



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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Our Healthy Future



Technical working paper

October 2009

Minister's Foreword

We place a high value on good health for ourselves and our families. We often use phrases such as 'Look after yourself' and 'Take care' because we want our families and friends to avoid harm and keep well. Encouragement to do all we can to look after ourselves is vital and can set us on the road to good health and wellbeing.

On top of individuals taking responsibility for their own health, all our partners have a significant role to play. This includes the Welsh Assembly Government, the NHS, Local Government, the third sector and the private sector. This role is discharged through the health services and programmes we provide, but also in ways that might be less obvious, such as through our housing, transport, environment, education, and economic development policies and the ways in which we involve and empower people and communities. Partnership working across policy areas and organisations are therefore vital if we are to give everyone the opportunity to enjoy the best possible health and wellbeing wherever they live.

We have made real progress, but we are not there yet. Realising the '*One Wales*' ambition to 'transform Wales into a self-confident, prosperous, healthy nation and society, which is fair to all' requires us to work harder to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in Wales. In particular, it is vitally important that we have inequities in health firmly in our sights. Such inequities are unfair and unjust and tackling them will be the cornerstone of public health policy and practice over the coming decade.

In October, the seven Local Health Boards and Public Health Wales became fully operational and ready to lead in responding to and shaping the NHS contribution to Our Healthy Future. In doing this, they will build on the collaborative working which we already enjoy with local government and the third sector.

Developing Our Healthy Future to this point has been a positive exercise in collaboration and partnership working. I am grateful to the Task and Finish Groups whose assessment of key public health themes and challenges has greatly contributed to the development of this document. Account has also been taken of the response to our e-document to raise awareness about Our Healthy Future.

This document sets the forward agenda for public health. But I do not intend that it will be fixed in time; it will be regularly reviewed and amended to reflect both our changing social, economic and environmental circumstances and the availability of new evidence on health and wellbeing issues and their potential solutions. As part of this approach, I would welcome comments on this document which should be emailed to OurHealthyFuture@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK or sent to Our Healthy Future Team, Health Improvement Division, Department for Public Health and Health Professions, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff. CF10 3NQ.

Edwina Hart AM OStJ MBE

Introduction

Our Healthy Future renews the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to improve the quality and length of life and to ensure that everyone in Wales has a fair chance to lead a healthy life. It sets a long-term vision in which:

- children and young people are given a good start in life that supports their long-term health and wellbeing.
- everyone aspires to, and is supported to achieve, a healthy and fulfilling working life.
- older people have the knowledge, skills or support to make informed choices about living independent and fulfilled lives.
- the health of individuals experiencing greatest disadvantage is improving to the levels found among the more advantaged.
- healthy sustainable communities – places where people want to live, work, play and flourish – are sought for all.
- health and social services place greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention.
- health and wellbeing is a shared goal for all.
- our public health policies and interventions are based on good evidence and monitored.

To realise this vision, Our Healthy Future aims to:

- increase the pace of change in improving health in Wales.
- increase years of healthy life.
- achieve fairer health outcomes.
- reduce (or eliminate) barriers to leading a healthy life.
- provide the strategic direction for national and local public health.

Our Healthy Future is important because unhealthy environments and behaviours, and the illnesses they cause, place a considerable and avoidable burden on individuals, communities and organisations, including the NHS. For individuals research¹ has shown that taking exercise, eating a healthy balanced diet, not smoking and drinking below the recommended limits can add a potential 14 years to life. While for the NHS, the financial cost of avoidable ill health is huge, continues to grow and is unsustainable in the future.

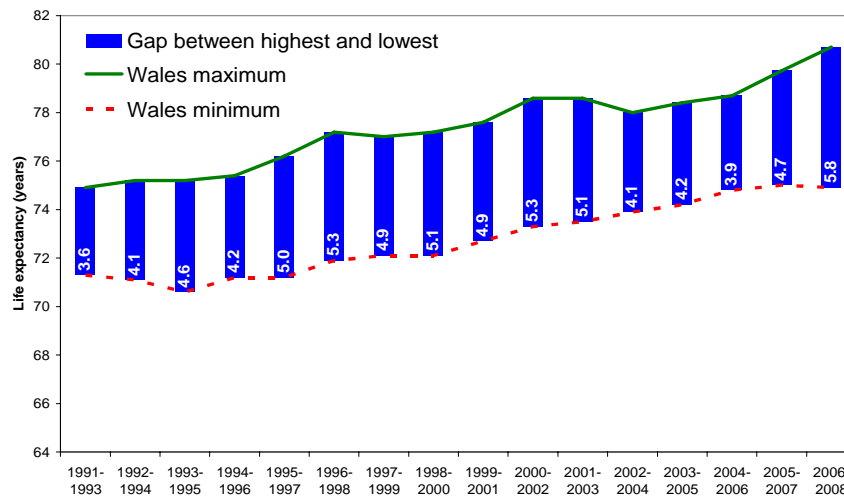
Background

The annual reports of the Chief Medical Officer² show that health in Wales is better than ever before. Average life expectancy is up, fewer babies are dying in the first year of life and fewer people are being injured or killed as the result of accidents. But, this does not tell the full story. People living in the most deprived parts of Wales are almost twice as likely to die before the age of 75 as those in the least deprived parts of the country. Small distances can mean big differences in the health of some communities. Inequities in health are also seen for certain groups, such as the disabled, some ethnic minorities, looked after children, asylum seekers, gypsy travellers, the long term unemployed and homeless people.

Gaps in health outcomes between different areas and social groups have always existed. However what is troubling is that in some cases these largely avoidable gaps have not reduced significantly, and may even have increased, over the past 20 years.

Figure 1 shows that the gaps between the highest and lowest life expectancy amongst men in Wales have increased since the early 1990s.

