The public health contribution to better healthcare

A healthcare public health framework for Wales

May 2025

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The public health contribution to better healthcare: a healthcare public health framework for Wales report
Date: May 2025

Executive Summary

The National Health Service (NHS) was established to provide high-quality care, free at the point of delivery, enabling people to live healthy lives.

Context and Background

The National Health Service (NHS) was established to provide high-quality care, free at the point of delivery, enabling people to live healthy lives. The NHS offers a wide range of services, including prevention, early intervention, primary care, community care, planned care, and emergency care.

Healthcare Public Health (HCPH) – the application of public health skills and expertise to supporting health and social care effectiveness, equity and efficiency - has been integral since the NHS's inception, focusing on identifying population needs, addressing inequalities, and optimising the use of technologies.

Challenges

The NHS faces unprecedented challenges due to demographic, social, and economic changes, including an ageing population, multi-morbidity, and health inequities.

These challenges impact social care needs and require collaborative solutions involving local government, NHS, Welsh Government, academia, third sector, and local communities. Technological advancements and public expectations further complicate such challenges.

Welsh Government tasked Public Health Wales with developing a HCPH framework in collaboration with key stakeholders. This framework aims to strengthen HCPH in Wales, providing clear roles for public health and strategic recommendations for future actions.

Healthcare Public Health Defined

HCPH maximises population health benefits by prioritising resources, preventing diseases, and improving health outcomes through effective health interventions. It involves applying public health skills across the healthcare system to achieve these goals.

Impact of HCPH Approach

Implementing a strengthened HCPH approach across the NHS and social care could significantly improve health outcomes and resource utilisation. For example, addressing unmanaged and undetected hypertension could prevent 419 heart attacks and 626 strokes in Wales over three years, saving the NHS £11.8 million and social care £6 million.

Framework Components

This framework consists of three parts developed after engagement with key stakeholders including Health Boards, NHS Wales Performance and Improvement and Welsh Government.

The three parts are:

1. **Proposing a Whole System Approach:** this document articulates the architecture and principles of HCPH, emphasising needs-based, data-driven, preventive, equitable, evidence-informed, and community-engaged approaches.

2. **Principles for the application of HCPH:** Proposed areas of application, including needs-based planning, prioritisation in decision-making, service and care pathway reviews, and evaluation and learning. As part of this we outline proposed roles and responsibilities for policy and delivery, emphasising the contribution of specialist public health professionals in areas such as health service commissioning, planning, prioritisation, equity, clinical governance, audit, evaluation, patient safety, and leadership.

3. **Tools and Resources:** A suite of resources including questions for NHS organisations to strengthen their HCPH approach and a web-based toolkit with practical examples. More will be added to these.

Strategic Recommendations

To embed the framework, we recommend:

