

New body to tackle health disparities will launch 1 October, co-headed by new DCMO

- Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy has been appointed as the new Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England and will co-lead the new body alongside Director General, Jonathan Marron
- Health disparities across nation to be reduced by tackling top risk factors for poor health

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) will officially launch on 1 October with the aim of tackling health inequalities across the country. It will be co-led by newly appointed Deputy Chief Medical Officer (DCMO), Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy.

The OHID will be a vital part of the Department of Health and Social Care and will drive the prevention agenda across government to reduce health disparities, many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and improve the public's health.

Health disparities across the UK are stark – for example, a woman living in Blackpool will on average live 16 fewer years in good health than a woman born in Brent, London and we know someone's ethnicity can have a significant bearing on their health and health outcomes.

Health disparities can undermine people's ability to work and live long healthy independent lives while creating pressure on the NHS, social care and other public services.

Ill-health amongst working-age people alone costs the economy around £100 billion a year and it's estimated that 40% of health care provision in the UK is being used to manage potentially preventable conditions.

The new body will tackle the top preventable risk factors for poor health, including obesity caused by unhealthy diets and lack of physical activity, smoking and alcohol consumption. It will work across the health system to drive forward action on health disparities, including improving access to health services across the country, and coordinate with government departments to address the wider drivers of good health, from employment to housing, education and the environment.

As the new DCMO for Health Improvement, Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy will advise government on clinical and public health matters as the co-lead for OHID, alongside the DHSC Director General for the OHID, Jonathan Marron. They will be under the professional leadership of the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the disparities that exist within our country. We know the virus has had a greater impact on those with poorer health and we must ensure we give people the tools they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle, whilst relieving pressures on our NHS.

By focussing on preventing and not just treating poor health, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will tackle health disparities to break the link between people's background and their prospects for a healthy life.

I look forward to Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy coming on board to co-lead the OHID, bringing her extensive knowledge to deliver a meaningful reduction in health disparities for people up and down the country.

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy, incoming Deputy Chief Medical Officer said:

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will play a critical role in reducing health inequalities across the country and build on the important work undertaken over recent years.

COVID has exposed and exacerbated the health inequalities across the UK. It is critical we address these head-on and support people to live healthier lives. I look forward to getting started.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer said:

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy brings extensive local, regional and national experience to the role.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has a lot of important and challenging work to do and Dr de Gruchy is well placed to ensure it delivers meaningful health improvements for people nationwide.

The Office will help inform a new cross-government agenda which will look to track the wider determinants of health and reduce disparities. The OHID will bring expert advice, data and evidence together with policy development and implementation to ensure action on improving health is better informed, more effective and more joined-up. It will bring together a range of skills to lead a new era of public health polices, leveraging modern digital tools,

data and actuarial science and delivery experts.

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy is currently President of the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH), the Director of Population Health at Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and Chair of the Greater Manchester Association of Directors of Public Health. She will be stepping down from these roles to become DCMO.

Her previous roles include being Director of Public Health at the London Borough of Haringey (2010 to 2018) and Chair of the London Association of Directors of Public Health. Prior to that, she was Deputy Director of Public Health at Nottingham City NHS Primary Care Trust.