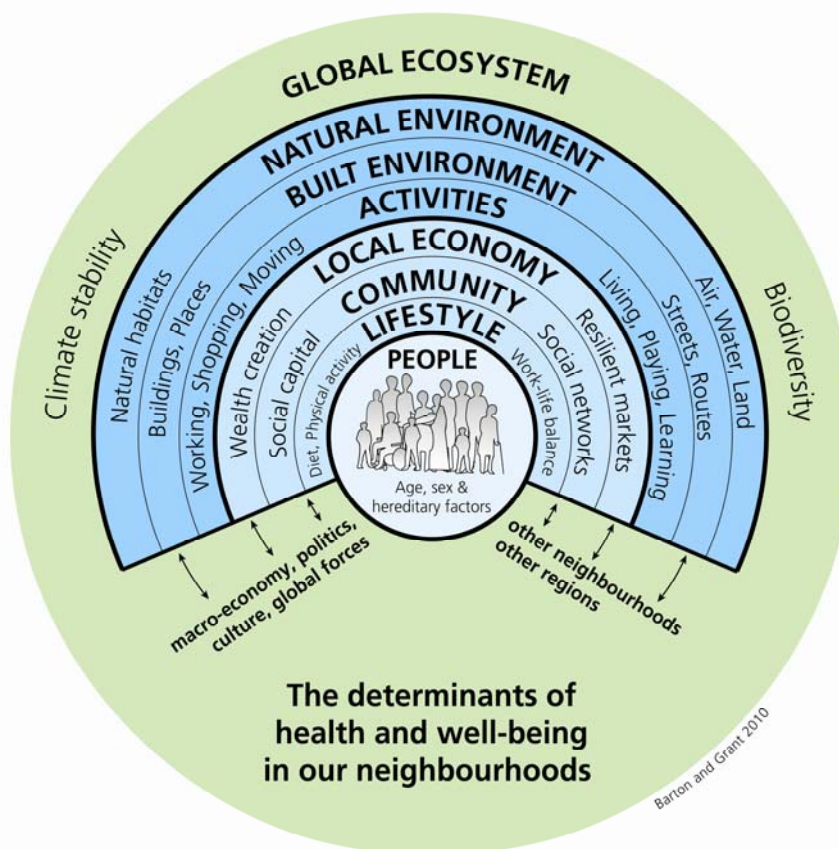
Figure 1: Male life expectancy at birth in Wales (1991-1993 to 2006-2008).



Source: Office for National Statistics

As well as social and geographical inequities, there are other challenges to face in creating a healthy future for all, such as climate change, an ageing population, the rising levels of obesity, harm from alcohol misuse, long term chronic conditions, and the threat of infectious disease. The financial uncertainty from late 2008 onwards could also pose challenges, due to its potential impact on a broad range of social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing, such as those illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The determinants of health and wellbeing in a global ecosystem.



Barton, H. and Grant, M. (2006) A health map for the local human habitat. The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, 126(6), pp252-253.

To address these social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing requires commitment from a broad range of policy areas, such as housing, sustainable development, transport, culture and sport, education and skills, economic development, and rural affairs. It also requires commitment by and across the public, private and third sector organisations.

Health and social services have a key role to play in working across policy areas and sectors to deliver health improvement and fairer health outcomes for all. The Welsh Assembly Government has recently restructured the NHS and the public health system to eliminate the internal market and establish a more joined up approach to improving health and wellbeing. Since 1 October 2009 there have been seven integrated Health Boards, with specialist public health services delivered through a new organisation called Public Health Wales. These specialist public health services will be delivered nationally and at health community and local levels, in partnership with the seven Health Boards, Local Government and the third sector.

The Welsh Assembly Government, working with the new organisations, will be producing a 5 Year Service, Workforce and Financial Strategic Framework. The plan will include an overall analysis of the current and future service and financial status of NHS Wales, including UK and international benchmarked comparisons. It will be the foundation upon which the success and reputation of the new organisations will be established. Our Healthy Future will be embedded in this framework.

Developing Our Healthy Future

The 2006 *Review of Public Health Functions of National Health Organisations and Units in Wales*³ recommended changes to the planning, commissioning and delivery of public health services to create a more effective and unified public health system in Wales. This has happened with the establishment of Public Health Wales from 1 October 2009.

In terms of planning, the report said: *‘A unifying public health strategy for Wales should be developed. This will shape long-term objectives for organisations and units delivering the public health function, and enable a performance framework to be developed to measure progress against public health issues.’* In light of the recommendations of the review and the Cabinet’s support for the Chief Medical Officer to develop a public health strategic framework, the Minister for Health and Social Services approved the development of Our Healthy Future.

To inform the development work, the Minister for Health and Social Services approved the formation of seven Task and Finish Groups⁴ to be established with membership representing key stakeholders. The Groups considered areas of key public health opportunities and challenges to 2020 :

- socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions;
- children and young people;
- healthy eating, food and fitness;
- health-related behaviours and risk;
- limiting long-term health conditions;
- mental health and wellbeing; and
- strengthening local public health delivery.

Each group was asked to consider current and future challenges, ambitions for 2020, gaps in existing policies and the need for further action. More information about the work of the Task and Finish Groups is available at www.wales.gov.uk/health. In addition, a web-based

engagement exercise was undertaken in March 2009⁵ which sought to raise awareness of, and to obtain early feedback on, the draft aims, ambitions and themes of Our Healthy Future.

This technical working paper

Drawing on the work of the Task and Finish Groups, the feedback from the engagement exercise and international best practice⁶, six strategic themes have been identified which will help set a clear forward agenda for the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners in the new Health Boards, Public Health Wales, Local Government and the third sector.

The themes are:

1. Health and wellbeing through the life course
2. Reducing inequities in health
3. Healthy sustainable communities
4. Prevention and early intervention
5. Health as a shared goal
6. Strengthening the evidence and monitoring progress

The six themes are interconnected and centre on the twin aims of 'Our Healthy Future' as illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 3: Strategic themes



