

Working together
for a healthier Wales

Our Long-Term Strategy 2023 – 2035



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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn y Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh

Executive Summary

This Long-Term Strategy sets out our vision for achieving a healthier future for people in Wales by 2035

Who we are and what we do

We are Public Health Wales – the national public health organisation for Wales. Our purpose is **'working together for a healthier Wales'**. We exist to help all people in Wales live longer, healthier lives. With our partners, we aim to increase healthy life expectancy, improve health and well-being, and reduce inequalities for everyone in Wales, now and for future generations.

Together, our teams work to prevent disease, protect health, and provide leadership, specialist services and public health expertise. We are the main source of public health information, research and innovation in Wales.

Our strategy

This Long-Term Strategy sets out our vision for achieving a healthier future for people in Wales by 2035. We are committed to working towards a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives and where everyone has fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being. We will do this through focusing on six priorities, which we describe in this document. These will also be

our well-being objectives. We have set out why we have chosen these priorities and the work we will do under each over the coming years. We cannot deliver these priorities alone. To succeed, we will need to work together and in partnership with our key stakeholders and the public.



The challenges we face

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a great effect on the people of Wales, which will continue to be felt for years to come. This includes not only the direct impact on our health and well-being but also the wider and longer-term implications. The social and economic consequences of the pandemic have been felt unequally across our society, particularly among those who already had the greatest health and social needs.

These inequalities are likely to be even more affected in the coming years as a result of the current cost-of-living crisis. Wages and benefits are not keeping pace with rising living costs, particularly energy and food prices, which means people will not be able to afford the essentials. This will be a long-term public health issue, which will affect the whole population and make existing health inequalities worse. We also know the effect that these challenges, particularly the pandemic, have had on the wider health and social-care system. The current pressure on the NHS and social care is considerable, and a range of partners will need to work together to address this over the coming years. The direct and indirect effects of this

pressure on the public, including patients and their families, is significant. Alongside this, we should focus on supporting health equity (making sure everyone has fair access to the things that keep us healthy).

Climate change is possibly the most significant global threat that we face. Its consequences will affect all areas of life that are essential for achieving and maintaining good health. Urgent action is needed to tackle climate change, and to meet the rest of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.



A strategy for the future

The challenges that we face are obvious and difficult. However, we have seen the power and impact that we can have when we combine our efforts and expertise. Wales has a proud history of community and co-operation. As a country, we have seen how much we can achieve through welcoming innovation, technological developments, and our commitment to working together. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) allows us to take a long-term preventative approach, involving the public and working with our partners to tackle the challenges that we face today and tomorrow.

This strategy is our response to those challenges. It sets out our role and how we will work to meet the challenges and make the most of the opportunities we are given. It also sets out the key priorities that we will focus our efforts and resources on. We must find new and innovative ways of putting our strategy in place, by building on what works, working closely with our partners, and putting those who use our services at the heart of what we do. Our strategy will be supported by other strategies, such as our Digital and Data Strategy, Research and Evaluation Strategy and Quality as an Organisational Strategy. These will direct and shape how we will meet our priorities and work in the future.

To put this strategy in place effectively we will work regularly with the third sector, community representatives, service users and the public to identify how we can collectively tackle the priorities identified in this strategy. Our new strategy will run until 2035 and set out our long-term direction in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We have welcomed the 'five ways of working' set out in the act, and we will use these to help develop and put in place our strategy over the coming years.

Our role

We will work with our national and international partners, including through networks such as the Internal Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI), to help deliver our strategy. As the Welsh member of IANPHI, and the national

public health organisation for Wales, we will work with our partners to protect and improve the public's health. In our strategy, we have made sure that we describe where we can add the most value for the people of Wales and our partners.



Our priorities under this strategy (see section 6)



Influencing the wider determinants of health



Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention



Promoting mental and social well-being



Delivering excellent public health services to protect the public and maximise population health outcomes



Promoting healthy behaviours



Tackling the public health effects of climate change

For each priority, we have set outcomes that will help us see the progress we have made in delivering the strategy. We aim to clearly describe how we:

- **inform** our partners about current and emerging threats to health in Wales, the factors which influence health, well-being and inequalities, and the evidence that shows we need to take action;
- **advocate** for action to improve and protect health and reduce inequalities in health;
- **mobilise** our partners to take action to improve health and well-being and reduce health inequalities; and
- **deliver** public services that we know have been based on available evidence.

We will regularly review our priorities to make sure they are still valid in light of changes both within and outside of our organisation

Delivering our strategy

As we begin to put our strategy in place, we recognise that we are working in an unpredictable and changing environment. This is reflected in our strategic risks (anything that might stop us delivering our expected outcomes), which we have reviewed and updated alongside our strategy. We need to show that we can respond quickly and positively to new threats and opportunities. As a learning organisation, we will make sure our services have the most value and the biggest effect. This means we will prioritise those areas where we can have greatest effect and be flexible when responding to new issues.

We will regularly review our priorities to make sure they are still valid in light of changes both within and outside of our organisation. This will be supported by public health evidence, identifying future threats (such as antimicrobial resistance), feedback from those who use our services and engaging with our stakeholders.



Background to our strategy

Context

A number of key issues have guided how we have developed our strategy.

Global issues

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals have played a major part in developing our strategy and have continued to influence us. We want to make sure everyone can achieve their best health and well-being. The Agenda provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the links between, and need for, urgent action to end

poverty and other deprivations, along with action to improve health and education, reduce inequality and tackle climate change. This is closely in line with the worldwide One Health approach, which recognises that the health of people, animals and ecosystems are closely linked, depend on each other and need to be sustainably balanced.

Welsh legislation and policy

A number of key pieces of public health legislation have come into effect in Wales in recent years, which we support and which have shaped our strategy. This legislation challenges public-sector

bodies to consider the longer-term effects of their decisions, and to support a greater focus on preventing and addressing inequalities.

The legislation includes:

- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- The Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020
- Socio-economic Duty 2021

A Healthier Wales (2018) sets out plans for the long-term vision of a 'whole system approach to health and social care' in Wales, focused on health and well-being and preventing illness. It aims to help meet future health and social-care challenges, including an ageing population and lifestyle changes.

Our priorities have also been guided by the Minister for Health and Social Services' priorities for NHS Wales, particularly the support and public health expertise that we can contribute to the wider system. This will help make sure that quality, safety, prevention and good health outcomes are at the heart of the NHS in Wales. We also have to consider our legal duties, including our role as category-1 responder (assessing and dealing with emergencies).

