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Student Name		Priti Ramoliya
Student Id		2506176

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TASK 1: Social Epidemiological Analysis

Age and Health Inequalities (Elderly Population in the UK)

1. Introduction

The aging population, which is generally described as people who are 65 years and older, is a fast-growing population group in the United Kingdom and this has tremendous effects on health and social care systems. Health inequalities are the systematic, preventable, and unfair disparities in health results among groups of the population, which are mostly defined by social, economic, and environmental factors (Marmot et al., 2020; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), 2023). Older adults in particular are susceptible to these inequalities because the cumulative effect of disadvantage throughout the life course manifests later in life in the form of more morbidity, disability, and lower quality of life (The King's Fund, 2022).

Ageing is related to reduced physical mobility, dependency on fixed incomes, such as pensions, and increased dependency on healthcare services, which increase the vulnerability to health risks (Age UK, 2024). Moreover, the main social determinants of health, such as income insecurity, poor housing, and lack of access to healthcare, greatly contribute to disparities among the older populations (World Health Organization (WHO), 2022; The Health Foundation, 2023). The needs to address these inequalities thus necessitate a thorough knowledge of the biomedical and socio-structural determinants of health outcomes.

2. Contextual Background and Underlying Factors

2.1 Higher Rates of Mental Health Issues

The UK has disproportionate mental health inequalities in older adults with 19.6% of individuals over 65 years reporting depressive symptoms and the prevalence of dementia steeply increasing after 75 years (Age UK, 2024; WHO, 2022; Stevenson and Mutebi, 2024). Social isolation bereavement and less independence are contributory to but behavioural explanations are inadequate since deprivation limits counselling access diagnosis and continuing care. Though NHS outreach has increased coverage is not even across regions. Ageing equity pathways of screening transport community groups memory clinics welfare advice and digital support would be more effective and equitable in the long term outcomes of the country particularly in men women.

2.2 Chronic Diseases (Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease)

Among the elderly populations, chronic diseases are very high especially the type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Older adults constitute a large proportion of the cases of diagnosed diabetes in England and the highest rates are observed in

deprived communities (NHS Digital, 2024; Diabetes UK, 2025). Much risk but individual choice discourses are explained by long term exposure to smoking inactivity obesity poor diet and stress which neglects unequal environments (Gutacker et al., 2025; Barker et al., 2025). NHS prevention programmes are beneficial and there is social pattern of uptake. Accurate yearly screening culturally sensitive coaching and neighbourhood food activity investment is needed to reduce inequalities in England in a sustainable manner today with quantifiable long term savings to services.

2.3 Higher Mortality Rates

There is a high rate of mortality among the elderly particularly those with more than one long term condition. In deprived regions that exhibit structural inequality that is persistent, healthy life expectancy is several years lower (ONS, 2023; Frontiers in Aging, 2024; OECD, 2023). Weak immunity and polypharmacy due to frailty contribute to avoidable death risk but service pressures also play a role. Medical advances have had an uneven distribution of survival benefits. For equity now fairer gains in survival and less winter pressures on national hospitals in severe influenza seasons and crises would be created by earlier diagnosis vaccination medication review rapid referral and proactive primary care of high risk neighbourhoods.

2.4 Social Isolation and Loneliness

Loneliness is a problem impacting millions of older adults in the UK and linked to cognitive decline depression falls and untimely deaths (WHO, 2022; Age UK, 2024). Individuals in solitude with caring and immobilized persons are at the highest risk. Explaining the problem in terms of individual resilience is not complete since bus reductions and unsafe streets diminish the possibility of connection. There are some social prescribing schemes that are effective but provision is patchy. Befriending hubs guaranteed community transport would cement belonging and safeguard mental and physical health more predictably in diverse rural and urban communities across the country with long-term local funding.

2.5 Poverty and Financial Insecurity

Numerous elderly people depend on fixed pensions that do not keep up with growing living expenses that augment economic insecurity. Poverty limits access to nutritious food that heats a transport dentistry and social engagement thus exacerbating disease risk (ONS, 2024; Public Health Scotland, 2022; European Commission, 2023). Budgeting behavioural tips are of little use when the incomes are still low. The current welfare maintenance alleviated poverty but occupies gaps among lonely pensioners. Upstream determinants would be better tackled by higher pension credit uptake, automatic enrolment energy assistance and targeted cost of living payments rather than crisis responses alone and lessen the stress related morbidity in later life across areas.