1. Strengthening understanding and capability to apply HCPH approaches in strategic roles.

2. Enhancing capacity and capability in the specialist public health workforce.

3. Co-producing a roadmap for practical application locally and nationally as part of our ambition to achieve a sustainable health and care system.
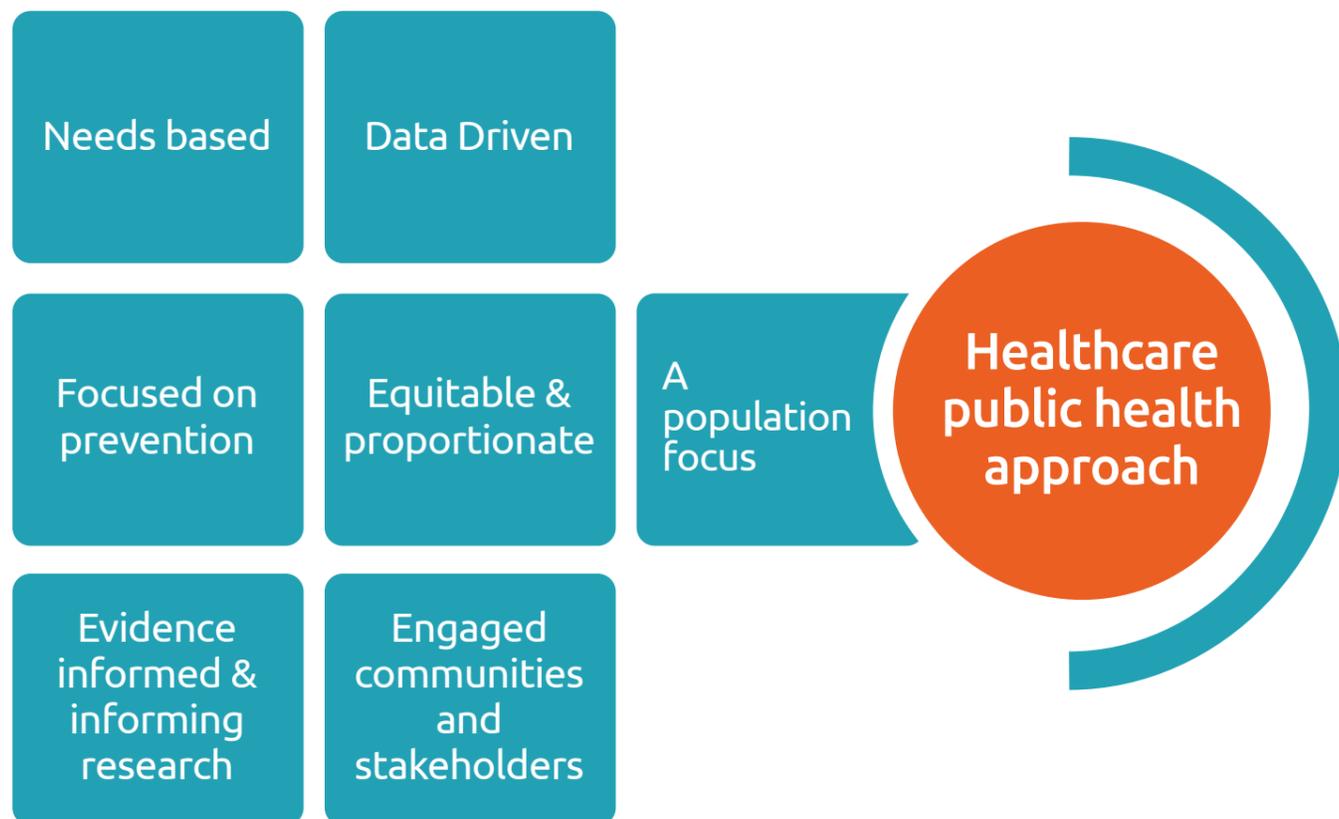
Conclusion

The proposed HCPH framework aims to improve healthcare in Wales by applying public health principles across the system, addressing health inequities, and optimising resource use.

Collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and community engagement are key to its success.

Healthcare Public Health Framework for Wales – A Whole System Approach

Underpining principles

Needs based

Data Driven

Focused on prevention

Equitable & proportionate

A population focus

Evidence informed & informing research

Engaged communities and stakeholders

Healthcare public health approach

Arenas of application

Legislation
Policy
Strategy

Planning
Performance
Accountability

Decision making
Service transformation
Resource allocation

Impacts

Maximise population health

Sustainable Healthcare: Value & Green

Informed & engaged workforce

Informed & empowered public

Services that meet the needs of today and tomorrow

Connected healthcare and integrated health & care system

People and Local communities

Primary and Community Care

Integrated Health and Care

Secondary Care

Tertiary Care

A Healthier Wales

Context and background

The National Health Service (NHS) was founded to ensure people received high quality care as part of enabling them to live lives which are as healthy as possible, free at the point of delivery.

There is much to be proud of in the broad range of high quality services it provides, from prevention and early intervention services including screening and immunisation, primary care (24/7) including general practice, dental, community pharmacy and optometry services and community care, planned care (mainly surgical; some medical procedures), emergency or 'unscheduled' care including ambulance services. It provides millions of service interactions every day.

The application of public health skills to healthcare provision – known as Healthcare Public Health - has been important since the foundation of the NHS.

From identifying the population need for services to support planning, through identifying inequalities in access and outcomes of care, and proposing best options for use of new and existing technologies, Healthcare Public Health is important to a sustainable and effective health and social care system.

The NHS is facing unprecedented challenges that are well rehearsed, for example a changing picture of health and social needs reflecting demographic, social and economic change with increasing numbers of older people who are living longer, consequent multi morbidity, as well as inequities in clinical and health outcomes of populations.