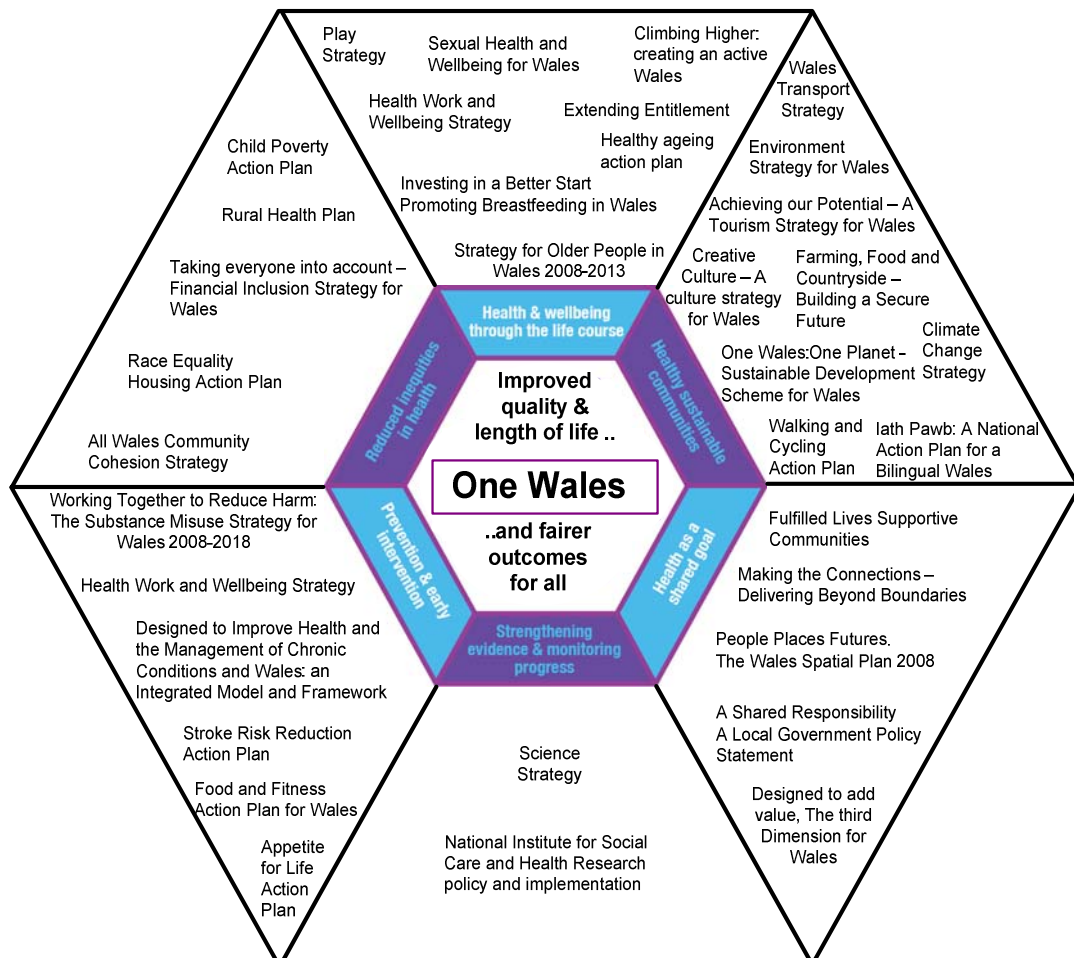
The themes provide the framework for the sections in this document. Within each section, the relevant overarching long-term ambition is stated and key challenges are identified, along with a small number of high level actions for the next three to five years which are itemised in tables.

These actions have been selected to make progress with the following priorities:

- Reducing smoking prevalence
- Increasing participation rates in physical activity
- Reducing unhealthy eating
- Stopping the growth in harm from alcohol and drugs
- Reducing teenage pregnancy rates
- Reducing accident and injury rates
- Improving mental wellbeing
- Improving health at work
- Increasing vaccination and immunisation rates to target levels
- Reducing health inequities

It is intended that the high level actions will build on the wide range of existing strategies, policies and action plans which already seek to improve health and reduce health inequities in Wales. Examples are illustrated in Figure 4.

Fig. 4: Examples of high level policies and action plans.



1. Health and wellbeing through the life course

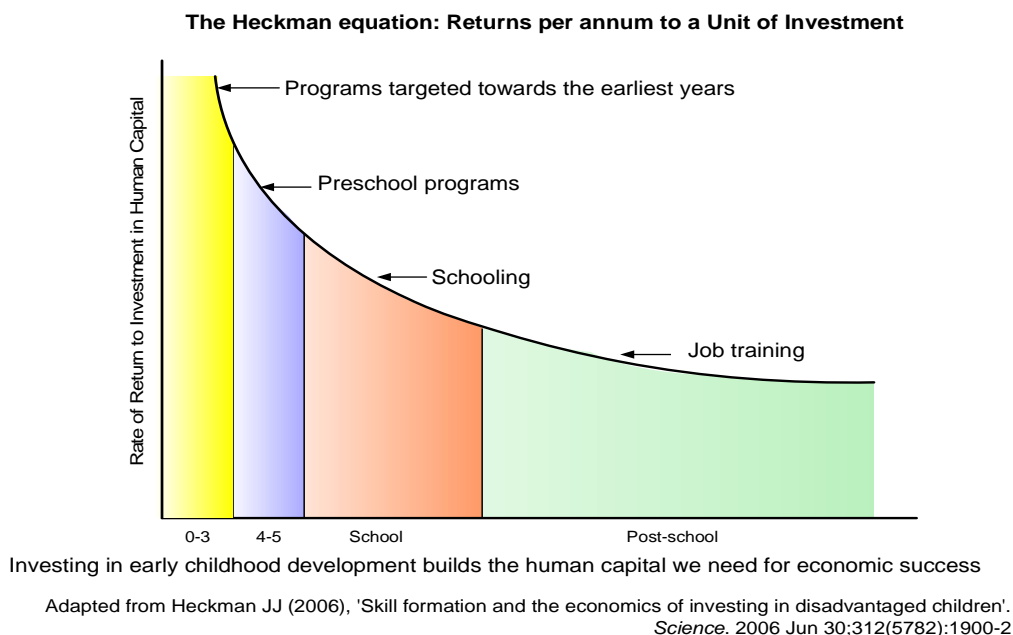
The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and the decisions they, their families and others make can promote and/or detract from their health and wellbeing. Adopting a lifelong health and wellbeing approach will therefore be essential if Our Healthy Future's aims are to be achieved.

Children and young people

Children and young people will be given a good start in life that supports their long-term health and wellbeing.

The foundations of good health are laid during pregnancy and infancy and built upon in the school-age years. A range of risk factors, such as maternal smoking and poor nutrition in pregnancy, poverty in childhood, poor educational attainment, and neglect and rejection by families, have been associated with negative health and wellbeing outcomes both in the short term and over the lifespan. Conversely, positive outcomes have been linked to a number of protective factors, such as a supportive family environment. Tackling risk factors for lifelong health and wellbeing in the early years and building children's resilience to adversity will therefore be central in taking this agenda forward. As can be seen from Figure 5, intervening in the early years has also been shown to be a good investment, as it provides a greater rate of return than that for later intervention.

Figure 5: Rates of return to investment in human capital



The Welsh Assembly Government has recognised the importance of investing in a good start to life for children and young people. It has adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷ which it has adapted into seven core aims - Our Start, Our Skills, Our Health, Our Action, Our Voice, Our Safety and Our Future. These seven core aims form the basis of Children and Young People's Plans⁸ which have been developed by local authorities and their partners and are central to the principle of children and young people's involvement in the development of policies that affect them.

The Welsh Assembly Government has developed a range of strategies, policies and services to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Of particular importance is the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services⁹ which aims to improve the quality of, and reduce variations in, health and related services for pregnant women, children and young people. It has also developed policies addressing key determinants of children and young people's health and wellbeing, such as educational attainment, child poverty and parenting skills¹⁰. A new child poverty strategy and a parenting action plan are being developed which, along with the School Effectiveness Framework¹¹, will provide major opportunities for health and wellbeing outcomes to be achieved through action across the Welsh Assembly Government.