Health in Wales

The Covid-19 pandemic has had significant effects on the people of Wales, and its social and economic consequences have been felt unequally across our society. They have disproportionately affected those who already had the greatest health and social needs. In Wales, life expectancy and healthy life expectancy have failed to increase over the last decade, and we continue to see obvious and continuing inequalities in health.

Typically, people living in the poorest parts of Wales already die more than six years earlier than those in the least deprived areas. The current

cost-of-living crisis will add to what were already increasing differences in health between the well-off and the less well-off.

'Rising to the Triple Challenge of Brexit, Covid-19 and Climate Change for health, well-being and equity in Wales', shows that the people of Wales have been significantly affected by all three of these challenges. For example, Brexit, Covid-19 and climate change have affected employment, trade and other factors which affect people's health, such as alcohol use, the cost of food, and mental well-being.

Wales is a country:

- with an ageing population and low fertility rate, which will increase our dependency ratio (the number of dependants aged from 0 to 14 and over 65, compared with those aged 15 to 64) in the future;
- which has clear and continuing health inequalities, with healthy life expectancy for women and men almost 17 and 12 years lower in the most deprived areas compared with the least deprived;
- where the gap between the least and most deprived areas in Wales for premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (those not caused by an infection) has been increasing in recent years, and the rate of premature deaths from this cause is now almost two and a half times greater in the most deprived areas compared with the least;
- where around one-third of people are following less than three of the five 'healthy behaviours';
- where one in seven of adults in Wales smoke;
- where loneliness is twice as likely among people living in the most deprived areas; and
- where there is a large backlog of patients waiting for treatment (in January 2023, there were around 576,000 patients on treatment waiting lists in Wales).

This information and our understanding of health in Wales has influenced our strategy and how we have decided our priorities. Our priorities and the action that we will take under each one is our response to

these challenges. We will continue to use the latest public health information and evidence to help us assess the effect we are having and adapt where necessary.

Our purpose statement

Our purpose is 'working together for a healthier Wales'.

Our mission

We help all people in Wales live longer, healthier lives. With our partners, we aim to increase healthy life expectancy, improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities for everyone in Wales, now and for future generations.

Together, our teams work to prevent disease, protect health, and provide leadership, specialist services and public health expertise. We are the main source of public health information, research and innovation in Wales.

Vision

By 2035, we will have achieved a healthier future for Wales. We are working towards a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives and where

everyone in Wales has fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being.



Values

Our values are:



working together



with trust and respect



to make a difference

Main outcome

It is essential to understand our progress in Wales towards our vision for a future where people live

longer and healthier lives.

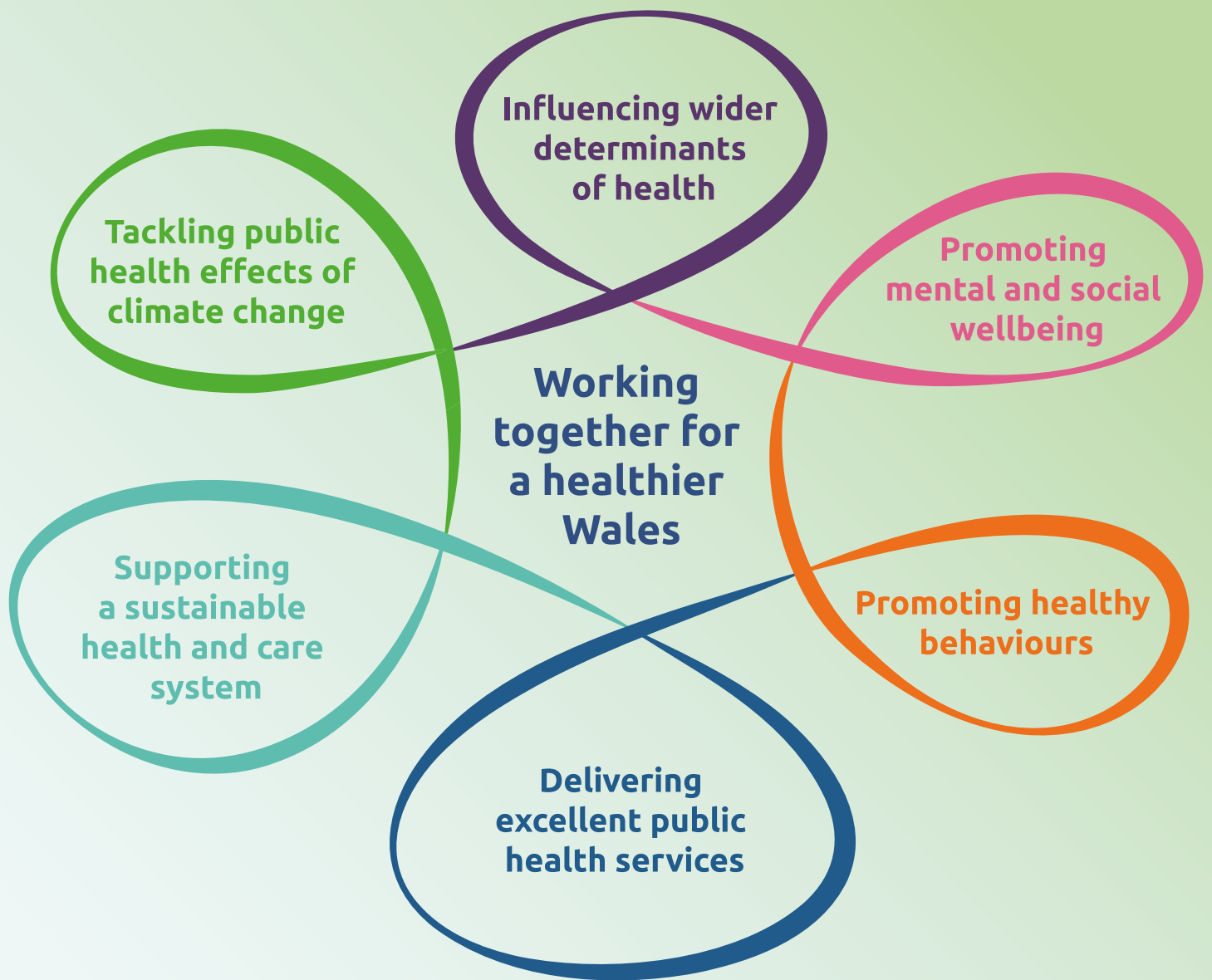
The main health outcome we want to influence and support is:

to increase healthy life expectancy and narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy between the least deprived and the most deprived.