These challenges also have significant implications for social care need and provision. Such inequities have many causal factors, including underpinning social determinants of health such as poverty, education, employment and housing. They require many people and organisations in the system – local government, NHS, Welsh Government, academia, third sector and local communities to work together to find solutions. Technological and innovative developments which can be difficult to resource, coupled with high expectations from the public add to the challenges faced by today's NHS.

A strengthened healthcare public health approach across the NHS and social care could better support the needs and health of our population in Wales in ways that would make the best use of resources to achieve better outcomes for a more sustainable future.

The impact of this approach

As part of the accompanying tools for this framework we are developing several worked examples of the impact of this approach, with the first example completed being blood pressure.

We estimate that in 3 years we could **prevent 419 heart attacks and 626 strokes** in Wales leading to **NHS savings of £11.8 million,** and **S**ocial **C**are savings in year 1 of £6 million (Figure 1)

Figure 1 **The impact of a healthcare public health approach on blood pressure**
Based on estimated % of people with diagnosed hypertension treated to target
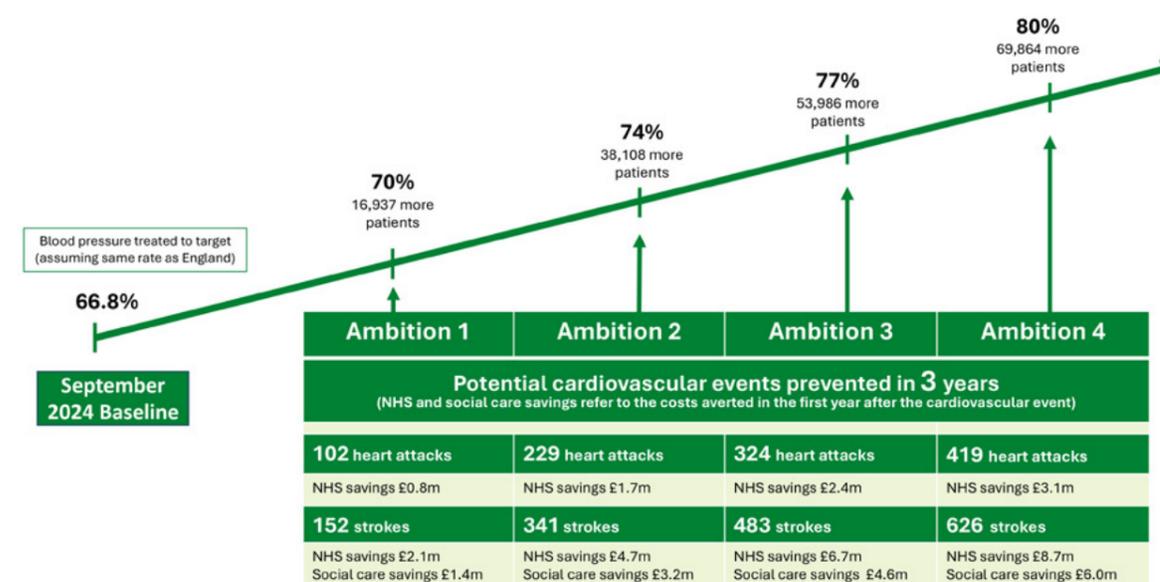
In this vein, Welsh Government (WG) asked Public Health Wales to develop a framework for healthcare public health in collaboration with key stakeholders, drawing on the views and expertise in Health Boards, the NHS Wales Executive and Welsh Government in 2024 – 2025. Public Health Wales has worked with Executive Directors of Public Health in Health Boards as co-sponsors of this work.

This document sets out our articulation of that Framework to strengthen our approach to healthcare public health in Wales.

The aims of the Framework and the recommendations stemming from its development, are:

- **To develop an approach to strengthen Healthcare public health for better healthcare in Wales**

- **To provide a clear articulation of the roles of public health in achieving this**

The document will cover what we mean by healthcare public health and the process and methods we used to develop the framework – drawing from work elsewhere; stakeholder views around what it should include as well as the strengths and gaps in the current healthcare system in Wales, and a set of strategic recommendations for the future.

This work is a contribution to the following short to long term objectives to meet the aims (below):

This framework has focused mainly on application of a public health approach in the healthcare setting, but the skills and approaches described could also apply to joint working between health and social care through Regional Partnership Boards and area plans.