The 2008 Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor for Wales¹² has identified a number of areas where greater effort is required. For pregnancy and pre-school children, these include reducing the number of pregnant women who smoke (which will also positively impact on the levels of low birth weight babies and asthma and wheezing among young children) and the levels of childhood dental decay, as well as increasing breastfeeding rates and the uptake of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination. The new Local Health Boards, working with Public Health Wales, local government and the third sector, will need to address these issues, particularly in the most deprived communities where action on them is most required.

Children from the most deprived communities in Wales are also the most likely to suffer accidents both within the home and outside, though there is evidence of some narrowing of the gap between the least and most deprived areas in rates of childhood pedestrian injuries. Overall, injuries remain the leading cause of death in children and young people. Building on the 2009 Child Safety Report Card for Wales¹³, the charity Children in Wales is developing a children's injury prevention strategy which will need to be considered by the Welsh Assembly Government and the new Health Boards.

The Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor also raises concerns about the levels of teenage pregnancy, smoking, alcohol consumption and cannabis use. In 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government launched its ten-year substance misuse strategy, Working Together to Reduce Harm¹⁴, and it has recently consulted on a draft working paper, Sexual Health and Wellbeing for Wales, 2009-2014¹⁵, both of which have a particular focus on children and young people. In the near future, the Welsh Assembly Government will be gaining additional powers to address young people's exposure and access to tobacco products, while the Task and Finish Groups raised the issue of children and young people's exposure to tobacco smoke in homes and private cars. The Groups also recommended the development of a new tobacco control strategy for Wales, a view echoed by health professionals and the third sector.

Recognition also has to be given to the links between smoking, alcohol and drug use and sexual activity. For example, early onset of smoking has been shown to predict alcohol-related problems in late adolescence and young adulthood, while adolescent alcohol and drug misuse has been associated with risky sexual behaviour. The Welsh Assembly Government will consider the potential for an integrated prevention framework for young people to better address risk behaviours during adolescence.

Two further issues that the Task and Finish Groups identified as being of particular concern are childhood obesity and the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. The Foresight report, Tackling Obesities: Future Choices¹⁶ suggested that in the UK two-thirds of children will be overweight or obese by 2050. In 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government published the Food and Fitness - Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Young People in Wales Five Year Implementation Plan¹⁷. A progress report on the first two years of activity¹⁸ has been published, with a further review of progress in

delivering the plan due in 2010; this will enable consideration to be given to the next phase of work on this issue.

During 2007/08 the tragedy of suicide among young people was highlighted. A national action plan, Talk to Me¹⁹, was published which seeks to reduce the rates of suicide in the future. More generally, it is recognised that we need to change the culture around mental health issues, reducing the stigma and discrimination which surrounds it. For children and young people, the Welsh Assembly Government has the Schools-Based Counselling Services Strategy²⁰ in place to provide them with someone to turn to if they need help and support. However, creating opportunities and environments to maximise mental wellbeing and build resilience remains crucial. The Welsh Assembly Government will be launching the post-consultation Mental Health Promotion Action Plan in 2010 which will have children and young people as one of its strategic action areas.

Both obesity prevention and the promotion of positive mental health feature strongly in the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS).²¹ More than 90% of state schools are involved, with schools working towards the independently assessed WNHSS National Quality Award. Early work has taken place to extend the scheme into pre-school settings and colleges, promoting healthy environments for a broader age of children and young people as well as a wider range of employees who work with this age group.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Maximise opportunities for health and wellbeing through the School Effectiveness Framework, child poverty strategy and parenting action plan.	Welsh Assembly Government	Ongoing
Review health improvement for pregnant women and pre-school children.	Local Health Boards	Spring 2011
Consider Children in Wales' children's injury prevention strategy.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2009/10
Launch post-consultation sexual health and wellbeing action plan.	Welsh Assembly Government	Spring 2010
Develop a tobacco control strategy for Wales.	Welsh Assembly Government	Autumn 2010
Scope an integrated prevention framework for children and young people.	Welsh Assembly Government	Spring 2011
Review Food and Fitness - Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Young People.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2010/11
Launch post-consultation mental health promotion action plan.	Welsh Assembly Government	Autumn 2010
Increase uptake of the WNHSS National Quality Award and expand the concept to pre-school settings and colleges.	Welsh Assembly Government / Local Government / Public Health Wales	Ongoing

The working age population

Everyone will aspire to, and is supported to achieve, a healthy and fulfilling working life.

The behaviours and lifestyles developed during childhood and adolescence are often cemented in adulthood. Such behaviours and lifestyles can potentially predict future health both for the individual adult and their families. Building on the work with children and young

people, the Welsh Assembly Government has policies and programmes, such as Mental Health First Aid ²², Stop Smoking Wales ²³ and the National Exercise Referral Scheme ²⁴, which make significant contributions to improving the health and wellbeing of adults. In addition to these, the workplace provides a further arena for engaging with the adult population.

Dame Carol Black's 2008 review of the health of Britain's working age population, *Working for a Healthier Tomorrow* ²⁵, was very clear about the positive links between health and work. 'Recent evidence suggests that work can be good for health, reversing the harmful effects of long-term unemployment and prolonged sickness absence', though it was recognised that some aspects of work can pose a risk to a person's health. There is also evidence that being out of work affects the next generation, with children in workless households suffering higher rates of psychiatric disorders and behavioural and conduct problems. They are also more likely to experience worklessness themselves in adult life.

Beyond the costs to individuals and families, there are costs to employers and the taxpayer from sickness absence and worklessness associated with working age ill-health. Dame Carol Black's review estimated these costs to be more than £100 billion a year for Britain - more than the annual budget for the NHS. More limited data for Wales just covering the costs relating to back pain shows these at £90 million for Incapacity Benefit payments, £150 million for healthcare costs and £250 million for sickness absence costs. The current recession is likely to add to these costs and in the longer term the impact of an ageing workforce on these costs will need to be considered.

The Welsh Assembly Government's response to Dame Carol Black's report ²⁶ was published in December 2008. It outlined how through *Healthy Working Wales* ²⁷, the Welsh Assembly Government is engaging and supporting employers, health professionals and individuals to create healthy workplaces and to minimise the impact of common mental health, musculoskeletal and cardio-respiratory problems, the three major causes of sickness absence and health-related worklessness.

Healthy Working Wales, for example, provides GPs with advice on health and work issues for their patients and ensures that small businesses can access timely advice on occupational health and safety issues. The response also outlined the Welsh Assembly Government's support for those not in work. This includes those in receipt of incapacity benefit, young people not in education or training, people with complex needs and adults who are unemployed or economically inactive.

More recently, a report on occupational health services in Wales ²⁸ has recommended that a national occupational health service should be provided by the NHS and made viable by contributions from the private sector. The Minister for Health and Social Services has established a Task and Finish Group to draw up costed proposals for such a service.