We have chosen this as it is one of Wales' National Well-being Indicators and national milestones. We will measure it through healthy life expectancy at birth, including the gap between the least and most deprived. While it is not just us who are responsible for this outcome, or for every factor that affects health and well-being, we will use it to help us understand the overall health and well-being of the people of Wales. It will also guide us as we deliver our strategy.

We will monitor the outcomes that we have identified in this strategy and develop specific ways of measuring our performance. This will allow us to monitor our contribution and help us evaluate how effective we have been and adapt where necessary. We will also monitor our outcomes across all the protected characteristics. (The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of these.)

Our Priorities 2023-2035



We are Public Health Wales.
We exist to help all people in
Wales live longer, healthier lives.

Our values are **working together**
with **trust and respect** to **make a difference**.



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Our priorities

Each priority is supported by our commitment to reducing health inequalities

The following sections set out our priorities under this strategy. The priorities have been shaped by health in Wales, wider global factors and threats,

and key legislation and policy. Our strategic risks have also played a key part in developing our priorities.

The delivery of our six priorities recognises the importance of:

- primary prevention (reducing the incidence of disease);
- secondary prevention (detecting the early stages of disease and intervening before full symptoms develop); and
- tertiary prevention (managing disease after diagnosis to slow or stop its spread).

This is reflected, where relevant, within the scope of each priority.

Each priority is supported by our commitment to reducing health inequalities. We will use the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future

Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to help put each priority in place, including by working with our partners.



Strategic priority 1: Influencing the wider determinants of health

Introduction

Everyone in Wales deserves the opportunity for good health. However, too often people become ill or die too early because they do not have the essential factors needed for good health. These include education and skills, a warm safe home, fair work (where workers are fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where their rights are respected), money and resources, access to affordable and sustainable transport, and a healthy physical environment. These factors, or 'determinants of health', affect us from our earliest experiences and throughout our lifetime.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 allows us to work with others to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. We will bring our public health expertise and evidence, working at many levels to influence these determinants and increase opportunities for a fair chance of good health. This has never been more important. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how all our efforts to improve and protect health are affected by these determinants. Currently, the cost-of-living crisis is disproportionately affecting the health of our most disadvantaged communities, increasing the effect of poverty on communities in Wales.

Influencing wider determinants of health



Overview – why this is a priority

The wider determinants, often called ‘the causes of the causes’, affect health outcomes in Wales. Different experiences of these causes lead to differences in health outcomes, or health inequalities, which in turn are responsible for ill health and a large number of the total early deaths. People from the most disadvantaged areas of Wales can expect to lose over a decade of life lived in good health compared with those from the least disadvantaged areas (13 years for men and 17 for women). These unfair differences continue across generations.

We can inform, advocate for, and mobilise action on these determinants, locally, nationally and internationally. As a trusted national public health organisation, we can support a ‘health-in-all policies’ approach, informing and influencing policies and how they are put in place.

We are uniquely placed to bring a public health perspective to areas of Welsh national policy relating to health and well-being, such as housing, education, planning, transport, economic development and government spending. We can connect partners and policies to show how they can contribute to improving health and reducing health inequalities. This joint approach and our expertise can also support the wider system, including health boards and local authorities across Wales. We can work with agencies to influence policies outside of Wales where appropriate, including when considering the commercial factors that affect health.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 says we must work to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being by contributing to all of the act’s seven well-being goals. These goals are similar to the wider determinants of health, as they focus on the factors contributing to good health and well-being now and for future generations. Also, under the Socio-economic Duty 2021, we have to consider inequalities that result from social and economic disadvantage. Taking action on the wider determinants of health also contributes to the UK’s duties under the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

From the post-industrial heritage of Wales, through austerity, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, the effects of determinants in Wales will continue into the future, both in ways we can predict and ways we cannot.



What this priority covers

The main wider determinants of health include:



good education and skills



good-quality housing, that is accessible and affordable



fair work



well-designed, sustainable transport, and



enough money and resources



a built and natural environment that supports our health and well-being.

Wider determinants relate not only to our living conditions, but also include things that affect these conditions, such as economic and commercial forces, political priorities and the unequal distribution of income, wealth and power. These are also called fundamental causes. The relationship between health and these determinants acts both ways, as health and illness can affect our social, economic and environmental well-being. For example, when we are healthy, we are better able to learn or to take part in fair work.

We will work with our partners, using evidence and expertise to inform, advocate for and mobilise action to reduce health inequalities and improve people's health and well-being throughout their lives. We will use evidence from many sources to do this, ranging from community experiences to monitoring key determinants, to international research.

We will add to this evidence base through advising on and leading research and evaluation related to the wider determinants.

We will organise action on determinants and develop a shared understanding of how we can affect different sectors and areas of policy which are dependent on each other. Our efforts will depend on the evidence we have of the importance of these determinants for people's health, as well as our unique ability to influence them.

Objectives

By 2035:

- Wales will be a place where people have a more equal chance of living a fulfilling life, free from preventable ill health;
- the health and well-being of future generations will be less affected by poverty and inequality;
- children will have a better and fairer opportunity to learn and to fulfil their potential;
- transport, housing and planned developments will support people, families and communities to live healthier lives;
- major decisions will have been made on wider determinants, guided by health impact assessments (which identify positive or negative effects of policies, plans and proposals on health and well-being);
- public and private-sector employers will be supported to improve the opportunity to take part in fair work, which will support health and well-being;
- we will have helped influence decisions on the wider determinants to reduce inequality and improve health, through our work with the Senedd and the Welsh Government; and
- we will have supported positive change on the wider determinants of health with partners locally, nationally and internationally to achieve better health and well-being for everyone.



Strategic priority 2: Promoting Mental and Social Well-being

Introduction

Mental and social well-being are the foundations of lifelong health and well-being. If the wider determinants provide the conditions for good health, then social and mental well-being can be seen as the foundations for healthy people and communities.

