Notes for using the tartan rug

The health profile or ‘tartan rug’ demonstrates how each Ward within the locality compares with all other wards in England across a range of health indicators and outcomes. It provides an overview of local health need and is a tool to aid discussions about local priorities. Green indicates that the area is better relative to other wards within England whereas red indicates that the area is worse. The darker red shading shows that the ward is in the worst fifth of all wards nationally and the dark green shading demonstrates that the ward is in the best fifth of all wards. Please refer to the Indicator Notes box for a more detailed explanation of each indicator.

It is important to understand that many of the indicators are interdependent. A number of the overarching indicators, such as life expectancy, are driven by early deaths from specific disease groups, such as lung cancer. Mortality from lung cancer can be cut by reduced smoking prevalence. Smoking prevalence can be reduced by encouraging more people to attend smoking cessation and by better education to encourage healthy lifestyle choices by young people.

Caution should be exercised, however, in the use of the tartan rug. It covers a limited number of indicators and does not on its own give a complete picture. It needs to be used in conjunction with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Whilst the tartan rug does represent local inequalities in relation to England, it does not necessarily reflect local ambition or the specific priorities for Health and Wellbeing Board partners. 

Crucially, the tartan rug does not tell us what needs to be done to reduce local inequalities. It gives a starting point for discussion and indicates where efforts should be targeted. Underpinning this is a need to understand population motivation and the drivers for behaviour change. The challenge for public health and its partners is the strategic development of a universal view of priorities and desired outcomes and working out how the system can deliver these.