Another area where further work has been suggested relates to mental health and employment. Mental health problems, including stress, are a significant cause of sickness absence, lower productivity in work and worklessness. In fact, almost four out of ten adults of working age with a mental health problem are unemployed. Research ²⁹ has shown that employers are far less likely to employ somebody with a history of mental illness than somebody with a physical disability. Not only do these facts exacerbate the social exclusion of people experiencing mental illness, it also represents a significant loss to Welsh society and the economy. A mental health and employment strategy for Great Britain is being developed which will feed into the developing Health, Work and Wellbeing Action Plan for Wales.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Develop a Health, Work and Wellbeing Action Plan for Wales.	Welsh Assembly Government	Autumn 2010

Older people

Older people will have the knowledge, skills or support to make informed choices about living independent and fulfilled lives.

A higher proportion of the people of Wales than in the UK as a whole are aged 50 and over (37% and 34%, respectively). Over the period to 2031, this age group is expected to grow in Wales by 28% to 1.42 million people or 43% of the population. This increase is mainly due to increases in life expectancy over the past 30 years, though not all of these added years are spent in good or fairly good health. While the overall life expectancy in Wales at age 65 is 16.7 years for men and 19.5 years for women, the healthy life expectancy is 12.3 and 13.3 years, respectively, lower than the UK average. Further details on the health and wellbeing of older people will be given in the forthcoming Older People's Wellbeing Monitor.

One scenario suggested by population data is a Wales in which there are increasing numbers of older people becoming dependent on support systems, at the same time as there are fewer working age adults available to provide financial and caring support and rising expectations of the quantity and quality of services. Such a scenario would pose significant challenges for health and social care services, families and carers, a challenge the Welsh Assembly Government has begun to address. It has developed a Strategy for Older People in Wales³⁰, the second phase of which reflects key determinants of health and wellbeing - social inclusion, material wellbeing, healthy and active ageing and access to appropriate health and social care. This is underpinned by the National Service Framework for Older People³¹ which established national standards and services in health and social care and the Healthy Ageing Action Plan³² which provided guidance at a local level on interventions to promote the health and wellbeing of older people. In addition there are a range of strategies, action plans and programmes which address specific topics of significance to the health and wellbeing of older people, such as chronic conditions management³³, malnutrition,³⁴ dementia³⁵ and stroke.³⁶

A common theme of these strategies and action plans is that chronic disability and poor health are not the inevitable consequences of ageing and that there is much that can be done to promote good health and wellbeing in later life. Active ageing has been described as 'Living life to the fullest extent, for as long as possible. Physical and mental health, mobility, hope, family and friends support and active ageing lifestyle'³⁷. It is likely to have greater significance in the future, as people may need to have longer working lives and retire later, though employment for older people can promote mental health and wellbeing.

Ideally the foundations for active ageing are set at the very beginning of life and reinforced throughout the life course. In updating the Healthy Ageing Action Plan, the Welsh Assembly Government will take a life course approach, particularly looking at building the knowledge, self confidence, skills and support to make informed choices for an active older age.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Update the Healthy Ageing Action Plan	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2010/11

2. Reducing inequities in health

The health of individuals experiencing greatest disadvantage will improve to the levels found among the more advantaged.

Inequalities in health and wellbeing between different areas and social groups are proving extremely resistant to policies and actions which seek to narrow the gaps. For example, progress has been made in reducing the socio-economic gap in deaths from heart disease but at the same time there has been a growing socio-economic gap in deaths from cancer.

This problem is not new, as was evidenced in the 1980s by the Black³⁸ and Acheson³⁹ reports. Nor is Wales unique in having difficulty in addressing health inequalities. As noted by Mackenbach⁴⁰ in a report for the European Union, 'at the start of the twenty-first century, all European countries are faced with substantial inequalities in the health of their populations'.

The Welsh Assembly Government, while committed to addressing inequalities in health, has recognised the difficulty of the task. In line with the report, '*Targeting Poor Health*'⁴¹, it has adopted a dual strategy for action. This involves action outside the NHS, or in partnership with the NHS, to address the socio-economic determinants of health inequalities, as well as action within the NHS to reduce inequalities in access to services.

Activity which has supported this dual strategy has included: the Sustainable Health Action Research Programme (SHARP)⁴² which sought to identify effective ways of improving health and wellbeing in some of Wales' most deprived areas; the Inequalities in Health Fund which supported 67 projects to address inequalities in coronary heart disease; and the adoption of a new model for allocating health resources which was based on the direct measurement of health need. The Welsh Assembly Government has also developed strategies to assist some of Wales' most deprived social groups such as refugees and gypsy travellers⁴³, along with a range of current and emerging policies to support action on the wider determinants of health and wellbeing such as child poverty⁴⁴, financial inclusion and community cohesion.

More recently, the Chief Medical Officer⁴⁵ has called for a focus on inequities rather than inequalities in health. The term 'health inequalities' means a measure of the differences and disparities in the health status of individuals and groups. This is usually determined by measures such as death rates (mortality) and levels of illness (morbidity). However, the attention on reducing inequalities often obscures the need to ensure equity and fairness. As noted by the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health⁴⁶, 'Not all health inequalities are unjust or inequitable. If good health were simply unattainable, this would be unfortunate but not unjust. Where inequalities in health are avoidable, yet are not avoided, they are inequitable.' The Commission believes that health equity can be achieved within a generation.⁴⁷

As a first step in taking up the challenge laid down by the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, the Welsh Assembly Government will develop a strategy to tackle health inequities in Wales. This will recognise that complex, multifaceted and collective action is required. Among the issues to be considered will be:

- the contribution of policies and programmes that address social, economic and environmental determinants of health;

- the role of primary care services in proactively and systematically identifying and supporting patients with risk factors for the major causes of death and chronic disease;
- the further efforts required to reduce the levels of smoking which remains a major cause of ill health and the most important single factor in producing health inequities;⁴⁸
- the potential for improving health knowledge and skills (health literacy) to increase people's capacity to manage their own health and better access health services; and
- the need to take account of the underlying differences in health at each stage of life. For example, the contribution of substance misuse, violence and suicide to health variations among young men.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Develop a reducing health inequities strategy.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2010/11

3. Healthy sustainable communities

Healthy sustainable communities – places where people want to live, work, play and flourish – will be sought for all.

One Wales, One Planet⁴⁹ confirms sustainable development as the central organising principle of public services in Wales and provides a clear framework for creating sustainable healthy communities. It also addresses issues that are critical to health and wellbeing such as air quality, congestion, poverty and housing quality, as well as access to services, employment and green spaces.

The Welsh Assembly Government is already responding to such issues through the One Wales⁵⁰ agenda and also to climate change which represents a significant threat to the health of communities. This threat includes: deaths from heat, cold or climate disasters; changes in air and water quality; and changes in the ecology of infectious diseases. Following on from the Climate Change Action Plan for Wales⁵¹, a plan to support the health response⁵² has been prepared.