2.6 Housing Issues

Another structural determinant of health amongst the older adults is poor housing conditions. Damp and crowded homes in cold conditions add to the number of respiratory diseases falls and hospitalization (WHO, 2023; OECD, 2023; Journal of Public Health, 2024). The poor people in the deprived regions can less afford repairs insulation or adaptations to create place based inequality. Divided housing services drag on the pace though policy has been reiterated. The rails ramps heating upgrades and integrated housing health teams would assist with ageing independently and saving avoidable admissions by a large margin every winter and make older residents more comfortable, dignified and energy-efficient.

3. National Response

UK government has enacted various policy-level interventions to mitigate health inequalities in older adults, with the most notable being NHS Long Term Plan, which focuses on prevention, early diagnosis, and integrated care to the ageing populations (NHS England, 2023). The strategy encourages individualised models of care, social prescribing, and community-based practices that would lessen the strain on acute care. Equally, Health and Care Act 2022 reforms aim to enhance service integration and decrease regional differences in care access (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022). Nevertheless, it has been shown that these policies have had mixed results, mostly because of the lack of funds, staffing gaps, and inconsistency in the local execution (The King's Fund, 2022). As a result, in the absence of more powerful accountability mechanisms and fair distribution of resources, national strategies will only serve to strengthen, but not to eliminate, current health inequalities.

4. Organisation Supporting the Group

Age UK is a prominent national charity that helps older adults by tackling health and social inequalities via advocacy, service delivery, and research (Age UK, 2024). It provides services like financial guidance, health support programmes, and community engagement initiatives to alleviate the loneliness and enhance wellbeing. The organisation also shapes national policy by creating awareness of the systemic problems of ageing populations. Nevertheless, although it is impressive, it depends on charitable funding, which implies that additional integration with statutory public health systems is needed to make it sustainable and equitable.

5. Conclusion

In the UK, older adults experience health inequalities due to complex interactions between social, economic, and health determinants, such as chronic disease, poverty, and isolation (Marmot et al., 2020). These must be addressed with specific

interventions as well as structural changes and long-term investment to achieve fair and productive results (WHO, 2022).

TASK 2: Epidemiological Analysis

Type 2 Diabetes in a UK Population

1. Introduction

Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) is a long-term metabolic disease that is characterised by insulin resistance and progressive dysfunction of the beta-cell leading to sustained hyperglycaemia and severe multisystem complications (International Diabetes Federation, 2023). It has become one of the most acute global non-communicable diseases, impacting over half a billion adults globally, and is on the increase because of population ageing, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, and urbanisation (WHO, 2024; IDF, 2023).

In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that there are 4.3 million individuals with diabetes, with about 90% having T2DM, which has resulted in a significant load on the NHS and the society at large (Diabetes UK, 2025; NHS Digital, 2024). But the distribution of disease is not a social neutral phenomenon. The social gradient in health is high, with prevalence being more in older adults, ethnic groups of South Asians and Blacks, as well as those who live in deprived regions (Marmot et al., 2020; Gutacker et al., 2025).

Not only does glycaemic control not suffice, but T2DM also predisposes risks of cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, neuropathy, blindness, and premature mortality and creates significant economic burdens in terms of hospital admissions and the need to be treated long-term (The Lancet, 2022). Thus, T2DM must not be viewed as a simple lifestyle disease, but as an epidemiological and structural public health issue, which needs specific prevention, surveillance and equitable intervention measures.

2. Public Health Measures (3 P's)

2.1 Prevention

The UK prevention measures on type 2 diabetes have focused mainly on the modifiable determinants such as poor diet, inactivity and obesity. The NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP) provides behavioural-based interventions on weight loss, healthy diet, and physical activity, and it has been shown to decrease the rate of transitioning into diabetes in those who complete the programme (NHS England, 2025; Barron et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the uptake and retention is always low among populations that are deprived since food insecurity, unstable job prospects, and

unstable exercise settings limit behaviour change. Prevention policy should therefore not just focus on lifestyle modification to fiscal, environmental and community actions.

2.2 Protection

Protective measures focus on the early detection of cases via NHS Health Checks, HbA1c screening, and primary care regular screening. Such systems enhance the early diagnosis and minimise the late treatment, which in turn limits complications, including nephropathy and cardiovascular disease (NHS Digital, 2024). However, there is still an unequal level of population coverage especially in ethnic minority groups and the deprived communities with low levels of primary care access. This implies that universal programmes cannot be relied on. Outreach screening using mobile, culturally competent, and data-driven risk stratification would enhance fair initial detection and disease management.

