

Our Healthy Future



If we are healthy, we are more likely to be happy. We all want good health for ourselves, our families, friends and neighbours.

We have a new approach to help everyone live longer with better health. It's called Our Healthy Future.

It wants to:

- Improve health and wellbeing in Wales.
- Do this more quickly than we have done before.
- Keep everyone healthier for longer.
- Get rid of the differences between social groups and areas.
- Get rid of the barriers that stop people leading a healthy life.
- Bring everyone together to make it happen.

Why do we need it?

Our Healthy Future is about the health of the whole community. A lot of good can be achieved by working together.

Many things affect our health and the way we feel. There are genetic or biological factors and the way we live our lives can make a difference.



If we don't smoke, don't drink too much, eat a balanced diet and keep active we are likely to live longer and healthier lives. Health Challenge Wales is the national focus for action to improve health. It helps us to make the small changes that can lead to better health.

Our health and how we feel are also affected by things such as how much money we have, our homes and where we live. How we got on in school and whether we have a job can also make a difference. The world around us has a big impact on health and how we feel.

Our Healthy Future focuses on supporting us to change to healthier behaviour and improving the economic, social and physical environments we experience. It also spells out what areas we need to focus on to get the best results.

Where we are now

The health of the people of Wales has improved in the past 150 years as public health action brought clean air, pure water, and safe food. Widespread vaccination and modern drugs have all but eliminated many diseases. Medical advances have cured or curbed the impact of other illnesses. And the NHS gives access to health care for all.

Wales has never been healthier. People are living longer, fewer babies die in their first year, and fewer people die of heart disease. But we still lag behind other parts of the UK, and of Europe, and the world. We could do better.



There are still big differences in health within Wales. People living in the poorer parts of Wales are almost twice as likely to die before they are 75 as those in the richer areas.

There are also unfair differences in health between people as a whole and some social groups. These include disabled people, some ethnic minorities, the long-term unemployed and people who are homeless.

The size and nature of these gaps is no cause for pride. The human and financial cost of ill health is huge and growing. We should not put up with the unfairness that favours the health of some over others, and Wales can't afford it.

Tackling these gaps is a good investment in a fair and prosperous society.



The six action areas



Our Healthy Future lists six areas for action from now through to 2020.



One: Good health and wellbeing through the lifecourse: action to improve health and wellbeing through all the stages of life – from cradle to grave.

This means:

- Giving children and young people a good start in life.
- Starting before birth and through the early years.
- Promoting good health and wellbeing at home, at school and in the community.
- Helping children and young people to avoid ways of living that put their health at risk.
- Helping people to have a healthy and fulfilled working life.
- Creating safe and healthy workplaces and reducing the impact of common health problems.
- Stopping people falling out of work from ill health.
- Helping older people to have the knowledge, skills and support to make informed choices about living healthy and full lives.



Two: Reducing inequities in health: action to reduce the gap between the health of the poorest people in Wales and those who are better off.

This means:

- Tackling the unfair and avoidable differences in health by improving people's social and economic prospects and by helping them to avoid action which can damage their health.

Three: Healthy sustainable communities – where people can live, work and play healthily.

This means:

- Building strong communities that promote health and wellbeing.
- Preparing for, and protecting against, risks to health – such as disease outbreaks, food poisoning, and the impact of climate change.
- Joining up health, social care and wellbeing planning and services.



Four: Prevention and early intervention – preventing avoidable ill-health.

This means:

- Preventing ill health by putting more effort into trying to get people fit and healthy.
- Picking up and tackling problems as quickly as possible, through careful planning and design of services.

Five: Health and wellbeing is a shared goal – we all have a responsibility for looking after and improving health.

This means:

- Working with people and organisations across Wales to find out what they can do.
- Government, local and national, thinking how they can do more to promote and protect health.



Six: Strengthening the evidence - ensuring that all our policies and actions aimed at improving health are based on good evidence, and are checked to assess how well they work.

This means:

- Using the best evidence to target our efforts.
- Monitoring what works well or not in Wales and using the findings to do even better.



Who will do this?

Many organisations and individuals are working to protect and improve health in Wales – and we all have some responsibility for creating a healthier nation. The Welsh Assembly Government believes it must take a lead in initiating action and in helping co-ordinate these efforts. Local government and the voluntary sector also have a vital role.

Working with its partners, the newly reformed NHS will have a key role. It will focus much more effort on preventing ill health. As part of the reform, there is a new body, Public Health Wales. It provides specialist knowledge, information and advice to protect and improve the people's health. By supporting action by the NHS, local government and wider society, it can help tackle the causes of poor health and reduce their impact.



What are the priorities for action?

Action will be stepped up on key priority tasks in all of the following areas:

- Reduce inequities in health
- Improve people's mental wellbeing
- Improve health in the workplace
- Cut the level of smoking
- Increase physical activity
- Reduce unhealthy eating
- Stop the growing harm from alcohol and drugs
- Cut the number of teenage pregnancies
- Cut the number of accidents and injuries
- Increase immunisation rates

To read more about Our Healthy Future see:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/ocmo>

Our Healthy Future is not set in stone – it will be reviewed and, if need be, amended, regularly. As part of this approach, you can send comments about Our Healthy Future to:

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