



Senedd Cymru
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion
Gwledig
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd
ETRA - 07
Ymateb gan: Conffederasiwn GIG Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs
Committee
Priorities for the Sixth Senedd.

Evidence from: Welsh NHS Confederation

Introduction

1. The Welsh NHS Confederation welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee consultation into its priorities for the Sixth Senedd.
2. The Welsh NHS Confederation represents the seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts, Digital Health and Care Wales and Health Education and Improvement Wales. We also host [NHS Wales Employers](#).
3. We are calling for an inquiry across all Senedd Committees on tackling health inequalities in Wales. Meaningful progress will require coherent efforts across all sectors to close the gap and an inquiry undertaken by all Senedd Committees will enable Committees to consider what action each Welsh Government department is doing to tackle the root cause of health inequalities and put forward recommendations around where improvements are needed. We also recommend that the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee considers the NHS contribution to driving the nation's critical economic and social recovery post COVID-19.

Health inequalities

4. We are calling for an inquiry across all Senedd Committees on tackling wider health inequalities in Wales. Health inequality is the result of many and varied factors. While COVID-19 has revealed and exacerbated pre-existing health inequalities, there have been many detailed and well-evidenced reports on health inequalities in recent years. In just the past year, many reports have called for system-wide action on health inequalities including the Welsh Health Equity Status Report initiative, [Placing health equity at the heart of the COVID-19 sustainable response and recovery](#) (Public Health Wales and Welsh Government), [The Marmot Review 10 Years On](#) (Institute of Health Equity and the Health Foundation) and the most recent [Unequal pandemic, fairer recovery](#) (the Health Foundation). Every one of these reaffirms the need for coherent, coordinated activity across all delivery partners and in COVID-19 recovery, there is an opportunity to create a healthier, more resilient society, by addressing the root causes of poor health and invest in people and their communities – their jobs, housing, education and communities.
5. Health inequalities are the result of many and varied factors and arise as a result of the social and economic inequalities that shape the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn, work and age. For too long, we have looked to the



health service to address these challenges in isolation, but the NHS alone simply doesn't have the levers to make the changes we know are vital to creating the conditions necessary for good health and wellbeing. Meaningful progress will require coherent, strategic efforts across all sectors – using their available resources, expertise and relationships – to close the gap. It will also be important that we are able to understand and measure our collective progress to ensure that we achieve the outcomes that matter most.

6. In April 2021, the Welsh NHS Confederation's Health and Wellbeing Alliance published a short paper, [**Making the difference: Tackling health inequalities in Wales**](#). In this paper, we suggest initial steps that the new Welsh Government should take to respond urgently to health inequalities and make the greatest possible impact by coordinating renewed commitment from all partners.
7. Through having a cross-Committee Senedd inquiry it will enable all Committees to consider what action each Welsh Government department is doing to tackle the root causes of health inequalities.

The NHS' role in economic and social recovery

8. The size, scale and reach of the NHS means that it has a significant influence on the health and wellbeing of local populations and the NHS will have a key role in actively supporting and driving the nation's critical economic and social recovery post COVID-19.
9. In our election briefing, "[**Valuing, Engaging and Delivering: A health and care system for future generations**](#)", published in September 2020, NHS leaders set out their vision for the health and care system in Wales. The vision included the NHS role in economic recovery through:
 - Creating social value in local communities to provide improvements in health, the environment and prosperity.
 - Using resources responsibly, efficiently and fairly to ensure sustainable services.
 - Being outward facing, working with the wider world to ensure economic partnerships, investment, research and promote Wales across the globe.
10. In light of COVID-19, the NHS is seeking to reset its services and priorities, with a focus on how it can influence wider community issues in its role as an anchor institution, including how its resource allocation and utilisation can support local economic development, influence social determinants of health and help to build sustainable communities.
11. An anchor institution is one that, alongside its main function, plays a significant and recognised role in a locality by making a strategic contribution to the local economy. As the Health Foundation report, [**Building healthier communities: the role of the NHS as an anchor institution**](#), highlights the NHS influences the health and wellbeing of communities by:
 - Directly employing people to quality and stable work with above average wages;
 - Purchasing goods and services locally for social benefits;
 - Using buildings and spaces to support communities;
 - Working closely with local partners across health and care; and



- Reducing its environmental impact through reducing its carbon footprint.
12. As the biggest employer in Wales, the NHS is central to regional economy, supporting a wide range of activity in every corner of Wales. Through the Committee undertaking an inquiry it will help understand this contribution and understand any changes in the level of support for the NHS in Wales, or indeed subtle changes in spending within NHS organisations and nationally, that could have an impact on the economy.