Mental well-being covers how we think, how we understand our emotions and those of others, how we form healthy relationships, how resilient we are, and how we make sense of our experiences. Our mental well-being is strongly influenced by the environment in which we live, work, play and learn. The early years are central to developing the foundations for mental well-being and are influenced by interaction between an infant and their parents or carers and by the relationship between parents in the home. If these conditions in childhood are not safe and nurturing, people may experience long-term effects as a result of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Promoting mental and social wellbeing

Critically, wider social networks within families and communities contribute to the social well-being of individuals and communities – the sense of belonging and being connected to a community and creating networks which aim to involve everyone is important. Communities like these are less likely to experience loneliness and isolation and are more resilient when faced with adversity and trauma.



Overview – why this is a priority

There is growing evidence that mental well-being is essential to our ability to respond to the challenges of day-to-day life and how we look after ourselves. A high level of mental well-being can reduce the effect of the wider determinants, but low mental well-being can worsen their effect. People who enjoy a high level of mental well-being will be better able to take steps to improve their own health and well-being and that of their family and wider community. They are more likely to take better care of themselves and get greater benefit from healthcare. When mental well-being is low, people sometimes use alcohol, drugs or food as a coping mechanism. This in turn increases the risk of health problems, and the person is less likely to ask for help or access care at an early stage.

The School Health Research Network gathers information on the health and well-being of secondary school children in Wales. It has found a decline in children's mental well-being compared with before the Covid-19 pandemic. For many people, the pandemic highlighted the importance of their relationships with others – loss of contact with friends and family had a negative effect on their mental well-being. Many people did things to help their mental well-being, such as going for walks, spending time with family, gardening, cooking, crafts and outdoor exercise. We have the potential to increase people's awareness and understanding of the relatively simple steps they can take to both protect and promote their mental well-being, particularly during times of stress.

We will all experience low levels of mental well-being at different times of our lives – when we lose someone we love, experience the breakdown of a relationship or lose a job, or during periods of ill health. However, for some people and groups, low mental well-being can be long term which, along with chronic stress, can have a significant effect on their health. Trauma and adverse childhood experiences, without positive protection and support, can affect people's mental well-being throughout their lives.

We are social animals, and human interaction is essential for good mental well-being. The growing focus on loneliness and isolation in policies recognises the importance of this. However, unhealthy relationships can be the basis of abuse, violence or exploitation. The National Survey for Wales 2021/2022 showed that, on average, 13% of people in Wales felt lonely and 58% felt lonely sometimes. The figures were slightly higher among young people aged 16 to 24 and the lowest among older people.



What this priority covers

This priority is about laying the foundations of good health and well-being throughout our lives. While our work under this priority will contribute to preventing mental ill health, this priority is not only about mental health or illness. In simple terms, mental well-being can be defined as 'feeling good and functioning well'. We will focus on the different foundations of mental and social well-being for individuals and within communities. This will include:

- psychological factors – such as self-esteem, self-confidence, self-determination, and self-acceptance;
- emotional literacy – the ability to recognise and respond appropriately to our emotions;
- healthy relationships – developing the skills to form and maintain good-quality healthy relationships with others;
- resilience – our ability to respond to the day-to-day challenges of life in a way that does not harm our health;
- reducing stigma and discrimination; and
- a 'whole of society' approach, in which individuals, organisations, communities, systems and the society in which people live are aware of the effect of trauma and are able to respond.



As the foundations of these skills are often laid in early childhood, we will build on the work of our First 1000 Days programme to strengthen infants' mental well-being. We will support parents and carers to create the best conditions for their child's social and emotional development. This will include continuing to highlight the wider social, economic and environmental conditions that give children the best start in life and supporting policymakers to assess how their policies affect families.

We will also continue to help develop and put in place a 'whole school' approach to mental and emotional well-being. We will support how school curriculums are put in place, so that our schools can create opportunities and lead by example to build self-esteem and self-confidence, develop emotional literacy, create a sense of belonging and being connected, and strengthen healthy relationships. We will continue to focus on preventing violence among children and young people. This will contribute to preventing all forms of violence in Wales, achieving what we currently can only imagine – a Wales without violence. We will develop programmes that produce and share evidence for effective action to promote mental well-being and the conditions in communities that support social well-being.

We will support employers to promote good mental well-being and encourage a sense of belonging and inclusive social networks. We will continue our work with Health Education and Improvement Wales to add to the knowledge and skills that help promote mental well-being as a basic part of all healthcare interactions. We will continue our work to keep to a minimum the long-term harm that results from adversity and trauma at any point in our lives. We are committed to helping deliver this programme of work, which will help Wales to become a nation that encourages everyone to be non-judgemental, kind and compassionate.

The pace of change of technology has been rapid over recent years and has transformed how we communicate and interact with each other. Our work will also recognise the need to be mentally resilient online. We will incorporate this approach across our work plans.

Finally, we will continue our work using mental well-being impact assessments to help create the best conditions for good mental health. Working with others, we will also aim to add to the evidence for effective action and make sure that we can monitor change and evaluate action.

Objectives

By 2035, we will have:

- worked with others to reduce inequalities in mental and social well-being;
- collected, interpreted and shared evidence for effective action to support policy development, legislation and action to promote mental and social well-being and reduce inequalities;
- helped to reduce the effect of adverse childhood experiences and other forms of trauma;
- supported action based on evidence to promote and protect mental well-being, including in education, at work and in communities;
- supported the wider system to review or evaluate policy or programmes for their effect on mental and social well-being and inequalities throughout people's lives;
- developed strong and purposeful partnerships that will give people more opportunities to improve their mental well-being by getting involved with the things that keep them mentally well; and
- worked with partners and parents to help children achieve the best social and emotional development.



Strategic priority 3: Promoting Healthy Behaviours

Introduction

Promoting healthy behaviours includes action to reduce disease, disability and early death that result from things such as smoking, our diet, how active we are and how we use alcohol and other substances.

Our behaviours are closely linked to the social, economic and environmental factors outlined in our earlier priorities. The opportunities to make healthier choices are influenced by our social and economic circumstances, by where we live and, importantly, by industries that produce a range of unhealthy products. These factors are one of the main ways that the wider determinants lead to ill health.

Our behaviours can also be a result of our mental well-being. Many of us will recognise how easy it is to eat unhealthy foods – often as a treat when we are feeling low – or how we may drink more alcohol when we feel stressed or anxious. For some people these behaviours become long-term habits, and they may need support to find healthier ways to cope. In these situations, people often need help to make changes, even when they are motivated to do so.



