# Health Inequalities self-audit tool

We would encourage you to use this tool in the context of your team environment as well as in clinical excellence networks (CENs) to consider in the light of particular clinical conditions. This could also be an activity to suggest to students on placement.

This tool can be used by SLTs in the NHS and in non-NHS settings, including in research and the higher education sector, and we would encourage you to adapt it to your own settings. It can also be used in different ways. You may simply want to use the questions to guide reflection or a team discussion, or you may wish to complete a full audit by answering all questions. This may be done by using a simple yes or no, or you may wish to assign a rating e.g., a score out of 5. We welcome you to use it creatively to suit the needs of you as a clinician, team, manager or service.

It provides you with space to note your reflections, and actions for next steps. You can also edit the template so if you wish to make rating scales or similar, you can do so. We have suggested some resources you can use, and you can also refer to other tools on the Health inequalities resources page.

## Part one: Understanding your community

### Context

The only way to really evaluate if your service is providing inclusive and equitable care is to understand the community you’re working with in the first place - both on a local level, and in terms of the clinical population. How do you know if you’re seeing who you should expect to be seeing in your service? It is the very first and fundamental step in exploring whether your service is inclusive and equal. Use the prompts below to examine what you know about the community you (do and don’t) serve.

### Understanding your local population

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Prompt Question** | **Self-Rating**  (for example, a score out of 10) | **Reflection**  (What are your thoughts on what you do/do not do?) | **Actions identified**  (What could you implement, or find out more about?) | **Resources you want to use**  (You may want to refer to the RCSLT resources) |
| **Do you know (or know how to find out) the remit of your service in terms of region and locality?**  (e.g. if you work in England or Wales you can look at census data for a customised geographical area) |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know the demographic make-up of your local population / remit of your service** (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language spoken)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know the general socio-economic landscape of your local population** (e.g. percentage of children on free school meals, Index of Multiple Deprivation in England?) |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know about any particular health inequalities raised in your area** (e.g. local reports such as Joint Strategic needs Assessments)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know (or know how to find out about) the prevalence of specific under-served groups in your locality who may face particular challenges accessing healthcare**, e.g. refugees or asylum seeking families, or those who are homeless? |  |  |  |  |

### Understanding the people your service aims to serve

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you know the demographic and socio-economic break-down of your caseload?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you systematically collect and analyse service user data including characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, languages spoken, etc?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you systematically evaluate your service user data to examine whether the expected demographics are reflected in your caseloads or referrals?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you collect data and analyse information about appointment/service take-up and map this to your demographic information?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you regularly reflect on your data processes and know how to and who to speak to amend them?** |  |  |  |  |

### Awareness of prevalence and incidence

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you know the general incidence and prevalence of the clinical conditions you come across in your caseload** (see ‘statistics’ sections in RCSLT guidance, eg. [aphasia](https://www.rcslt.org/members/clinical-guidance/aphasia/aphasia-influencing/#section-5))? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know if there are any specific statistics regarding incidence and prevalence of clinical conditions among populations with specific characteristics** (e.g. prevalence among a given gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you systematically evaluate your patient data to examine whether the expected prevalence and incidence of clinical conditions (broadly and among specific populations) are reflected in your caseloads?** |  |  |  |  |

## Part two: Access and Equity

### Context

We know there are some clear blocks for some people accessing services which need to be addressed, but examining some of the subtler reasons why they may not be accessible is important. It’s also important to understand who is accessing what kind of service to scrutinize whether there are any inequalities. The questions below will help to guide your thinking about how accessible and equitable your service is.

### Ensuring accessibility

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you know the waiting list figures for assessment and therapy for your general caseload, and specifically for those from typically under-served groups?** |  |  |  |  |
| **For those offering universal services, do you know if there are any particular access/equity issues within the settings in which your expertise is utilised?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know the accessibility** (in terms of proximity and usage) **of general and specialist services to your local community, and specifically for those from under-served groups?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you offer options to those on your caseload for where they are seen (where possible/relevant), to ensure you are able to meet the needs of everyone?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you provide communications (including appointment notifications and clinical reports) in accessible formats** (e.g. different languages, braille, spoken rather than written etc.) to ensure those from under-served groups fully understand their needs and their care? |  |  |  |  |

### Ensuring equity

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you systematically compare service user data of those accessing specialist provision with those accessing generalist provision across that community that you serve, to identify whether there is unwarranted variation** (specifically in relation to under-served groups for example homeless people or those seeking asylum)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know how to request and work with interpreters, when required?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you reflect on any planned advice/ intervention to ensure there are no assumed prerequisites on resources to be provided by a famil**y (e.g. a fixed address, money to purchase telephone credit, data for telehealth appointments, living space to carry out intervention)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you consider service designs that incorporate a range of offerings including universal and targeted to maximise equity?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have a ‘did not attend’ policy, and if so, are you confident is does not penalise service users who may be facing access difficulties and thus perpetuating inequalities?** (Could this be a ‘was not brought’ policy for Children’s services) |  |  |  |  |

## Part three: Your service provision

### Context

Thinking about what you know about the health inequalities or under-served groups in your local population, how can you apply that in your provision of a service? The questions below may be used as prompts to evaluate the degree to which your service is reaching all communities.