Another significant threat to the health of communities comes from a pandemic influenza virus. Health preparedness for pandemics, such as the recent Swine Flu pandemic, aims to ensure an effective Welsh Assembly Government response to such events. The profile of other health protection issues, such as E.coli, measles, health care acquired infections and child protection, has also been recently raised. One area which the Task and Finish Groups particularly felt warranted further action was food safety. The Welsh Assembly Government, working with Public Health Wales, Food Standards Agency Wales and local government, will continue to review health protection services.

The rising levels of obesity brought about by a sedentary lifestyle and over-consumption of highly processed foods and sugary drinks also represents a significant challenge for communities. Building on the Food and Fitness - Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Young People in Wales Five Year Implementation Plan⁵³, the Welsh Assembly Government has launched Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales⁵⁴. This places particular emphasis on increasing physical activity in the sedentary population. One of its strategic aims is to develop a physical environment that makes it easier for people to be more physically active through ensuring appropriately designed and maintained play areas, safe and attractive streets, pedestrian links, cycle paths and

access to green space such as parks and allotments. This plan will be complemented by the Quality Food for All in Wales Action Plan which will propose a vision of a Wales where everybody is able to eat healthy, safe, affordable, sustainable food. These two plans will be central to combating obesity in Wales, potentially bringing multiple benefits to both health and wellbeing and climate change.

The planning system can play an important enabling role in creating healthy, sustainable communities and in promoting increased physical activity. The public health and planning systems will need to work more closely together in the future, exploring how any new build, redevelopment or regeneration scheme can be designed to make healthy living the easy option. Indeed, the Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010⁵⁵ has suggested that Planning Policy Statements should 'ensure that all new developments must be able to demonstrate a meaningful positive impact on health in order to be approved'.⁵⁶ Similarly, it is vital that transport planners have a good understanding of their role in making walking and cycling a safe and attractive option.

It is also vital that good quality housing is available to help people to live as healthily and independently as possible. Achieving the best possible solutions to address poor housing is a major focus for multi-agency and stakeholder action. Publication of the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Sustainable Homes: A National Housing Strategy and action plan' will provide the direction for housing policy in Wales. This will be a significant lever, particularly ensuring that the homes of the future are health-enhancing to sustain long-term improvements in health and wellbeing.

Although the nature of the social and physical environment is important to all communities, the issues tend to be starker for the poorest in society. Their neighbourhoods have traditionally had poorly designed housing, limited facilities, greater incidence of fuel poverty, poor access to services, employment and transport, and little control by residents. It is particularly vital for such communities to build their capacity to both own and shape the policies and programmes that affect them and for national and local organisations to involve and empower them.

Communities First⁵⁷ has been established to enable and empower people living in Wales' most deprived communities to decide what is needed for their area's regeneration and then to help them realise their ambitions. The achievement of that aspiration is heavily dependent on local people receiving the support and encouragement of the authorities, agencies and other organisations which deliver the key services, advice and programmes. The Welsh Assembly Government is placing increased emphasis on targeting policies and programmes at Communities First areas – known as 'programme bending'. As improving health and wellbeing is one of the key outcomes of the Communities First programme, it is critical that public health policy and services take steps to programme-bend.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Publish health response to Climate Change Action Plan for Wales.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2009/10
Develop a food safety strategy for Wales	Food Standards Agency Wales / Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2010/11
Continue to review health protection services	Welsh Assembly Government	Ongoing
Publish Quality Food for all in Wales Action Plan.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2009/10
Encourage joint working between planners and public health staff.	Welsh Assembly Government / Local Planning Authorities / Public Health Wales	Ongoing from winter 2009/10

Maximise opportunities for targeting public health activity to Communities First areas.	Welsh Assembly Government/Public Health Wales	Ongoing from winter 2009/10
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4. Prevention and early intervention

Health and social services will place greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

The NHS and social services face considerable pressures which are likely to continue to increase from, for example: the continuous innovation in genetics, diagnosis and treatment which allows more to be done than before; rising public expectations of health and social care; and an ageing population. Moreover, this challenge will need to be addressed at a time when public sector funding is constrained.

Sir Derek Wanless' 2003 Report 'The Review of Health and Social Care in Wales'⁵⁸ referred to these pressures and for the need for them to be addressed by shifting to a more sustainable way of working. For the health and social care sector this means rebalancing services, with more emphasis on promoting, protecting, maintaining and restoring health and independence and less on avoidable, more expensive options such as treatment and care. Similarly, the Chief Medical Officer in his 2008 Annual Report⁶¹ has called for the redoubling of efforts to 'prevent the preventable'.⁵⁹

The planning system for the reformed NHS and Public Health Wales will have a key role in driving this change to prevention and early intervention. It will need to build on the preventative work of primary and community care professionals and of local partnerships, and on the current range of immunisation programmes and screening services⁶⁰. To be successful in taking this change programme forward will require support from local government and the third sector. An assessment of our baseline position on prevention and early intervention activities and spending is a key next step as is ensuring that appropriate monitoring is undertaken.

The NHS is already preventing harm and avoidable deaths across Wales through the '1000 Lives Campaign'.⁶¹ This aims to reduce risks to patient safety in hospital by implementing life-saving interventions developed by clinicians in Wales. Interventions include better management of medicines, reducing healthcare associated infections and surgical complications and improving general medical and surgical care.

In tandem with the greater emphasis on helping people to protect and improve their health and wellbeing, individuals need to recognise their responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and that of their families. The notion of shared responsibility for health and wellbeing between the NHS, its partners and the citizen was outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation document, *Well Being in Wales*⁶², and reinforced by the Wanless Report⁶³. As a result, Health Challenge Wales⁶⁴ was developed. It has been encouraging people to live healthier lives by making small and inexpensive changes to their daily routine and calling on organisations to look after their staff and customers by addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing.

The Welsh Assembly Government has provided leadership for Health Challenge Wales and local government has been active in its support by developing local health challenges. Feedback to the web-based engagement exercise referred to the success of Health Challenge Wales, though it was felt that it could be further developed. In particular, the key message, *Small Steps to a Healthier You*, needs to be promoted more widely. The new Health Boards and Public Health Wales will be expected to work with the Welsh Assembly Government and local government to refresh and reinvigorate Health Challenge Wales

from 2010 with a focus on raising people's aspirations for their own and their family's health.