**Promoting
healthy
behaviours**

Overview – why this is a priority

The leading causes of death (particularly early death in Wales), such as heart and other circulatory disease, some cancers and respiratory disease, have strong links to health behaviours as risk factors. A significant proportion of these deaths are due to things such as smoking, diet and alcohol use. Behavioural factors also play a part in the conditions which lead to disability, such as musculoskeletal diseases, and substance use.

Smoking is still the leading risk factor for poor health. This is partly because, for some diseases, the risk remains for several years even after someone has stopped smoking, particularly if they smoked for a long time. It is also due to the wide range of conditions that smoking causes, including heart and circulatory disease, dementia, cancer and lung disease. However, smoking rates have reduced significantly over recent decades, and the most recent figures suggest that only 13.8% of adults in Wales currently smoke. The Welsh Government launched their Smoke Free Wales strategy in 2022, with the goal of reducing smoking rates to below 5% by 2030.

Our diet and being overweight or obese has far more impact than tobacco use. As rates of smoking are falling, the number of overweight, and particularly obese, people is increasing. In 2022, 62% of adults in Wales were either overweight or obese and 25% were obese. This means that their weight is at a level where the risk of poor health is high. Rates of obesity are higher in people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The Welsh Government launched Healthy Weight Healthy Wales as a long-term strategy to reduce the number of overweight and obese people. Our diet, combined with how much alcohol we drink and whether we are active, is the leading cause of being overweight or obese. Just over half of adults (56%) do the 150 minutes of moderate or vigorous activity a week recommended by the UK Chief Medical Officers. However, we know that the greatest health gains are to be made from helping the 30% of Welsh adults who are currently inactive (that is, active for less than 30 minutes a week) to become more active.

Being active depends on a range of things, including where we live, whether we have easy access to places to walk and cycle or to frequent and reliable public transport (as an alternative to a car), whether we can afford to go to a gym or leisure centre regularly, and the kind of work we do. We are becoming increasingly less active, and the need to create opportunities to be active is a relatively recent development that would not have been recognised by people 100 years ago.

Food poverty is a significant and growing problem – many families struggle to provide food at all and are much less able to focus on whether that food is healthy or not. Reversing changes which have happened over decades will not be easy, but if we do not take action, disease related to obesity will continue to increase.

During 1990 to 2016, disease caused by alcohol and drugs increased. Alcohol use is seen as normal in our society, yet the World Health Organization issued a statement in January 2023 in which it said ‘when it comes to alcohol consumption there is no safe amount that does not affect health’. Also, guidelines produced by the UK Chief Medical Officers in 2016 spoke about ‘low-risk drinking guidelines’ rather than safe levels.



What this priority covers

This priority will focus mainly on behaviours which have the largest effect on preventable ill health, disability and early death. We are also aware of how these behaviours contribute to the health of the planet as well as the health of individuals.

We will continue our work with the health board and Directors of Public Health and local authorities to deal with the issues of smoking and obesity. We will take a similar approach to preventing harm from the use of drugs and alcohol. We have seen measurable benefits to this joint approach to tobacco use, particularly through the Help Me Quit programme, and we will aim to build on this to achieve a smoke-free Wales.

We will work to support the wider system in measuring change. This will include reducing unhealthy behaviours and the gap between those in the most and least well-off groups in society. The basis for many of these behaviours begins in childhood, and we will continue to support healthy behaviours from birth. This includes working with our partners to increase the number of women who breastfeed and advise on the best time to introduce babies to solid food. We will also develop a 'whole school' approach to food, which will include making sure that nutritional standards are in line with the latest scientific guidelines and seeing whether this policy improves the eating habits of children and young people.

We will take a commercial determinants of health approach, which focuses on the private- sector activities that affect population health. This approach aims to recognise and take action on those industries who manufacture products which actively encourage behaviours that are harmful to health. Wales has been active in introducing legislation to reduce the harmful effects of tobacco, and we will give the Welsh Government evidence

that will help them make sure Wales remains among the leading countries in the world in tackling these issues. To do this, we will need to work closely with public health agencies in the UK and around the world to make sure we contribute to and benefit from taking action together.

We will also work to make sure that we can identify new and emerging behaviours which may be encouraged or influenced by industry. There is growing concern about issues such as gambling-related harm, and most stakeholders believe that this is at least partly due to the role of the industry. Also, there has been increasing concern about the number of young people who are vaping and the role that new attractive and flavoured single-use products may play. Confusion over cannabis and how harmful it is results partly from the actions of industry, either through promoting cannabis-derived products without active ingredients or supporting its decriminalisation.

We will investigate and respond to new and emerging health behaviours to make sure that we can promptly provide evidence and advice to the Welsh Government, the wider health system and the public. We will also continue to use behavioural science and the best available information and evidence from a growing range of sources so that we have the best possible understanding of what influences unhealthy behaviour. While we recognise that we should mainly aim to influence the wider environment (making the healthy choices the easy choices), supporting individuals will remain a main part of our work. We will support those working with individuals in the health and care system through programmes such as Making Every Contact Count.

Objectives

By 2035, we will have:

- worked with others to reduce ill health and death from the use of products which are harmful to health, and promoted behaviours that lead to good health;
- produced, interpreted and shared evidence for effective action to support policy, legislation and action on tobacco, diet, inactivity, and alcohol and other substances;
- developed and tested new approaches and co-ordinated programmes of work across the wider system;
- methods in place for quickly assessing the effect of new and emerging behaviours on public health; and
- reviewed or evaluated the effect of policy or programmes.



Strategic priority 4:

Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention

Introduction

We have a national leadership role, supported by using information and evidence, when developing public health strategies and working in partnership with NHS Wales and communities on public health activities. The health and care system is working together to make sure healthcare is sustainable and fit for current and future generations. Our approach will reflect evidence-based prevention activity and action.

The ambition of A Healthier Wales is for everyone to have long, healthy, happy lives, and to set out how the health and social-care system will work together to deliver sustainable healthcare. Sustainable

healthcare is high-quality care that does not damage the environment, is affordable now and in the future, and has a positive effect on society. Our work includes moving services out of hospital into communities and having more services which detect illness or prevent it altogether. This will include helping people manage their own health and long-term illnesses. It will also make it easier for people to remain active and independent in their homes and communities.