### Appropriateness of service provision

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you have access to interpreters to enable you to provide effective support in both the home language of the patient and English*?*** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have access to interpreters with all the languages you require?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you ensure people are aware of their right to request an interpreter?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know how to gather information about the service user and family holistically including finding out about religious or cultural beliefs, parental/family arrangement, family practices and attitudes and how this may relate to their understanding of your service** (e.g. cultural norms related to play, or religious beliefs about illness and intervention, view on disabilities or mental health)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you discuss and consider all elements of a service user's identity when planning assessment, goals and intervention** (e.g. that may support participation in religion, faith and spirituality, LGBTQ+ community activities etc)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have access to other services or resources to enable you to provide appropriate support that is sensitive to holistic needs** (e.g. religious counsellors)? |  |  |  |  |
| **If relevant, do you have access to thickener products or meal plans that are sensitive to various dietary requirements and relevant for authentic dishes from a range of countries?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do** **you have appropriate assessment tools or techniques to reliably and validly assess the needs of under-served groups** (e.g. fully evidence-based, linguistically and culturally translated and standardised tests?) |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have appropriate therapy approaches or techniques to support the needs of under-served groups who are represented on your caseload?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have access to a range of materials and resources that are appropriate to different needs** (e.g culturally appropriate, representing black or minority ethnic people, LGBTQ families etc) **to support your assessment or intervention?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you know what to do/where to go/ who to ask if you do not have appropriate assessment of therapy materials to support the needs of diverse caseloads** (e.g. line manager, head of service)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Are the materials, promotional materials and information on display in your environment that show diversity** (e.g. minority ethnic, Black, same-sex couples, trans people, people with physical differences or disabilities)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have access to interpreters to enable you to provide effective support in both the home language of the patient and English*?*** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have access to interpreters with all the languages you require?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you ensure people are aware of their right to request an interpreter?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Does whoever is responsible for budgeting, consider budget requirements for e.g. making services and facilitates fully accessible?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have a process to easily collate feedback about your services from your service users that is inclusive and accessible to all?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you work to promote communication accessibility across teams/services to ensure those with communication needs do not face inequities in other aspects of their healthcare?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you regularly undertake audits and service evaluations to ensure your service is designed in an optimal configuration to meet the needs of all who may require it** (for example, evaluating your universal or targeted offer, measuring the impact of new pathways etc?) |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you engage people with speech, language, communication and swallowing needs – especially those from typically underserved groups - in the design and coproduction of your service?** |  |  |  |  |

### Enabling service user involvement

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you ensure you do not make assumptions, and ask your service users about their preferred pronouns, names, honorifics and implement this?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you ensure you do not make assumptions about your service users’ family set up, ways they refer to each other and utilise the appropriate terms in your conversations?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you work with your service user and their families/carers to co-produce meaningful goals and care pathways / intervention approaches?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you encourage and provide opportunities for children/their families to share experiences to support ‘oral tradition’ common amongst cultures and embed this in provision/planning, where appropriate?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Are these explained to families/carers with space for feedback and adjustments to suit their needs?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you regularly provide opportunities for your service users and their communities to get involved in audits, service evaluations and improvement projects or research?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you regularly provide opportunities for your service users and their communities to support universities or services with teaching, applicant interviews and conversation partner schemes?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Ensure you seek feedback from diversely represented community members?** |  |  |  |  |

### Outreach to communities

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you/your service outreach to local communities** (e.g. via an advocate, local religious institutions ie. mosque, synagogue, or charities) |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you have a member of staff in your service who could serve as a cultural interpreter for outreach activities?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you work with the community to help identify barriers to accessing your service?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you collect feedback from your service users about their experiences of healthcare, ensuring avenues to do so are fully accessible and in a range of languages?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you work with local nurseries or playgroups to understand needs which could be addressed through a universal offer?** |  |  |  |  |

## Part four: SLT workforce

### Context

As health professionals you are encouraged to reflect regularly on your practice and own values, skills and knowledge. Take the time to broaden your own understanding of health inequalities by looking at some of the [references](#_ergsy6rzr6ml) and the [AHP Health Inequalities framework](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/tackling-health-inequalities-framework-allied-health-professionals). You might also find the [RCSLT anti-racism reading list](https://www.rcslt.org/learning/diversity-inclusion-and-anti-racism/external-resources/#section-4) useful. Use the questions below to reflect as individuals or as teams.

### Professional development and allyship

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you seek/are provided appropriate and regular training from your organisation that supports you to address the needs of the community you work in?** |  |  |  |  |
| **When you have students on placement, do you engage them in conversations about equity, equality and inclusion?** |  |  |  |  |
| **When you have students on placement, do you train them to work with bilingual populations and how to work with interpreters?** |  |  |  |  |
| **When you have students on placement, do you train them how to gather information about the service user and their family/carers holistically and in an inclusive way?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you ask your colleagues what their preferred pronouns are and implement this?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you engage with different networks representing the needs of under-served groups** (e.g. trans and gender-diverse CEN, SLT pride network, Bilingualism CEN)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you share your learning with colleagues and encourage staff to be allies to under-served groups?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you demonstrate your allyship visibly to service users** (e.g pride lanyards, BLM badges)? |  |  |  |  |
| **Does your service provide equality and diversity and anti-racism training for staff?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Does your service engage staff and students on placement in conversations and provide opportunities to ask questions or feedback about equality, diversity and inclusion in a safe space?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Is there a clear process for reporting concerns in your workplace and specific support around issues of equality, diversity and inclusion?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Do you discourage staff and service users from using racially inappropriate terms/language or other discriminatory behaviours if it occurs (including helping people to understand how this impacts others)?** |  |  |  |  |

### Recruitment

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| **Prompt Question** | **Reflection** | **Action** | **Rating** | **Resources** |
| **Do you encourage black, Asian and minority ethnic people, LGBTQ+ and trans and non-binary people and people with a disability to apply for posts by specifically inviting people from these communities? You may wish to review your approach for each group separately as well as considering intersectionality.** |  |  |  |  |
| **Does your service have effective policies for training and retaining SLTs, especially those who may come from diverse backgrounds?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Does your service employ bilingual assistants?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Does your service evaluate the diversity of staff teams?** |  |  |  |  |