Public health, healthcare and social services can also contribute to Health Challenge Wales, and to sustainable development, by addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing through their employment practices, purchasing of goods and services, and research and development programmes. The NHS has already recognised their potential in this area through the Sustainable Development Toolkit.⁶⁵ However, in response to the Welsh Assembly Government's new sustainable development scheme, *One Wales, One Planet*⁶⁶, the Health Boards, Public Health Wales and social services will need to step up their efforts in this area.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Rebalance health and social services to prevention and early intervention.	Welsh Assembly Government / Local Health Boards / Public Health Wales / Local Government	Continuing development from 2010/11
Review spend on prevention and early intervention.	Welsh Assembly Government	2010/11 to be established as the base year
Develop a proposal to refresh and reinvigorate Health Challenge Wales.	Welsh Assembly Government / Local Health Boards / Public Health Wales / Local Government	Summer 2010
Develop new guidance on sustainable development for the NHS.	Welsh Assembly Government	Autumn 2010

5. Health as a shared goal

Health and wellbeing will be a shared goal for all.

It has been recognised for some time that while the NHS makes an essential contribution, it cannot on its own deliver sustained high levels of health and wellbeing across all groups of society. To achieve the necessary improvements, the social, economic and environmental determinants of health need to be addressed through commitment from a broad range of policy areas and from across public, private and third sector organisations.

Health in all policies

Policy areas, such as housing, sustainable development, transport, culture and sport, education and skills, economic development, and rural affairs, can make significant contributions to health and wellbeing. Indeed, there are relatively few areas of policy which do not impact on people's health and wellbeing, while improvements in health and wellbeing can also help other policy areas to achieve their goals.

Making the connection between health and other policy areas poses a number of challenges for policymakers. The Welsh Assembly Government has already taken up this challenge by developing a policy impact assessment process. The One Wales Policy Gateway Tool aims to ensure that policies from all portfolio areas deliver not only their own specific objectives, but also contribute to addressing the Welsh Assembly Government's broader objectives set out in the One Wales programme.⁶⁷

The connection between health and other policy areas can also be seen in strategic documents, such as the Walking and Cycling Strategy⁶⁸, Local Sourcing Action Plan,⁶⁹ All Wales Youth Offending Strategy⁷⁰ and Arts and Health Action Plan⁷¹. However, further support is required if a health-in-all-policies approach, as advocated by the World Health Organization⁷², is to be achieved. A virtual Our Healthy Future Network will be established within the Welsh Assembly Government, with expertise provided by the Department for Public Health and Health Professions, to facilitate and support this approach.

In some cases policies covering the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing have not been devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. European (for example, the Common Agricultural Policy and food labelling) and UK (for example, tax and social security benefits) policies clearly have an impact on health and wellbeing in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government has, for example, outlined in the Substance Misuse Strategy⁷³ and made representations to the UK Government on, action required at the UK level to meet our policy objective of effectively tackling the inappropriate use of alcohol, such as stricter rules on the promotion of alcohol and minimum pricing. The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to press for changes to EU and UK legislation which will deliver health and wellbeing benefits to the people of Wales.

Local Government also has considerable potential to deliver healthy public policies. Traditionally local government has had a range of statutory responsibilities to protect health, but it has become increasingly recognised that local government is well placed to take forward action on the broader social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing through its roles as community leader, service provider, regulator and employer. In recent years, this broader approach to improving health and wellbeing has been seen in, for example, Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategies, the Welsh Local Government Association's Route to Health Improvement⁷⁴ programme and Cardiff City Council's commitment to become a Healthy City.⁷⁵

To facilitate this broader approach to health and wellbeing, local authorities have been establishing Corporate Health Improvement Groups (CHIGs), with membership from elected members and council officials from different departments. CHIGs are the key organisational mechanism to develop the positive health impact of council services and community leadership activity. For the future, the potential of these groups needs to be maximised. The reform of local government duties, through the Local Government (Wales) Measure, to improve local wellbeing, sustainability and fairness, will also provide the opportunity to deliver increasingly healthy public policy. The Wales Spatial Plan⁷⁶ also provides an opportunity to support health and wellbeing.

One of the key tools which can support a health-in-all-policies approach is Health Impact Assessment (HIA).⁷⁷ It offers a systematic means of taking health into account as part of planning and decision-making processes; HIA can be used with policies and programmes from any area of public, private or voluntary sector activity and at both national and local levels.

The Welsh Assembly Government has supported the Welsh Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU)⁷⁸ to increase the use of HIA across local authorities, the NHS and Communities First Partnerships. It is timely to reflect on the experience of the Welsh Health Impact Assessment Support Unit and stakeholders over the past five years and to consider how the use of HIA could be developed further. For example, the role of Public Health Wales in supporting HIA needs to be considered, along with the greater use of HIA within the planning system. It is also timely to reflect on the potential to embed HIA within the Welsh Assembly Government's policy development process.

More widespread use of HIA, as well as a broader health-in-all-policies approach, might also be enabled by the introduction of a Public Health Measure, similar to the Swedish Public Health Act⁷⁹. This Act seeks to help people lead healthier lives, support a society where people are encouraged to make healthier choices and eradicate inequities in health. The Welsh Assembly Government and its partners already have a significant range of policies and action in place and Our Healthy Future seeks to bring them together into a strategic direction, but there is no single legal measure in Wales to improve health and wellbeing. A Task and Finish Group will be established to consider whether or not such a measure would provide significant benefits to health and wellbeing in Wales.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Develop an Our Healthy Future Network within the Welsh Assembly Government.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2009/10
Continue to lobby and influence the EU and UK Government on legislation impacting on health and wellbeing in Wales.	Welsh Assembly Government	Ongoing
Further develop Corporate Health Improvement Groups as agents for healthy public policy within local government.	Local Government / Public Health Wales	Ongoing
Further develop links with the Wales Spatial Plan as a lever for developing and delivering healthy public policy	Welsh Assembly Government / Local Health Boards / Public Health Wales	Ongoing
Consider the potential of the Local Government (Wales) Measure to deliver healthy public policy.	Local Government / Public Health Wales	Ongoing
Review the use of Health Impact Assessment in Wales.	Welsh Assembly Government / WHIASU / Public Health Wales	Winter 2010/11
Establish a Task and Finish Group to consider a Public Health Measure.	Welsh Assembly Government	Spring 2010

Multi-sector working

Working across sectors has underpinned public health policy and practice in Wales, particularly since the launch of Better Health Better Wales⁸⁰ in 1998. It has been recognised that while sectors can make a contribution in their own right, there are also issues for which the potential to make a real difference to people's health and wellbeing can be best realised by the different sectors working together. Nevertheless, the difficulties of establishing, building and maintaining multi-sector working should not be underestimated; this was recognised by the Task and Finish Groups which emphasised the need to find more effective ways for different organisations to work together.

