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Jenny Rathbone, MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Senedd
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF99 1SN

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Dear Jenny,

**Equality and Social Justice Committee's
Sixth Senedd Legacy Report**

I am grateful for the opportunity to share with you our public health policy priorities to inform the development of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's Sixth Senedd Legacy Report.

Public Health Wales is the national public health organisation for Wales. We exist to help all people in Wales live longer, healthier lives, and to make health part of every conversation about Wales' future.

We are highlighting five priority areas where we believe public health policy action can build a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Wales for the future, and support a strong sustainable health and care system.

By sharing these with you, we hope to support the work your Committee is doing to highlight the issues the Seventh Senedd, and your successor Committee may wish to consider.

1 Context

People in Wales are currently experiencing unfair and avoidable gaps in health and wellbeing. For example, women in the least deprived areas of Wales live 20 years more of their life in good health than those who live in the most deprived areas. In our most deprived communities, we also see three times as many avoidable deaths and 70% more child deaths. Without change, poor health in our most deprived communities will continue to result in increased demand for our public services.

Through a prevention-first approach to policy and by working together in partnership, we can overcome these challenges and build a healthier future for Wales. We know that every £1 invested in prevention returns £14 for society by creating healthier people, a stronger economy and lowered NHS costs.

Our five policy priorities

1. The best start in life builds lifelong health and wellbeing

The foundation for a life lived in good health is built in our early years. Policies need to promote the wellbeing of babies and young children and protect children from harm, for example from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and poverty, to give them the best chance to thrive through life.

- Consider children's wellbeing in all policy decisions.
- Deliver the Best Start in Life framework through cross-government leadership.
- Ensure comprehensive child health data to guide policy, target support, and track outcomes for babies and young children.
- Ensure every family can easily access Health Visitor support, and provide Flying Start based on need, not postcode.
- Embed trauma and adverse childhood experience-informed approaches from pre-pregnancy onwards.

2. Financial wellbeing drives better health and a prosperous economy

Secure and fairly rewarded work that pays a living wage is good for our health. Healthy communities mean a healthy workforce, and a healthy, productive workforce is good for a prosperous Welsh economy. Policies need to support people in Wales to find, stay in or return to healthy, safe and secure work.

- Ensure public bodies provide safe, secure jobs paying at least the Real Living Wage.
- Monitor progress on workplace equality, including gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps.
- Support people with health challenges to enter, stay in, or return to work.

- Link employment services with health support especially for those with long-term or mental health conditions so people get help when they need it.

3. Healthy lives start in our everyday places

When the places where we live, eat, shop, and play are healthy, it is easier for all of us to live healthier and happier lives.

National planning and other policies need to create and strengthen healthier places strategically, regionally and locally to support physical, mental and social health and wellbeing and reduce the appeal and availability of health harming products.

Healthy communities – characterised by healthy homes, sustainable transport, safe space for active travel, and green spaces – create additional benefits to the environment.

- Increase the availability of healthy and affordable homes, especially social housing.
- Raise standards in private rental housing.
- Reduce exposure and availability of tobacco and vapes by licensing retailers, and extend smoke-free zones.
- Make healthier food and drink the affordable, visible options in shops and restaurants, and restrict price promotions for less healthy food and drinks

4. Care tailored to local need builds health and resilience

Addressing the root causes of poor health—not just the consequences—means everyone in Wales can prosper and enjoy better health and wellbeing and our health system is resilient.

Policies need to address the needs of local people through earlier intervention and delivery of joined-up, effective care for the whole person when and where people need it.

- Increase the yearly share of the NHS budget spent on prevention and primary and community care instead of hospital treatment.
- Join up health and community care with public services and voluntary organisations to support the whole person.
- Invest in community health facilities, skilled staff, data and digital tools that link with health records to support early and preventative care.

5. A healthy planet protects our people now and in the future

The health of people and the planet are interconnected. Many actions that address climate change also support longer, healthier lives.

Policies need to focus on both preventing the health harms of climate change and tackling its root causes, especially for those most vulnerable and least able to adapt.

- Invest in safe walking and cycling routes, footpaths, and car-free town centres.

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- Make public transport accessible and affordable, including free bus travel for young people.
 - Protect communities from the health harms of climate change by tackling flooding, improving food security, ensuring sufficient and quality water for private supply, and expanding access to green spaces and tree cover

At Public Health Wales we welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Committee to inform the development of its Legacy Report, and we look forward to ongoing, constructive engagement with your successor Committee. If you would like more detailed information in relation to the specific interventions to tackle these five areas then please do not hesitate to contact us. I have also attached the infographics for the summary and solutions for the priority areas for information.

Yours sincerely,



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