**Supporting
a sustainable
health and care
system**

Overview – why this is a priority

More people in Wales are living longer and needing more health and social care than before, but resources are stretched. An ageing population, inequalities in health and health outcomes, and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in huge pressures on the health and care system. This is having a significant effect on patients and their families, relating to access to treatment, waiting times and overall outcomes. These issues are likely to be further affected by other immediate pressures, such as the cost-of-living crisis, which will further widen the gap between the better-off and the less well-off. As part of the recovery from Covid-19, we have an opportunity to support physical developments and improvements, particularly in relation to secondary prevention.

Current pressures within the NHS and social care are having a significant effect on health outcomes and raising questions about the long-term future of the whole system. While there are several immediate pressures, it is still extremely important that we focus on prevention, early intervention and health equity to develop care that meets people's current and future health needs, reduces harm and improves outcomes.

We have a key role in supporting the health and care system to develop detailed care plans which focus on good outcomes. We will work with key partners to co-ordinate efforts across the system. We learned a lot from the pandemic about future infectious diseases and how healthcare agencies are able to work together to meet healthcare challenges. We will build on this to make sure we work together to achieve fair health outcomes for people. There is significant evidence of the benefits of primary and secondary prevention in relation to reducing the incidence of disease and dying from them, including many cancers and cardiovascular disease.

Our aim is to prioritise resources to get the best possible benefits of healthcare for people in Wales, making sure we meet the needs of individuals and groups and focus on reducing health inequalities. We can improve people's health by preventing and detecting disease early or improving health-related outcomes through using effective interventions or treatments.



What this priority covers

This priority is central to our role in shifting the balance of our health and care system in Wales to focus on prevention, early intervention and health equity in order to improve people's health. We will:

- have a leadership role in working with NHS Wales and care agencies to support public health, with a particular focus on evidence-based preventative measures;
- have a clear role in healthcare public health locally and nationally, through developing a Public Health Wales Framework for Health Care Public Health with key stakeholders;
- help lead the way in co-ordinating and supporting how prevention, early intervention and health equity are transformed throughout the whole system;
- promote ways to better understand our population and use impact assessments to identify 'at risk' groups to help see how to deliver the most effective interventions, particularly with secondary prevention;
- identify vulnerable people, marginalised groups and local health inequalities, advise people on how to meet their healthcare needs and apply these principles to healthcare services we directly provide, for example screening programmes; and
- lead and support the healthcare system in Wales to use its role to influence and affect health and well-being.

We will support our partners by assessing and planning the health needs of certain groups. This will include considering the effect of taking a preventative approach to include primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

We will also provide and co-ordinate resources with the aim of making sure everyone in Wales now, and in the future, has access to effective and efficient healthcare that meets their needs. This will support the wider system in understanding health and well-being in Wales, centred around reducing death and disease. We will also make sure there is a consistent approach to collecting and sharing information nationally, including information about health behaviours, patients, clinicians and the wider workforce.

We will support a framework for reducing health inequalities which can be used consistently across Wales to deal with the differences in care plans (for example, through audits). This will maintain the quality of patients' experience, safety and outcomes. It will also make sure we use resources efficiently, through setting priorities, reviewing options and assessing our effectiveness.

We will also support the transformation of primary care (healthcare services in the community, such as GPs, dentists and so on). By leading the way on this in Wales, we can make sure that improvements in healthcare public health and people's health, and in reducing inequalities can guide wider primary-care reform. We will also help lead the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network, focusing on the use of quality improvement approaches, while learning together with NHS Wales.

Objectives

By 2035, we will have:

- supported the system to shift the balance of health and care towards prevention, early intervention and equity;
- made the most of opportunities to prevent disease through focusing on secondary prevention and making every contact with patients count, and making sure resources are allocated fairly;
- supported moving care closer to home, making sure it is centred on the person;
- provided information, analysis, research and evaluation evidence to improve the health and well-being of people in Wales and tackle health inequalities; and
- supported our partners to use the whole of the healthcare system to positively influence the health and well-being of communities.



Strategic priority 5:

Delivering excellent public health services to protect the public and maximise population health outcomes

Introduction

Protecting the public from the effects of infections and exposure to environmental problems (such as air pollution) and delivering our national screening programmes are our main responsibilities. We do this through our health-protection and infection-control services and national screening programmes.

We deliver, monitor and evaluate seven screening programmes, and co-ordinate the all-Wales managed clinical network for antenatal screening. The aims of these programmes are either to reduce the rate of disease (for example, through cervical screening) or improve early diagnosis to reduce the effect of disease (for example, breast screening).

Delivering excellent public health services



Overview – why this is a priority

Protecting people from infections and environmental threats is the key to achieving a healthier Wales. The Covid-19 pandemic, and its ongoing implications, highlighted the serious threat to health from communicable diseases and reinforced why health protection and health security will remain a public health priority in an interconnected world.

The pandemic has shown how connected we are with others around the world, and how we must be prepared to act on global threats to health, including identifying future threats. We will take on board what we have learned from the pandemic and make sure we are as prepared as we can be for future threats. One of these threats is antimicrobial resistance (where infections become harder to treat with drugs), and we must focus our services on reducing this. Connecting with our partners around the world so that we are aware of threats to health as they emerge and can put systems in place to deal with them will be important as we work to protect future generations.

We will deliver excellent screening programmes that are safe, effective, people-centred, prompt, efficient and fair, and which have been evaluated and proven to improve people's health.

How we deliver our services to protect the health of the people of Wales is crucial. The Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 highlights the 'duty of quality' we have to provide care within a learning environment. We believe providing our services in this way will deliver the best outcomes for the people of Wales.



What this priority covers

We have defined excellence through the Institute of Medicine's 'dimensions of quality', which are also used in the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020. These are:

- **safety** – services should be able to show, through reliable evidence, that they are safe and that interventions have more benefits than risks;
- **effectiveness** – services should be evaluated and proven to be effective;
- **patient-centredness** – services should be able to show that they regularly and actively engage with those who use them and stakeholders to assess their experiences as part of continuing to improve;
- **timeliness** – services should be able to respond promptly;
- **efficiency** – services should be able to show that improvements to health are being achieved in the most efficient way; and
- **equity** – services should keep to a principle that decides what is fair when distributing healthcare.

Because we recognise the importance of continually innovating and improving our services, we also have the following additional measures of excellence.

- **Innovation and continuous improvement** – excellent public health services always look to innovate and improve in order to achieve excellence.
- **Education and training** – excellent public health services are those that invest in staff, making sure they have the right skills to achieve excellence.
- **Internal and external collaboration** – excellent public health services are those that work together across the organisation and the public health system to achieve our outcomes.