Further work will be incorporated in the action plan stemming from the recommendations in this framework to explore understanding and application in this arena.

- **To support better understanding** in the NHS of what taking a healthcare public health approach means, how it could be applied and the tangible benefits through articulation of a framework

- **To co-design application** of a healthcare public health approach in practice, using impactful examples

- **To highlight the relative role played of the current main key frameworks and programmes** that contribute to a healthcare public health approach in Wales

- To **work towards a strengthened skillset** in applying a healthcare public health approach - for those in NHS and those in the specialist public health discipline

- To work towards **strengthening support in the system** (supportive architecture) to apply a healthcare public health approach, where there are recognised gaps

What is healthcare public health?

Public Health has often been conceptualised as having three major domains of action:

- **Health improvement** – actions which improve the health of the population eg healthy weight services and healthy public policies
- **Health protection** – actions which protect the public from threats to their health such as communicable disease control, chemical hazards and so on
- **Healthcare Services** – actions and tools which seek to ensure healthcare services are consistently effective, safe and accessible for all.

Healthcare public health is concerned with maximising the population benefits of healthcare while meeting the needs of individuals and groups by:

- **Prioritising available resources**
- **Preventing diseases and deterioration**
- **Improving health outcomes through design, access, utilisation and evaluation of effective and efficient health and care interventions and pathways of care Faculty of Public Health**
- **Applying public health skills, techniques and expertise appropriately across the system to achieve this.**

The specialist discipline of Public Health in the UK has developed a more detailed articulation over the years of what a healthcare public health approach means.

Healthcare public health forms one of the 3 specialist domains outlined by the Faculty of Public Health (FPH), alongside health improvement and health protection.

These domains are underpinned by the integral functions of actionable public health intelligence, academic public health and workforce development.

More detail on each of these domains can be found here: **Key areas of work - FPH.**

The insights from the UK have been taken up and developed on by public health practitioners, clinicians and service planners internationally.

We reviewed a range of health system assessment documents including those published by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and allied grey literature.

This showed that two-thirds of European nations are seeking to or applying public health principles specifically to healthcare planning, access, equity, quality and outcomes as part of their strategic approach to population health.

Gulliford and Jessop (2020) identify that a range of nations have been applying and developing insights of healthcare public health as part of their national programmes.

The Health Information and Quality Authority for Ireland conducted a review of national public health strategies in a selection of countries (Health Information and Quality Authority, 2023) and concluded that contributing to the effectiveness of healthcare systems was part of a number of national strategies.

We reviewed a selection of these strategies for Austria, Australia, Canada, Finland, Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Sweden.

All of the strategies had recognition – although most were implicit - of the importance of public health methods applied to healthcare. We have sought to apply their learning in this framework.

The key lesson for us after looking internationally at national healthcare systems is that improving population health and reducing health inequalities needs a combination of planning and action across all 3 domains of public health – they are interconnected. A second lesson is that Public Health Strategies which miss one domain are missing important opportunities to improve and protect the health of the population, and to tackle inequalities in health. All three domains are needed for the health of a population, and its health systems, to be sustainably improved and protected.

The unique characteristics of each area are highlighted (**Figure 2**), which illustrates the importance of partnership working and in public health action with local communities and on wider determinants. This framework focuses on the arenas in the top right quadrant, which form part of a healthcare public health approach.

