 <p>GIG CYMRU NHS WALES Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales</p>	<p>Name of Meeting Knowledge, Research and Information Committee</p> <p>Date of Meeting 17 March 2026</p> <p>Agenda item: 2.4</p>
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<h2>Strategic Priority 1 – Influencing the Wider Determinants of Health</h2>	
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<p>Approval/Scrutiny route:</p>	<p>Reviewed by the National Director of Policy and International Health</p>
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<p>Purpose</p>
<p>The purpose of the report is to provide an update on Strategic Priority 1: Influencing the Wider Determinants of Health</p>

<p>Recommendation:</p>				
<p>APPROVE <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>CONSIDER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>RECOMMEND <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>ADOPT <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>ASSURANCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the work that has been undertaken and plans for future on Influencing the Wider Determinants of Health • Take assurance on progress to date 				



Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	1 - Influencing the wider determinants of health
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Summary impact analysis

Equality and Health Impact Assessment	No Equality and Health Impact Assessment has been undertaken as no decision is required.
Risk and Assurance	Risks are being managed in accordance with the Board Assurance Framework.
Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act	This report supports the implementation of the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act by demonstrating a transparent approach to delivering improvements that address the wider determinants of health, in line with the Duty of Quality.
Financial implications	Financial implications are being considered as part of this work programme.
People implications	People implications are being considered as part of this work programme.

1. Purpose

This paper provides assurance to the Committee on progress being made in Strategic Priority 1 – influencing the wider determinants of health.

2. Overview

Our role is to inform, advocate for and mobilise change in order to influence the wider determinants (or the ‘building blocks’) of health.

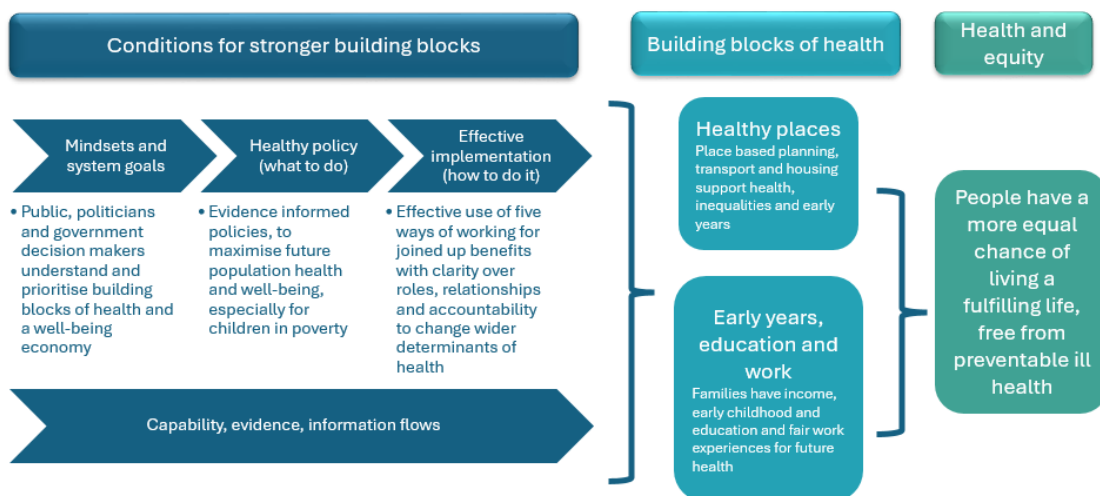
We set out our work across four themes:

- ❖ mindsets and system goals (e.g. health at the heart of economic decisions)
- ❖ healthy places (policy and implementation e.g. planning, transport, and healthy, affordable, warm and secure homes)
- ❖ early years, education and work (policy and implementation e.g. relating to skills and employment)
- ❖ how we work better together (e.g. coordinated evidence and shaping beneficial information flows)

Throughout our work we provide a consistent focus on the importance of strong building blocks of health for the future of babies, children, young people and their families and for future generations, no matter what their background or circumstances.

Our previous assurance paper to the committee was to the meeting on 17 June 2025.

Strengthening the building blocks of health



3. Mindsets and system goals theme

What we set out to do

We set out to support policy makers to strengthen health in all policies through Health Impact Assessments, evidence and advocacy tools and a well-being economy approach.

What we have achieved and impact

As part of our Public Health Advocacy Programme, we have described [five evidence informed policy priorities](#) to make the biggest difference to health and wellbeing in Wales, including best start in life, financial well-being and healthier everyday places. These policy priorities have been used to engage policy makers, stakeholders and staff, and have been incorporated into our organisational communications to provide consistent messages to support healthy public policy making. We are monitoring and evaluating our impact, so that we incorporate learning into our long-term approach on public health policy advocacy.

