



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

# **User testing exercise of the Wider Determinants of Health Fingertips tool Summary of feedback**

## About Public Health England

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health, and are a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy to advise and support government, local authorities and the NHS in a professionally independent manner.

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# Contents

About Public Health England	2
Introduction	4
User testing	5
Summary of results and associated actions	6
Priorities for indicator development	6
Summary of feedback on indicator presentation	7
Summary of feedback on functionality	8
Feedback	9
Conclusion	10

## Introduction

This is a short summary of the user testing exercise conducted in January 2017 for the purposes of feedback to those who took part and other stakeholders. The **Wider Determinants of Health Tool** is a product on the Fingertips platform (PHEs online data presentation platform) that was developed during 2016 to 2017, and launched in March 2017. The aims of the tool are to:

- provide a set of indicators that describe a range of wider determinants of health and enable a comparison of these factors between areas
- highlight relationships between wider determinants and other risk factors and health outcomes
- provide, where possible, links to best practice in tackling wider determinants. This may take the form of best practice, case studies, interventions, guidance, or links to other tools.

User testing was conducted at an early stage in development, after the structure of the tool had been developed and populated with some initial indicators. The aim of the testing was to:

- make contact at an early stage with potential users so they could input into development
- see if the initial development was generating a product that potential users thought was valuable to their work
- understand what users priorities were in terms of developing indicators, functionality and further resources
- identify general improvements in presentation or structure that could be made

The tool remains in development and further indicators, resources and functionality will be added over the coming year. All feedback received has been considered and will feed into the ongoing development of the tool. In addition to the user testing exercise, the development of the tool is being guided by advisory groups specific to each of the thematic domains (natural and built environment, work and the labour market, vulnerability, income, crime, education, and the set of Marmot Indicators). As an official statistics product, user engagement will continue to be undertaken on a regular basis.

## User testing

Approximately 100 contacts had been identified or had expressed an interest in testing the tool. The vast majority were local authority contacts of PHEs Local Knowledge and Intelligence teams primarily working in public health intelligence, as Healthy Places leads, or in the work and health field. These contacts were also encouraged to forward the invitation to participate to relevant colleagues.

Contacts were invited to provide feedback to a set of questions and also to attend a webinar which was held at the start of the testing period (13 January 2017) to introduce the tool and guide people through the contents and functionality. A deadline for feedback was set for 3 weeks after the webinar.

There were 36 responses to the formal user testing exercise, excluding feedback received during the webinar. Most responses (86%) were from local authorities (the primary audience). A small number were from Public Health England, Transport for London or were undisclosed.

The questions users were asked were:

1. The indicators currently in the tool are pre-existing PHE indicators and we will be adding new indicators over the coming months. Please tell us what you think the priority areas are for the development of new indicators (indicators of wider determinants should be prioritised over indicators of behaviours or health outcomes).
2. Do you have any comments on how the indicators are presented and how this could be improved (for example, labelling or grouping of different indicators)?
3. Is there any functionality that you would like to see in the tool that is not there already?
4. What are your views on the further resources section (available by clicking the 'Further Resources' link at the top of the page)? Is there anything in particular you would like to see in this section? Could this be made more prominent?
5. Are there any additional comments about any aspect of the wider determinants tool you would like to make?

## Summary of results and associated actions

Results from the user testing exercise are summarised below.

### Priorities for indicator development

Nearly 100 indicators were suggested as priority areas for development. Some indicators suggested were added to the tool before launch on 7 March 2017 as they were available due to being included in other PHE Fingertips profiles. The most commonly requested indicators are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Commonly requested indicators**

Indicator topic	Response
<b>Income:</b> various measures suggested including older people and child-specific measures, and low wage-related measures such as low pay and in-work poverty	Further measures related to income are planned. 'Children in low income families' and 'Income deprived older people' (IDAOP) have already been added.
<b>Out-of-work benefit claimants:</b> particularly for Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), including insightful sub-group breakdowns	Indicators for 'ESA claimants' and 'Long term claimants of JSA' have been added (alongside an indicator of International Labour Organisation defined unemployment).
<b>Employment rates:</b> by various sub-groups	Further sub-groups have been developed for the 'Employment rate' indicator and put into the inequalities tab.
<b>Air quality and pollution</b>	An initial indicator of air pollution ('fine particulate matter' also known as PM2.5) has been added. Further indicators of air pollution will hopefully be developed with continued guidance from the advisory group.
<b>Walking, cycling and active travel</b>	Relevant indicators on this topic are being explored for the natural and built environment domain.
<b>Loneliness and social isolation</b>	An indicator for 'Social isolation: adult social care users who have as much social contact as they would like' has been added. Other sources that may cover a wider population and are available at the local authority level are being explored.
<b>Food bank usage/food poverty</b>	Data availability will be explored.
<b>Housing affordability</b>	An 'affordability of home ownership' indicator has been added. Other options are being explored.