This priority focuses on all public and patient services we provide, particularly screening, health protection and microbiology. However, as we put

this strategy in place, we will also aim to use this approach for the other main public health services that we deliver.

National population screening programmes

We will provide -screening programmes to help improve people's health in Wales. The aim of these programmes is either to reduce the rate of new cases of disease or improve early diagnosis to reduce the effect of disease. We offer screening to everyone who is eligible for it, but the number of people taking part varies. One of our main priorities

is to improve this (by sharing the pros and cons of screening). Our ability to provide our screening programmes was greatly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. We will recover our two remaining delayed screening programmes through an ambitious programme that will use new technology, and use innovation aimed at improving practices.

Health-protection and infection services

Responding to the challenges of communicable diseases in Wales involves providing programmes and services, the importance of which were highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic. We will learn from the experiences of our health-protection and infection services during the pandemic to make sure we are prepared for the challenges of future threats.

We will provide these programmes and services with our wider services, making them more reliable and sustainable. We have a leadership role, working with and advising our partners on strategies to make sure infection is diagnosed and treated early and effectively to control the spread. Our key services, including the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, support this response, which will help us understand the effect of communicable diseases and interventions on the people of Wales.

Covid-19 and other respiratory infections continue to show that immunisation is the most important way of preventing disease and reducing the severity of infection, alongside managing outbreaks effectively and controlling infection. The Vaccine and Preventable Disease Programme is the national programme for immunisations and vaccinations.

We will also play a necessary role in protecting people from environmental threats, such as air pollution. Our environmental public health services make sure that we reduce the number of people who become ill or die as a result of environmental threats and increase the number of people whose health benefits from a good environment. We will do this through support, policy guidance, expert advice and monitoring.

Our microbiology services will continue to provide world-class diagnostic and clinical advisory services and Specialist and Reference Microbiology Services to support how outbreaks are identified and managed.



Innovation and future threats

Our public health services will always aim to achieve excellence through innovation and improvement. Public health genomics focus on populations, health services and public health programmes, rather than individual clinical care, through using advances in human and pathogen genomics to improve public health and prevent disease. Our Public Health

Genomics Programme will help us take the lead in improving outcomes for people in Wales. We will continue to lead the development of guidance on the use and effectiveness of antibiotics across the NHS, with the aim of reducing cases of infection and so the demand for antibiotics.

Objectives

By 2035, we will have:

- delivered excellent, people-centred screening programmes that are improving people's health by giving them fair opportunities;
- developed and adapted our screening programmes in line with current evidence and innovation to improve care plans;
- provided a comprehensive bowel screening programme and a sustainable diabetic eye screening programme;
- put in place new UK National Screening Committee recommendations for people in Wales;
- experienced fewer infections associated with health and social care and only use antibiotics appropriately;
- given clinicians the evidence they need to make faster diagnoses so patients can be treated quickly and accurately (through our microbiology services, using world-class, modern techniques developed through continuous innovation and improvement);
- better identified communities at increased risk of harm from communicable diseases, leading to interventions to reduce the number of people who become ill or die from these diseases or environmental threats;
- helped lead and support excellent immunisation and vaccination programmes, resulting in much less ill health; and
- provided information promptly to help stop disease being passed on and reduce the effect of communicable diseases on individuals and healthcare services.

Strategic priority 6:

Tackling the public health effects of climate change

Introduction

Climate change is recognised as the most significant public health threat of the century, and a danger to physical health, mental health and well-being. It threatens all areas of life that affect our ability to achieve and maintain good health. In October 2021, the World Health Organization declared climate change to be the single biggest health threat facing humanity, due to rising global temperatures.

The earth has already warmed by 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels as a result of human activity. Urgent action is needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C to prevent devastating harm to health. Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better choices of transport, food and energy leads to improved health, particularly through reduced air pollution.

The many effects of climate change are affecting the social and environmental determinants of health (clean air, enough food, safe homes and access to services). The effects are already being felt in Wales, both from physical threats to life through extreme weather, and anxiety related to climate. In short, climate change is already adversely affecting the health of people in Wales and will continue to do so well into the future.

Tackling public health effects of climate change



Overview – why this is a priority

We know that some communities in Wales are likely to be more affected by climate change than others, and some are less likely to be able to take action to respond to these changes. These include lower-income households in areas that regularly flood, and people living with disabilities or chronic (long-term) conditions, and their carers. The effects of climate change are likely to make existing health inequalities in Wales worse. We must make sure that we have efficient and fair adaptation policies and interventions in place that help to reduce these inequalities.

Wales has the environment and legislation to support the transformation needed to tackle climate change. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 makes sure that the climate is considered when everyday decisions are being made. This world-leading legislation places a duty on us to support the seven well-being goals put in place by the act.

We have a long history of work on climate change and sustainability, inside and outside of our organisation. We set up our Health and Sustainability Hub to help put in place the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Hub has helped develop our approach to sustainability and to reducing our carbon-dioxide output. With our key stakeholders, we have begun a comprehensive health impact assessment of climate change in Wales, to inform decision-making and policy on adapting to climate change.

In 2021, we carried out a review of the Climate Change Risk Assessment for Wales report (CCRA3). This report assessed 61 risks and opportunities from climate change, across sectors such as health, housing, the natural environment, business and infrastructure, and risks from the international effects of climate change. The report identified a significant number of risks that needed urgent public health action.

Since 2021, work has been underway across Public Health Wales and the wider health system to respond to the climate emergency. This has involved including activity on climate change in existing programmes, for example, Healthy Working Wales and Improvement Cymru, or developing new action programmes such as the Greener Primary Care Wales Scheme. We also published our NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan. This sets out how we plan to address the climate emergency in Wales through reducing the carbon footprint (the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere) of the health sector (including us).

Key parts of our role reflect the range and amount of work we have done on climate change and sustainability. This includes developing, understanding and interpreting evidence to support action, providing interventions that work and giving technical advice to partners (such as advice on policy, changing behaviour, communication, monitoring and guidance).



What this priority covers

The International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI) plan for action on health and climate change sets out how national public health organisations have a critical role in dealing

with climate change. The plan is in line with our own views about the work needed to respond to the health effects of climate change and has been used as a basis for action.