We have informed and influenced Welsh Government [statutory HIA Regulations](#), passed by the Senedd in November 2025, which will require all public bodies to undertake an HIA when making strategic decisions. As part of our statutory role, we have developed statutory and voluntary guides and are delivering training to upskill those who will need to carry out HIAs. We are promoting the use of evidence and research in the implementation of Health Impact Assessment (HIA). This is part of a programme of work being carried out jointly with Welsh Government, ahead of the Regulations coming into force in April 2027.

We are developing our well-being economics function to support a shift towards an economic system that places people and the planet at the centre of policy and investment decisions. We launched the Well-being Economics and Value (WEAVE) team in February 2025, building on a growing portfolio of work and demand for economic analyses, research and modelling to inform spending and investment in prevention, and evidence and value-based policies. The team has developed a [Social Value E-Guide for Public Health](#) for building know-how and capacity across the system. It is supporting research and evaluation across the Strategic Priorities, such as for smoking cessation and TB management; and has initiated economic policy modelling. A major Social Value of Immunisation project with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) 2025-2027 is generating income, developing skills and capacities, and enabling novel approaches to address vaccine hesitancy in Wales and beyond.

We are developing an organisational policy statement and decision-making framework on the commercial determinants of health that will strengthen governance, guide interactions with commercial bodies and manage conflicts of interest. Further development of the framework will involve engagement with directorates and senior leaders. We have also commissioned a project to explore public attitudes in Wales



toward commercial influence on health and wellbeing and harm reduction measures, which is currently underway. The findings will support informed decision-making about the acceptability or otherwise of potential policy measures designed to reduce the impact of the commercial determinants of health.

Additional research and information considerations

Future research needs include establishing the effectiveness of the use of HIA in Wales after the Regulations come into force, the use of AI in HIA and data, and evidence availability for those carrying out HIAs to maximise the opportunities afforded to public health by the legislation.

Next steps

- Undertaking discovery and model building phase to identify suitable policies and approaches to model the impact on economic policies on health
- Delivering training to upskill those who will need to carry out HIAs
- Advocacy for our healthy public policy priorities, in the context of supporting a programme for government

4. Healthy Places theme

What we set out to do

We set out to work with partners to strengthen capability and mobilise action for healthier places through planning, transport and housing for those experiencing poverty

What we have achieved and impact

We have informed spatial planning to shape healthier places and spaces including through our annual planning and health conference. Seventy-seven participants attended online and in person from a range of organisations including health boards, local authorities, third sector and environmental and public health agencies across the UK. The benefits included increasing collaboration between sectors to improve health, wellbeing and reduce inequalities through the planned and natural environment, mutual learning and demonstration of where success and benefits have been garnered across Wales and the UK to date. The evaluation feedback from the conference was very positive.

We have published an evidence based [Planning Healthy Places Guide](#), requested by health boards and local government planners. We have supported and influenced local development plan health impact assessments in Wales, to shape local policies and planning for the future. This includes Conwy County Borough Council, Bridgend County Council and Cardiff and Vale County Council. In total nine local authorities were supported in 2025 with more engaged for 2026.



We gathered evidence by engaging third sector, health boards, local and national government, social landlords and lived experience on system needs for healthy homes. Subsequently we are publishing a report which outlines some practical solutions for policymakers, stakeholders and partners across sectors on how to implement change to improve quality and access to healthy housing for children and families in poverty. The report is informed by lived experience insights and stakeholder views. A further report pending publication will focus on research findings on the lived experience of home temperatures and health among low-income households during winter.

The WEAVE team has been supporting the development of South-West Wales Regional Health Economy (a workstream of the Regional Joint Committee) with a focus on opportunities to practically apply work on social value and prevention spend at the regional level, and to connect the Regional Health Economy work to international best practice. The WEAVE team is also doing work around healthy high streets, to provide evidence around planning policy and local decisions. The WEAVE team is also scoping out modelling of health and wellbeing impacts of policies around childcare, employment and welfare benefits.

Next steps

We are moving our evidence and research findings on housing and health into action by developing practical, cross-policy solutions for health and wellbeing of children and families to inform the forthcoming housing and regeneration strategy.

We will seek to influence the review of Future Wales, the Wales spatial planning framework.

5. Early years, education and work theme

What we set out to do

We set out to work with partners to support action on child poverty, healthy, safe and fair work, and the education attainment gap.

What we have achieved and impact

We have made recommendations for improving collaboration to tackle child poverty to support implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales through the Building a Healthier Wales partnership. This was informed by a review of published literature on what creates the conditions for effective multi-agency collaboration, survey data gathered from poverty partnerships and in-depth qualitative interviews. We mapped our contributions against the Child Poverty Strategy, so our organisational actions are informed by lived experience and data-driven insights.

We developed and published the early years framework for action, which describes the building blocks of health needed for the best start in life, and who needs to take



action. This is informed by qualitative interviews with parents and families as well as perspectives gathered from across the system.