## Summary of feedback on indicator presentation

Participants were asked for comments on how indicators were presented and how this could be improved (for example, labelling or grouping of different indicators). A summary of responses is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2. Feedback on indicator presentation**

Comment on indicator presentation	Response
There were several requests to have a separate domain for a given topic area.	From a usability perspective there is a maximum number of domains that work within the Fingertips tool. There is not room for each sub-domain to be given its own tab, so at present we do not plan on creating new tabs for sub-domains. There may well be some changes to improve usability however.
Several comments suggested that the indicator labels were too wordy, especially with the use of prefixes to demark sub-domains or types of indicator.	This approach was also problematic because a few indicators are relevant to (and included in) multiple domains, and when an indicator included a sub-domain prefix relevant to one domain, it did not make sense in another domain (indicators are constrained to have the same label within a single profile so cannot be labelled differently in each domain). These prefixes have now been removed.
There was some confusion around the 'vulnerability' domain.	This domain had not been developed at the time of testing and so only contained homelessness variables. We plan to develop the domain further to include a broader range of vulnerable groups in the vein of the inclusion health agenda. Earlier feedback had identified a preference for 'vulnerability' over 'inclusion health'.
Several users noted that more inequalities data would be welcomed.	Inequalities data will be added where possible. Availability is often limited by sample size when disaggregating the data, especially at the local authority (LA) level.
The motivation for the inclusion of indicators in the 'Health outcomes' domain was questioned by a few users.	The indicators in this domain will be reduced to include only high level health outcome indicators to give a broad understanding of health in a given area.
A number of suggestions would require software development to enact. For example, being able to divide domains into sub-groups in the overview and area profile data views.	These comments have been passed on to the development team.

## Summary of feedback on functionality

Participants were asked to comment on functionality they would like to see in the tool. Comments on the further resources section and any additional comments have also been grouped into this section because they are associated with functionality. A summary of responses is provided in Table 3.

**Table 3. Feedback on functionality**

Comment on functionality	Response
A few people suggested that lower level geography data would be useful.	There are several factors to consider, including there being relatively few indicators that will have lower level data available, and that the Fingertips platform was not designed to explore lower level data (and therefore there are better tools available for such data exploration). At present, links to more detailed data where they exist can be provided in the Further Resources section (such as to LocalHealth.org.uk). We are currently reviewing options and considering how best to work with lower level geography data going forward.
Downloadable profiles were suggested.	These will be developed over the coming year.
One suggestion queried access options to the underlying data.	Users who wish to make use of the underlying data for further analyses or automated processes can either download all the data via the 'Download' tab or make use of the Fingertips Application Programming Interface (API) (see <a href="https://rpubs.com/sebsfox/fingertipsAPI">https://rpubs.com/sebsfox/fingertipsAPI</a> ).
A number of suggestions would require software development to enact. Some examples include: greater range of comparator groups, customisable comparator groups, customisable infographics, ability to sort indicators by RAG rating and a sign-in option that remembers 'home' LA.	These comments have been passed on to the development team.
Several people found the link to the Further Resources section difficult to find.	A large link on the introduction page has been added under the link that takes users to the main data views.

## Feedback

As well as highlighting issues and obtaining constructive feedback as discussed above, user testing revealed support for the overall aim of the tool. Below is a selection of positive comments:

“I think it’s a valuable addition to the arsenal of profiles and I look forward to using it with my wider team. Thank you.”

“It looks great and it brings together information in a useful way instead of accessing multiple sources. I hope it will develop and grow over time.”

“With links to the source data and links to relevant publications and guidance the resources section should prove very useful.”

“I have found it extremely useful as well as quicker and easier to navigate than [other data sites].”

“The groupings of variables seemed more intuitive...useful to link to other sources out there.”

“I really like the inequalities function and that it goes down to district level.”

“The tool looks very useful – bringing together various indicators relating to wider determinants in one place.”

“The profiles are really useful and collate a wide range of helpful data.”

“I think it is user friendly and contains useful information and useful/varying ways to display the data.”

“Really good that this is being developed.”

## Conclusion

The user testing exercise has provided valuable feedback with which to shape the continued development of the tool and enthusiasm for the tools aims. Several recommendations have been actioned, including new indicators added based on the feedback received.

Further user testing is planned at key points in development, however, feedback is welcome at any time and can be made by email to [wider.determinants@phe.gov.uk](mailto:wider.determinants@phe.gov.uk).