Figure 2 Healthcare public health

- Prioritisation of **prevention and early intervention**
- **Equity** of access and outcomes
- **Value**
- Using **data and evidence**
- **Effectiveness, quality and safety**
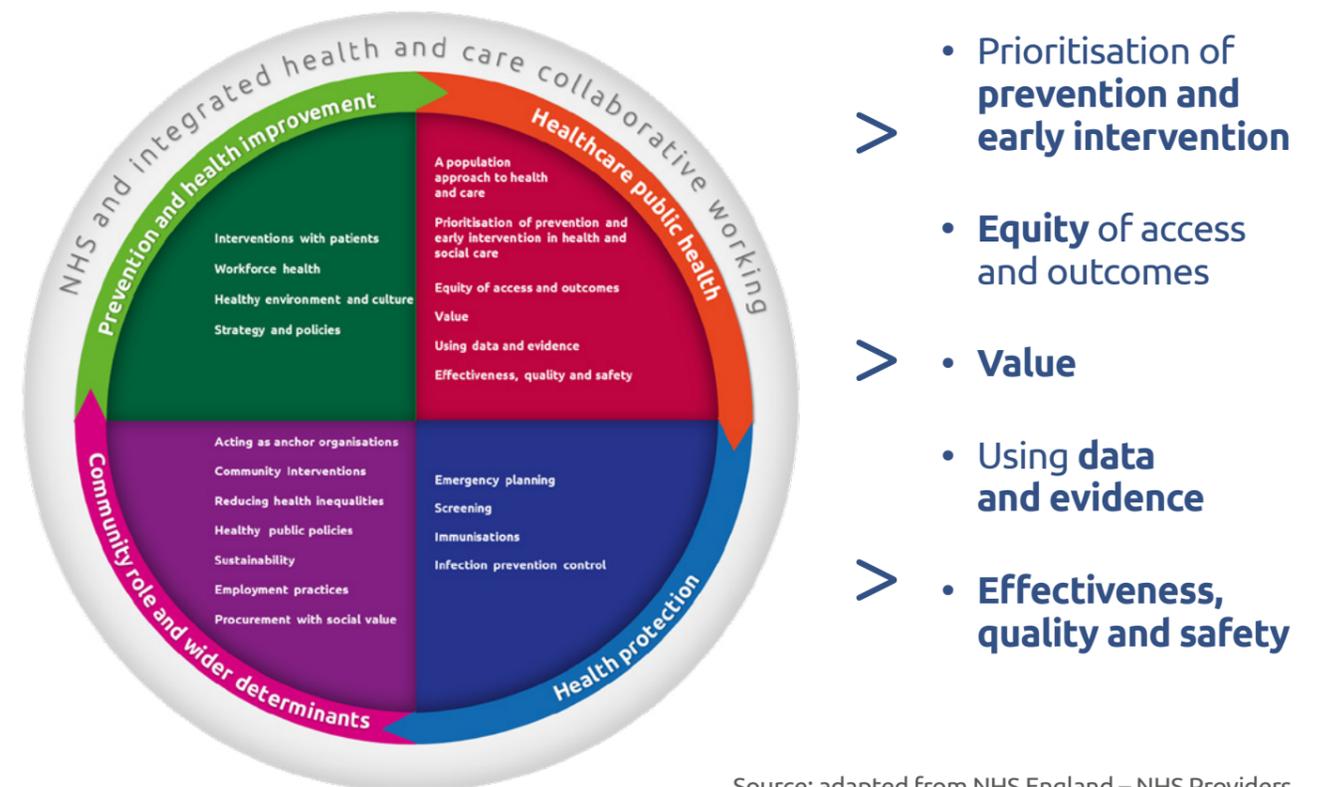
Source: adapted from NHS England – NHS Providers

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How we developed the framework and recommendations

Development of the Healthcare public health framework for Wales was informed by:

- **Relevant legislative and strategic context in Wales**

- **A desktop exercise to examine grey literature, especially key publications within the UK**

- **A desktop examination of grey literature, mostly official publications and national strategies, of a selection of nations internationally**

- **Engagement with a broad range of colleagues within the public health community in the UK, wider stakeholders within Wales and NHS professional public health bodies in England and Scotland. A thematic analysis of stakeholder understanding of, advice on, and gaps in application of population healthcare approach in Wales**

- **Internal mapping of healthcare public health activities/practices across Public Health Wales using a questionnaire.**

Acknowledgements to all those who contributed to this work can be found in appendix 1.

Key findings:

1. Aspects of a healthcare public health approach or its principles are advocated by strategic documents produced by Governments in the UK, the NHS, different think tanks and public health organisations such as the Faculty of Public Health and the Association of Directors of Public Health, and internationally.

2. Welsh legislation, for example the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Duty of Quality, Socio-Economic Duty, alongside the NHS Wales Core values and the guiding long term plan for the NHS and social care **A Healthier Wales** require healthcare to apply many of the principles and components of a healthcare public health approach. However, legislation and strategy on their own have been insufficient to drive implementation of a healthcare public health approach in NHS Wales and with partners.

