



Welsh NHS Confederation
Health and Wellbeing Alliance

In partnership with:



How is your government department working to reduce the impact of poverty and inequalities?

21 October 2024

We have come together as 47 organisations to ask how your government department is working to reduce the impact of inequalities.

Wales has one of the [highest poverty rates among the four UK nations](#), with 29% of children and 21% of working aged adults living in poverty. This is driven by the relatively high proportions of working age adults working typically lower-paid 'routine' jobs, and a high economic inactivity rate, 28% in the three months to April 2024.

The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated poverty and inequalities in Wales. According to the [Bevan Foundation](#), a large numbers of people are going without essentials, and a recent YouGov [Barnardo's survey](#) found 30% of parents are struggling to afford enough food for their children and 56% are taking measures to reduce their food bills.

The cost-of-living crisis is not affecting everyone in Wales equally. The extent of the hardship faced by some groups is worrying. [Data](#) show that excess winter deaths are higher in areas with high levels of deprivation. The [Institute for Health Equity](#) recently found that those living in cities in England and Wales have a higher risk of mortality from cold than those living in cities of Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

Audit Wales has called poverty [the single major challenge facing all tiers of government](#).

A national delivery plan to tackle poverty and inequality is desperately needed.

Our organisations are calling for a national joined-up delivery plan that sets out milestones, timelines and clear targets detailing what every Welsh Government department is doing to tackle inequalities within their remit, and how Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers are working together to reduce the impact of poverty and deprivation on the people of Wales.

Led by the First Minister and jointly written with external stakeholders, this plan should be shaped by lived experience as well as objective statistical data.

As you will know, the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) requires public bodies – including the Welsh Government – to think about the long-term impact of their decisions and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.



In 2021, the Welsh Government also enacted the [socio-economic duty](#), which aims to improve inequality of outcome for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. At the end of 2023 the Welsh Government also launched a consultation on [Health Impact Assessments](#), but these assessments are unlikely to be implemented for some time. We have been told a cross government plan is not needed because these tools are already in place, or on the way.

The tools may be in place, but are they being used effectively?

‘Concurrent action is needed at multiple levels [of government]: an enduring national mission to tackle inequality; a new local and national partnership to create the conditions for system success; and local leadership to nurture the disruption needed to sustain success.’ ([The King’s Fund](#))

In July 2022, many of our organisations [came together to publish](#) a paper on the cost-of-living crisis and the rise in inequalities in Wales. The paper called on the Welsh Government to consolidate commitments on reducing inequalities and map out existing activity on poverty reduction to improve cross-government accountability, provide more detailed national implementation guidance to local delivery bodies, and introduce health impact assessment regulations as a priority.

“Reducing health inequalities is one of my key priorities as a Minister”. [Eluned Morgan MS, 2022](#)

In 2023, many of our organisations [came together](#) again to asked how government departments were tackling inequalities. With the appointment of a new First Minister and Cabinet we are asking again how departments will reduce the impact of poverty and inequalities.

“We will continue to address the underlying causes of health to positively influence how the wider determinants such as work, education and housing can improve health and equity.” [Welsh Government response](#) to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observations

In the [2024–25 budget narrative](#), the Welsh Government acknowledges that ‘we will focus funding where it will have the greatest impact in tackling inequality and discrimination and promoting human rights.’

However, there is no overarching explanation in any of these documents about how work to tackle inequality will be joined up, how outcomes will be measured and how Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers will be held accountable for delivering change.



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We know, for example, poor housing, food quality, community safety, low incomes, fuel poverty, racism and discrimination, poor transport links and air pollution all have a major effect on people's wellbeing and outcomes.

'[Evidence](#) shows that a comprehensive approach to tackling [inequalities] can make a difference. Concerted, systematic action is needed across multiple fronts.' ([The King's Fund](#))

This is not an unprecedented approach. It has been done before.

In January 2023, the Welsh Government published the [child poverty strategy](#), which seeks to 'ensure stronger integration across our national policies, programmes and action plans and to support collaboration at the regional and local levels'.

In March 2022, the Welsh Government published the [children and young people's plan](#), which consolidates government priorities and fosters cross-ministerial working. This was updated in [2024](#) showing the need to consolidating priorities remains an ambition within Welsh government.

Now we are asking you to write to us with more detailed information about how you and your officials are working to reduce the impact of inequalities and poverty across your portfolio.

We would like to know:

1. How are you and your officials delivering on [the Programme for Government 2021–2026 commitment](#) to 'move to eliminate inequality'?
2. How are you and your officials working with other government departments to maximise the impact of your work?
3. How are you and your officials using the [socio-economic duty](#) to ensure that strategic decisions made by your department are tackling inequality of outcome?

We would be very happy to meet with you to discuss this work.

We look forward to hearing from you.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.



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Royal College of
Paediatrics and Child Health
Cymru

Leading the way in Children's Health

This letter is signed by:

ABPI Cymru Wales	NYAS National Youth Advisory Service Cymru
Asthma + Lung UK Cymru	Parkinson's UK Cymru
BMA Cymru	Prostate Cancer UK
British Psychological Society	RNIB Cymru
British Society for Heart Failure	Royal College of General Practitioners
Cancer Research UK	Royal College of Nursing Wales
Care and Repair Cymru	Royal College of Occupational Therapists
Carers Trust Wales	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Carers Wales	Royal College of Pathologists
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	Royal College of Physicians
Children in Wales	Royal College of Podiatry
Children's Commissioner for Wales	Royal College of Psychiatrists
Citizens Advice Cymru	Royal College of Speech and Language
Coeliac UK	Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
Community Leisure UK	Royal College of Surgeons of England
Crohn's & Colitis UK	Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Cymru Versus Arthritis	Samaritans Cymru
Diabetes UK Cymru	Stroke Association Cymru
Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales	Tai Pawb
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales	Tenovus Cancer Care
Home-Start Cymru	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Learning Disability Wales	Welsh NHS Confederation
Marie Curie Cymru	
Mencap Cymru	
MS Society Cymru	

About our work: The Welsh NHS Confederation Health and Wellbeing Alliance subgroup on health inequalities is convened by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and Royal College of General Practitioners. The subgroup has published [Mind the gap: what's stopping change?](#), which was endorsed by 50 organisations in July 2022. Later the same year we published [Everything affects health](#), which describes how organisations from across Wales are working collaboratively across health, social services, housing, the arts, benefits and welfare advice, transport, loneliness and isolation, climate change, air pollution and much more.

[Welsh NHS Confederation Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#)
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