At the national level, greater leadership for multi-sector working will be provided through a reconstituted Public Health Planning Group. This will be chaired by the Chief Medical Officer, report to the NHS National Delivery Group, and include representatives from Public Health Wales, the new Health Boards, local government and the third sector. It will seek to maximise the potential of joint working across and between the various levels of action and to advise on key issues. To be successful, this Group will need to foster a new form of leadership, collaboration and accountability to ensure a clear and common purpose to prevent ill-health and promote equity. Success will also be dependent upon strong citizen engagement in the development and provision of public health services. One approach that

it will consider is the stewardship model which sets out guiding principles for making decisions about public health programmes.⁸¹

At the local level, the NHS reforms, including the creation of the new Health Boards and Public Health Wales and closer working with local government, provide a new dynamic for leadership and collaboration. Key elements of this new environment will be Public Health Wales' focus on strengthening public health at the local level and a new local public health strategic framework for each of the seven new Health Board areas. The Welsh Assembly Government will provide guidance on developing these local public health strategic frameworks and on their relationship with primary and community services, local bodies and partnerships.

It is intended that these frameworks will support the work of their constituent Local Service Boards, and of their Health, Social Care and Wellbeing, Children and Young People and Community Plan partnerships who will continue to have a major role in public health leadership and collaborative working. The Local Government Strategic Policy Framework⁸² offers significant potential for collaboration on and strengthening the health improvement and reducing health inequities agenda.

This greater collaboration will stretch public health skills and capacity. Public health specialist careers have been opened up to a broad range of medically and non-medically qualified professionals, and standards for and registration of public health practitioners are under development. However, building 'made in Wales' public health leadership skills for a broader range of civil servants and NHS, local government and third sector staff is relatively underdeveloped. In addition, it is recognised that the training needs of the wider workforce, such as teachers, exercise instructors and youth workers, and of community volunteers needs further consideration.

The new Public Health Wales Institute will be charged with developing a public health training plan for Wales to build common knowledge and skills across the key players contributing to this agenda.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Establish a reconstituted Public Health Planning Group.	Welsh Assembly Government	Winter 2009/10
Provide guidance on developing local public health strategic frameworks	Welsh Assembly Government	Spring 2010
Establish a public health training plan for Wales.	Public Health Wales	Autumn 2010

6. Strengthening the evidence and monitoring progress

Our public health policies and interventions will be based on good evidence and monitored.

The past 150 years have shown how health problems, such as infectious disease and heart problems, can be tackled systematically by governments, scientists, health professionals, local authorities, communities and individuals working in partnership. These major killers have been controlled through the creation, application and sharing of knowledge. In moving towards the health and wellbeing challenges of the 21st century, we need to continue to strengthen this evidence base with good quality and timely research and intelligence.

Research

The Welsh tradition of excellence in health Research and Development (R&D) has resulted in real benefits to the health of the population, as well as to wealth creation for the Welsh economy. Health R&D is essential for improving the quality of health and social care and as a key element of the Welsh Assembly Government's Science Strategy⁸³, it will be crucial to Wales' pathway out of the recession and in building our knowledge economy.

Taking forward the One Wales commitment to develop the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHSCR)⁸⁴, is providing both the strategic and delivery mechanisms for promoting excellence in and strengthening the base of health R&D in Wales. It is also seeking to attract a greater proportion of UK R&D funding into Wales which in the past has been lower than our proportionate 'share'.

One focus of this strategic approach to health R&D is public health. This will build on our current strengths in this area including:

- the Public Health Improvement Research Network (PHIRN)⁸⁵ which draws together policy makers, service providers and researchers for a collaborative and co-ordinated response to meet policy and service development needs in public health research; and,
- the design and evaluation of complex interventions in public health through the Centre of Research Excellence: DECIPHer⁸⁶

However, further co-ordination of public health R&D and more engagement with and tailoring to the needs of citizens and communities would be advantageous. There also needs to be more evaluations of the effectiveness of public health relevant policies and interventions, and particularly those addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing. These developments will require continued efforts to build capacity for a multi disciplinary approach to public health research. The development of the Institute of Public Health in Public Health Wales, working closely with WORD and higher education establishments across Wales, should make a major contribution to this process.

Intelligence

In this information age there is more information and data about the health and wellbeing of our communities than ever before. However this plethora of information has the potential to create more problems than solutions. In knowing the right information to trust and use in making decisions about health and wellbeing, there is a need to filter intelligently the signal from the noise. This affects government, local organisations, the NHS and citizens, so information and intelligence needs to be targeted to different audiences, using high quality and reputable data sources.

Wales has developed considerable expertise in information and intelligence over many years. Organisations and programmes such as the Welsh Cancer and Intelligence Surveillance Unit (WCISU)⁸⁷, Informing Health Care⁸⁸ and the Health Information Research Unit (HIRU)⁸⁹ at Swansea University are providing high quality data and working on increasingly sophisticated analyses of health and wellbeing issues. However, the Review of the Public Health Function of the National Health Organisations and Units in Wales⁹⁰, concluded that there was potential for some rationalisation of intelligence and analysis providers within the new public health system. In addition, developments following on from the Beecham Commission⁹¹, such as Local Service Boards, have reinforced the need for health information and intelligence to be more tailored for the citizen and communities.

Leading practice across the United Kingdom and internationally has resulted in the creation of Health Observatories to provide a focus for stakeholders to access information.⁹² Developing the Welsh Health Observatory is a priority for Public Health Wales and in doing so it will need to consider, for example:

- the emerging technologies and techniques that will create new possibilities for engagement through intelligence;
- new investigative techniques and non-traditional sources of data to produce intelligence for communities and localities to enable them to focus in on their health and wellbeing challenges; and
- the comparative information developments across Europe which will make it easier to assess Wales' health and wellbeing performance against similar regions and countries.

In addition to the need for a greater focus on coordinated information and intelligence, it is also important that our journey towards our healthy future is measured and assessed. Currently there are a series of Health Gain Targets⁹³, covering heart disease, cancer, mental health and the health of children and older people, which run to 2012. There is also a set of targets for 2020 relating to some of the health-related consequences of child poverty⁹⁴ while many organisations, partnerships and initiatives are monitoring progress towards their own outcomes (see, for example, Shared Planning for Better Outcomes⁹⁵).

A Task and Finish Group will be established to consider existing outcome targets and indicators and to recommend a shared public health dataset for Wales as the basis for a performance management framework which will link to the Welsh Assembly Government's Dashboard and support and sustain progress towards Our Healthy Future.

Next steps	Lead	Timing
Establish Institute of Public Health.	Public Health Wales / Welsh Assembly Government	Summer 2010
Develop Welsh Health Observatory.	Public Health Wales / Welsh Assembly Government	From winter 2009/10
Establish a Task and Finish Group on developing a shared public health dataset.	Welsh Assembly Government / Public Health Wales	Spring 2010

OUR HEALTHY FUTURE – REFERENCES (October 09)

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