2.3 Promotion

Health promotion aims at empowering both individuals and communities by education, self-management support and by creating healthier environments. Social prescribing, community exercise referral and local wellbeing programmes are NHS initiatives that seek to maintain behavioural change (NHS England, 2023). Nevertheless, education-only solutions are not very effective when poverty, insecure housing, and low-income levels are not dealt with. Thus, a more effective promotion plan will be a combination of personalised health education with broader policies on the affordability of food, transport, and neighbourhood design to minimise the social gradient of diabetes risk (Marmot et al., 2020).

3. Determinants / Risk Factors

There are biological, socioeconomic and behavioural determinants of diabetes, type 2, which interplay throughout the life cycle. The greatest modifiable factor is obesity since too much adiposity raises insulin resistance and metabolic dysfunction (International Diabetes Federation, 2023). High intake of ultra-processed food, sugar and saturated fat, coupled with lack of exercise, further increase the risk of incidence. Nevertheless, the behaviours are patterned in the society, especially in the deprived urban regions with obesogenic conditions, a lack of green space, and access to healthier food (WHO, 2024; The Health Foundation, 2023). Reduced healthcare engagement and delay in prevention occurs among lower socioeconomic groups as well. There is a genetic predisposition factor, particularly in certain ethnic groups but genetics on its own cannot be used to explain the contemporary trends. As such, a combination of behaviour, environment, and structural inequality-wide action is necessary to prevent.

4. Population at Risk

There is an unequal exposure and unequal vulnerability to type 2 diabetes in certain populations in the UK. The South Asian ethnicity and the Black ethnicity are also much prone to developing diabetes earlier and at lower BMI levels than the Whites (Diabetes UK, 2025; NHS Digital, 2024). The older adults are still high risk because of the metabolic ageing, multimorbidity and accumulated behavioural exposure. People in deprived communities are also more likely to be affected and to have an early diagnosis and worse outcome of complications (ONS, 2023). Epidemiological data reveal that there has been a stable social gradient with prevalence being concentrated in the least privileged areas (Gutacker et al., 2025).

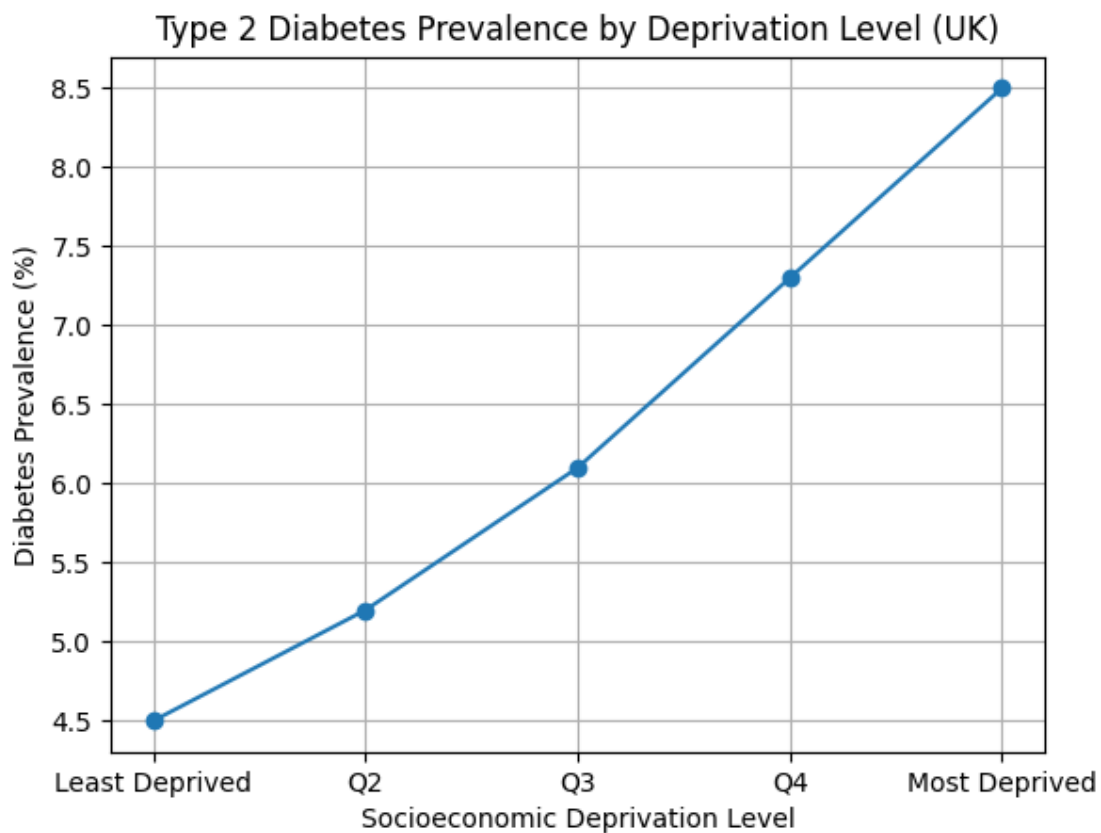


Figure 1: Type 2 Diabetes prevalence by socioeconomic deprivation level in the UK (adapted from ONS, 2023; Diabetes UK, 2025)

Despite available targeted programmes, limited coverage is problematic. Therefore, interventions that focus on equity and are culturally competent are necessary to reduce disparities.

