that for reasons of social justice, action to achieve health equality was imperative. It stated that inequalities between and within countries were related to levels of social disadvantage and inequality; they were not inevitable.

The Report outlined how government policies, governance and social and economic forces shaped health, even in more developed countries. The CSDH showed that countries with more equitable policies and more just societies were healthier. It found that in most countries health inequity was a significant problem, and in a number of countries was deepening, and there was far too little action to reverse these trends.

With few exceptions the evidence showed that the lower an individual's socioeconomic position, the worse their health. Attempts to reduce health inequity therefore needed to be predicated on addressing the wider social and economic determinants, such as levels of education, economic status, work and power relations.

Chaired by Professor Sir Michael Marmot, the Marmot Review will draw on evidence from the CSDH, other relevant international evidence and from past experience of policies and interventions in England. In turn, it is hoped other countries will find the evidence useful in developing their own strategies to reduce health inequalities.

The Review must report back to the Secretary of State for Health in December 2009 with recommendations on how to tackle inequalities from 2010, and ways that national and local government and partners can work together to reduce the health inequalities of their citizens.

Throughout 2009, a series of consultations with regional and local public health and local government leaders and other delivery organisations, and with the public, will take place. The Review will also be informed by the EC expert working group on Social Determinants and Health Inequalities and a range of other organisations including the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Europe Health Management, National Heart Forum, WHO Europe and the Royal College of Physicians. Throughout the process there will be a series of policy dialogues to inform the review and to disseminate findings.

Tasks set down for the Review are mostly the work of three committees, who will put forward evidence and recommendations to the 10 commissioners, who in turn will deliberate on the given information and – under the chairmanship of Sir Michael Marmot – make the final recommendations which will be published in the December 2009 Review report.

The four tasks set out for the Marmot Review:

- To identify the evidence most relevant to underpinning future policy and action regarding England's health-inequality challenges.
- To show how this evidence can be translated into practice.
- To advise on possible objectives and measures, building on the experience of the current PSA target on infant mortality and life expectancy.
- To publish a report at the end of 2009 of the review's work that will contribute to the development of a post-2010 health-inequalities strategy.

Commissioner Chris Ham, appointed because of his expertise in the NHS, said: "The Marmot Commission provides a timely opportunity to take a fresh look at what more needs to be done to address health inequalities in England."