We developed our [Healthy Working Wales employer offer](#) including 1:1 Workplace Advisor Support, employer peer-mentoring and website.

Building on the evidence informing the £10m Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) trailblazer sites, we have now developed a cross organisational programme on worklessness of public health concern.

Additional research and information considerations

The NIESR led UKRI bid for Interventions Stimulating Economic Activity (ISEA) was unsuccessful, although we are continuing to explore opportunities to develop our research capability in relation to health and work with partners.

We are developing areas of research interest with the two Welsh NIHR funded Health Determinants of Research Collaborations (Torfaen and Rhondda Cynon Taf) with a focus on child poverty and health.

We are scoping partnerships and funding opportunities linked to economic inactivity and health e.g. exploring opportunities through a currently open UKRI call for a What Works Centre for Local Employment Support.

Next steps

Research is underway into employer support for 16–24-year-old employees, with a mental health focus informing the Healthy Working Wales offer especially relating to economic inactivity.

We are undertaking a review of reviews on employability and health. We are working with DWP, Welsh Government and others for evidence informed action on worklessness of public health concern across Wales, including local growth deals and working with a newly co-developed forum with DWP and Welsh Government on employability and health.

We are working with partners to implement an action plan to support tackling poverty partnerships to collaborate effectively, including through use of data and evidence.

As part of the Welsh Health Equity Status Report initiative (WHESRi) work we have commissioned a review with John Moores Liverpool University which examines international trends in gendered economic inequality across the life course, explores how intersectional factors drive in-work poverty and child poverty, assesses the relevance of economic empowerment policies in a Welsh context, and identifies solutions-focused actions to drive innovation and system-level change for those experiencing the deepest poverty.

6. How we work better together theme

What we set out to do

We set out to develop our evidence base for action, data surveillance and workforce capability to influence the wider determinants of health.

What we have achieved and impact

We have built capability in Public Services Boards (PSB) to take integrated action on wider determinants through applying systems thinking approaches as part of the Health Foundation funded Shaping Places for Wellbeing in Wales Programme. Eleven of thirteen PSBs have engaged with this work with multiple examples of how learning has been used in practice. The programme is using a contribution story evaluation approach where the evaluation is integral to the programme adaptation and learning (see below).

We have built workforce capability, through the Public Health Network Cymru with 1,560 people actively participating through webinars and in-person events. Evaluation shows that the Network continues to support professionals in delivering their work by providing opportunities to connect, share information and learning, and access strategic insight. Early indications suggest that creating space for people to connect encourages further relationship building and collaborative working to develop solutions to shared challenges.

Our work with the World Health Organization supports knowledge mobilisation, innovative investment approaches and evidence-informed policy through the work of the Policy and International Health Directorate, which has been re-designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being for another four years. As part of this work programme, the WEAVE team and the Welsh Health Equity Initiative and Solutions Platform have delivered high-level cross-sector, interdisciplinary events and policy dialogues to support promoting, adopting and applying Well-being Economy (WBE) approaches and tools with international partners. These include a *WBE and Gender Equity* webinar in September 2025 hosted by the Minister for Mental Health and Well-being, a Round Table on *WBE and Public Health: investing in prevention for prosperity, resilience and equity* at the European Public Health Conference in November 2025, establishing a *WBE Task Force Group* as part of the WHO Regions for Health Network and organising a session at its Annual Conference, and a high level policy dialogue on *Unlocking funding for health and well-being* focusing on impact investment hosted in Wales, January 2026. This is delivering on the Wales-WHO/Europe Memorandum of Understanding towards healthy prosperous lives for all.



Additional research and information considerations

We have exemplified an applied systems thinking approach to the Shaping Places evaluation, so learning and adaptation maximise impact. Baseline evaluation demonstrated PSB challenges which would make it difficult for programme participants to apply a systems thinking approach. As a result, with partners we used a 'viable systems model' to understand and respond to these challenges. This led directly to Welsh Government establishing a Strengthening PSB group and action plan with us and partners. We have reshaped the programme based on these findings. For the remainder of the period, the work will focus on (a) a national systems thinking learning group (b) systems thinking support to two local areas and (c) leading on a learning spaces subgroup of the national Strengthening PSB group.

Next steps

We are developing collated evidence resources on the wider determinants of health. This is being informed by user engagement and feedback, and with intended use cases being Public Services Boards' well-being assessments and health impact assessments.

Our Shaping Places for Wellbeing in Wales programme is developing case studies of impact and undergoing midpoint evaluation.

We are developing our approach to embedding the IMTP measurement system into our work, including developing strategic outcome indicators, our approach to monitoring and evaluation and policy modelling (see section 3).

Our analysis of recent data showing a decline in healthy life expectancy in Wales will be used to inform our decision making and prioritisation on wider determinants of health.

7. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- **Consider** the work that has been undertaken and plans for future on Influencing the Wider Determinants of Health
- **Take assurance** on progress to date