5. Monitoring & Surveillance

To manage type 2 diabetes in UK, there is a need to have effective monitoring systems. The incidence, prevalence, glycaemic outcomes, complications, and service quality in England is monitored by NHS Digital and the National Diabetes Audit allowing the

analysis of trends and benchmarking (NHS Digital, 2024). OHID also facilitates the use of surveillance via inequality dashboards used to detect regional as well as ethnic and socioeconomic variation (OHID, 2023). Data on all countries enables WHO to compare with trends worldwide (WHO, 2024). Nevertheless, the quality of surveillance lies in the ability to ascertain the cases and the undiagnosed diabetes is still significant, especially among the marginalised populations with less access to healthcare. Thus, strong surveillance should comprise regular data gathering with the involvement of the community in finding the cases, primary care outreach, and enhanced ethnicity and deprivation coding.

6. Impact Analysis

Type 2 diabetes poses significant both short-term and long-term effects on both the individuals and the NHS. In the short-term, its effects comprise fatigue, frequent infections, lower productivity, and the quality of life (International Diabetes Federation, 2023). In the long-term, diabetic complications uncontrolled lead to cardiovascular disease, renal failure, neuropathy, amputations, blindness, and untimely deaths (The Lancet, 2022). Such outcomes are also not evenly spread across the communities but rather concentrated in the communities that are deprived thus contributing to health inequalities. Diabetically, NHS spending on medications, hospitalization, and the treatment of complications takes a considerable percentage (NHS England, 2023). Treatment has increased the survival although prevention is less expensive as compared to the burden of advanced disease.

7. Intervention Programme Design

A good intervention programme must be structural reform and targeted prevention. To enhance the level of symptom identification, screening attendance, and self-referral, the culturally-specific awareness efforts must put a particular emphasis on deprived and ethnically diverse groups (Diabetes UK, 2025). Secondly, screening must increase by primary care, pharmacies, workplaces, and mobile clinics by risk stratification as a way of reaching the underserved groups (NHS Digital, 2024). Third, diets, physical activity referral and dietary coaching should be part of intensive lifestyle support and are associated with the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (Barron et al., 2023). But behaviour change will not last long unless healthy food is affordable, and the environment and incomes are safe. Thus, the transport, food access, and community wellbeing should be organised locally by the local councils, NHS systems, and voluntary organisations. There is a need to have continuous assessment based on the results of HbA1c, attendance, and the equity measures.

8. Evaluation of Intervention

Epidemiological, clinical, behavioural and equity indicators should be used to assess the intervention. The success would be a reduction of incidences and prevalence of

the disease in the identified high-risk communities, especially those that are deprived (NHS Digital, 2024). These clinical outcomes should be better HbA1c control, reduced complication rates, and decreased diabetes admissions (International Diabetes Federation, 2023). The behavioural measures are a continued increase in physical activity, healthier food and increased uptake of screening and prevention services. Avoid treatment expenditure should also be used to determine cost-effectiveness. Importantly, it should be assessed whether the advantages are evenly shared between the ethnic and socioeconomic groups instead of increasing the current gaps (Marmot et al., 2020).

9. Strengths & Weaknesses

Some of the strengths of the intervention are that it is data-driven, is preventative, and fits the national NHS priorities (NHS England, 2023). It focuses on medical and social factors that determine the risk of diabetes through a combination of screening, lifestyle support and community partnerships. The cost of implementation can however be quite high, particularly outreach and multidisciplinary delivery. Participation of underserved groups may still be restricted by structural barriers like transport, unsafe employment, language barriers, and digital exclusion. Moreover, long-term behaviour change is difficult to maintain, with poverty continuing to be a problem. These restrictions suggest that the constant adjustment, consistent funding and broadening of social policy support is required.

10. Conclusion

Diabetes type 2 continues to be a significant UK national health issue that is conditioned by behavioural, biological and structural factors. Epidemiology plays a crucial role in determining the patterns of risks, tracking disparities, and how to design interventions. The key to long-term improvements lies in the equity-based, long-term strategies that combine prevention, treatment, surveillance, and the broader societal policy intervention (WHO, 2024).

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