We need to do the following:

Protect, promote, and educate:

- Protect people and communities from the health effects of climate change, with a particular focus on equity and reducing health inequalities.
- Educate colleagues from across the health and care system about climate and health risks, making sure they feel able to act and respond to changing demand.
- Promote healthy environments and lifestyles, using changes in health behaviours and health impact assessments to influence policy and decision-making.
- Help people and communities adapt to and reduce the health effects of climate change.

Response and action:

- Make sure policy advice and guidance, based on evidence, is given across the public health system in Wales.
- Co-ordinate action and contact with other UK nations and agencies and across the public health system in Wales.
- Make sure we are prepared for and respond to extreme weather, together with other partners, in a way that meets the needs of our most vulnerable communities.

Monitor and evaluate:

- Develop our climate monitoring so that we can check the effects of climate change on health and well-being and guide further action from agencies, including incorporating early-warning systems.
- Carry out research into the public health effects of climate change, and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing them.
- Evaluate the health effects of climate policies in Wales.
- Evaluate the effect of our own ways of working.

Objectives

By 2030, we will have:

- supported the Welsh Government's ambition of achieving a net zero NHS Wales (reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible and reabsorbing any remaining emissions by natural or technological means).
- a carbon-negative organisation (removing more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than we release);
- have worked with our partners to respond and take action on climate adaptation and reducing the effects of climate change;
- have a reliable monitoring, research and evaluation system that allows us and our partners to prioritise action based on evidence; and
- have a workforce that delivers climate sensitive public health across all areas of the organisation.



Putting our strategy into action

We will put our strategy into action through developing digital solutions that meet people's needs. We will focus on building on innovative approaches that work, putting those who use our services at the heart of what we do, and steadily and constantly focusing on improving the quality of our services.

The Health and Social Care Quality and Engagement (Wales) Act, particularly the 'duty of quality' and the 'duty of candour', will be a key factor in putting our strategy in place. Supporting this will be a small number of other strategies and approaches.

People Strategy

Our People Strategy sets out our vision for all those who work for us (or want to work for us) and our role supporting the development of the wider public health system workforce. Our aim is to develop a flexible, sustainable and thriving workforce that can, and wants to, successfully deliver our Long-term Strategy.

We launched our People Strategy in March 2020 and have made significant progress with the nine themes that make up the strategy. During 2023, we will adjust them to make sure they are aligned with our new priorities and other key strategies.

Digital and Data Strategy

Our Digital and Data Strategy will use the modern technology people expect and make better use of the information we and others have in order to

provide the maximum effect on health and well-being outcomes in Wales.

We have also developed the following five main digital principles to guide our work.

- **User needs first:** People and their needs are at the heart of what we do.
- **Accessible and equal:** Everyone who needs our services can find and use them.
- **Open by default:** By sharing openly and transparently, we increase the value of our services and earn the trust of others.
- **Efficient:** We reuse what we can and test our assumptions before we carry them out.
- **People-focused:** We value the people who build and run our services.

Our Digital and Data Strategy will focus on a number of main areas, including building on solid foundations, making sure that we deliver our

priorities, and improving public health through digital technology.

Research and Evaluation Strategy

Our aim is to be an outstanding learning and developing organisation that transforms public

health by focusing on research and evaluation that will help make a difference to practice.

Our research and evaluation principles are as follows:

- **Open by default:** Developing and sharing areas of research interest, publishing outputs targeted to the needs of those who use our services, and being clear about what we are leading or supporting.
- **Inclusive:** Designing approaches and solutions with communities when working with them, collecting and evaluating equalities information, and working with communities to include those whose trust we don't have.
- **Multidisciplinary:** Celebrating the range of our work and combining the skills and diverse expertise we need, leading to a joint model of research and evaluation.
- **Influential:** Guiding our funders to address gaps in evidence, research and evaluation needed to help us achieve our health aims.
- **Joined up:** Making sure we have shared standards for products and a clear and comprehensive package of research, and that we work with others to deliver our services.

International Health Strategy

Our international health vision is to be a globally connected and inspiring national public health organisation, working towards a healthier and fairer

Wales to address worldwide challenges and shared goals.

Our International Health Strategy aims to:

- bring international and worldwide health activity together to demonstrate our good work and celebrate good practices and successes;
- strengthen existing international health activities, opportunities and partnerships and help develop new ones;
- help provide opportunities for professional development and recruiting and retaining staff, supporting the organisation as an inspiring workplace; and
- promote and strengthen Wales' leading role and effect on the international stage.

Engaging people and communities

Our Approach to Engagement document covers a wide range of involvement activities, from individuals and communities sharing their experiences, to communities united on a specific topic, to giving people ways to influence issues that affect them.

We will focus on involvement and collaboration – two of the ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Our approach must put people at the centre of our work.

Behavioural science

Our Behavioural Science Unit will provide specialist expertise and enable us to use behavioural science routinely to improve and protect people's health and well-being. Supporting and guiding our

stakeholders and adding to their capabilities will help significantly change how we achieve our priorities.

Budget Strategy

Our Budget Strategy will support us by encouraging financial sustainability, improvement and value. We will make sure that our resources are aligned to our priorities and we will continue to stay financially stable within a challenging external environment.

We will challenge ourselves to make sure that we are delivering the best value for the people of Wales, and our stakeholders, through using our resources efficiently and effectively.

Quality as an Organisational Strategy

We aim to be the perfect example of an organisation in relation to quality, improvement and innovation. We will use these values when putting our new strategy in place. This aim is supported by the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020, particularly its duties of quality and candour.

The aim of Quality as an Organisational Strategy (QoS) is to help an organisation provide services and products that focus on the user and help create an environment where our staff can enjoy and take pride in their work.

Conclusion

This strategy sets out our long-term ambitions and how we will tackle the health challenges facing Wales in the coming years. While the challenges we face are difficult, we have shown in recent years what we can achieve through the commitment, professionalism and expertise of our staff.

Our strategy gives us the opportunity to build on and welcome innovative ways of working, use the potential of huge amounts and various types of information and new technologies, and work across professional boundaries and with a range of partners.

We have given our staff the power to come together, drawing on their knowledge and skills, to help shape our strategy. It will be through their expertise, skills and knowledge that we will succeed in delivering the strategy.

We will meet head on the challenges and opportunities Wales faces in the coming years and succeed through the commitment, professionalism and efforts of our staff. We will work to create an environment that encourages innovation and working in a flexible way.



Crystal
Mark
24094



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