COVID-19 and deprived areas

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The direct impact of COVID-19 on mortality

- Considerable inequalities in mortality by deprivation, particularly for those aged under 65
- 3.7 times higher for people living in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived for under 65s, twice as high for over 65s
- This reflected both higher numbers of deaths and younger average deaths in deprived areas
Why was the mortality impact higher?

- Health conditions – and particularly multiple health conditions – are more prevalent in deprived areas.
- People in the most deprived areas have two conditions on average by age 61, 10 years earlier than those in the least deprived areas.
Why was the mortality impact higher? (continued)

- Socio-economic context factors such as overcrowding or working from home
- Often interact with health and risk factors

Percentage of people in overcrowded households by income quintile

- Red: People in an overcrowded household with someone over 70 or someone with a health condition
- Blue: People in overcrowded accommodation
Why was the mortality impact higher? (continued)

- Differences in exposure by occupation
- Differences in lockdown-acquired infection by occupation
Impact on mortality since summer 2021

• In the Delta (summer 2021) and Omicron (winter 2021/22) waves, overall mortality was lower than in previous waves but inequalities by deprivation remained – 30% higher in the most deprived fifth)

• Regular statistics no longer published on COVID-19 mortality by deprivation
Longer term health impacts

- ONS survey of post-COVID symptoms finds higher incidence in most deprived areas
- Most deprived areas have also seen bigger increases since April 2021

Estimated percentage of people living in private households with self-reported long COVID who first had (or suspected they had) COVID-19 at least 12 weeks previously

Source: ONS, Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus (COVID-19)
Longer term risks to health

Education:
• School children lost around 2 months of education, with a greater loss for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
• There is still disruption as children isolate.

Employment:
• Furlough has been a success in preventing a rise in unemployment but inactivity has risen for workers aged over 50.
• We are yet to understand longer term scarring effects.

Income:
• Risk of future financial strain and poorer families have been more likely to run down savings or build up debt. Inflationary shock combined with reduction in Universal Credit.
Addressing immediate harms and building long term resilience

Immediate action is required to tackle the health care backlog, catch up education and protect family finances.

Longer term action is needed to ensure the recovery builds resilience for the next crisis:

• Creation of high-quality jobs in areas with historically low employment, as well as those hardest hit by the pandemic

• Strengthening local communities as people potentially spend more time, and money closer to home

• Closing gaps in the welfare state to support people through income and health shocks
Thank you