3. Key themes arising from engagement within the public health community in Wales and other parts of the UK and wider stakeholder engagement in Wales were:

   a) **Framing, communication and ongoing engagement are important**

   The terms healthcare public health, population healthcare or a public health approach in healthcare are often used interchangeably. Although there was no clear consensus within and beyond the public health community on what should be and should not be included within a Healthcare public health framework, there was a broad agreement on the approach, principles and need for application in all parts of the system. It was highlighted that any new framework must be clear on its purpose, language and objectives and how it aligns with existing programmes and frameworks already in place. It should also include practical examples which should also help to communicate the value of applying a healthcare public health approach. It was felt it would also be important to have an action plan that includes ongoing engagement and communication with stakeholders to enable understanding of the multiple competing priorities and pressures in the healthcare system.

   b) **Key principles or component parts to be included in the framework**

   The importance of the healthcare system and its component services and care pathways being preventive, evidence informed (clinical, health economics, return on investment, sustainability and overall value) needs-based, high quality and outcome focussed were highlighted as key principles to articulate in the framework. Public health colleagues and stakeholders also emphasised the importance of ongoing public and patient engagement, 'live' data dashboards including data on equity and outcomes to inform ongoing improvements. Data-driven discussions, decisions and improvement plans are needed to inform improvements in policies, plans and services. Additionally, the need for ongoing evaluation and research in a joined up way at all levels in all parts of the system were highlighted as key elements to ensure ongoing learning and improvement.

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c) Application of a healthcare public health approach: strengths and gaps

The Public health community and wider stakeholders emphasised that the application of a healthcare public health approach is already happening to some extent in different programmes (e.g. Value in Health, Strategic Programme for Primary Care), services (e.g. Screening Services), initiatives (e.g. population health management) and frameworks (e.g. Prevention Based Health and Care, Inequalities Framework). Every Local Public Health Team in Wales is engaged in some form of healthcare public health activity both planned (eg pathway design) and reactive (provision of advice) linked to priorities in their Integrated Medium Term Plans (IMTPs) under the leadership of their Local Health Board Executive Director of Public Health.

However, they highlighted that a healthcare public health approach requires strengthening through collaboration within stakeholder organisations and between organisations especially for building capacity and capabilities in different parts of the system for its application. Join up was also needed between major programmes.

Engagement conversations also highlighted the need for shared leadership (with agreed roles and responsibilities) between WG, the NHS Wales Performance and Improvement, Public Health Wales and Health Boards (planning, public health, clinical engagement and facilitation) to implement a healthcare public health approach in a more co-ordinated way.

It was suggested that any action plan for application of a healthcare public health approach should not be seen as an output from Public Health Wales but owned more widely in the system and therefore should be co-produced, taking full account of the implementation context including capacity and capabilities of those involved in implementation and other enablers and barriers present in the system.

Data or access to data, analytical and modelling capability and capacity, digital infrastructure, once for Wales resources (e.g. evidence, toolkits), health economics' expertise, evaluation and research, public and community engagement and ongoing leadership were identified as areas for improvement to strengthen the implementation of a healthcare public health framework.

These improvement areas highlighted by the public health community and stakeholders align well with the enablers outlined in the Duty of Quality and other frameworks in development or in place in the system (e.g. Inequalities Framework, Prevention Based Health and Care Framework).

4. Internal mapping of current healthcare public health practice within Public Health Wales

Internal mapping indicated that Public Health Wales (PHW) already makes a strong contribution to the healthcare system including enabling the system to take a healthcare public health approach, mainly at a national level, through a portfolio of activities:

- Provision of public health expertise and advice, for example:
  » Safeguarding
  » Dental public health
  » Wider primary and community service reform/transformation
  » Mental health prevention and services
  » Infection Control and Prevention
  » Antimicrobial resistance
  » Advice and support to clinical networks e.g. cardiovascular; diabetes; MSK

- National statistics and data on different areas (e.g. cancer; congenital anomalies; child deaths; rare diseases; suicide; primary care cluster dashboard; communicable disease surveillance; antimicrobial resistance)

- Leading or providing significant support for delivery of relevant programmes in partnership with the NHS and wider partners e.g.
  » Strategic Programme for Primary and Community Care
  » Dental public health programmes
  » All Wales Diabetes Programme
  » Greener Primary Care

- Production of national frameworks e.g. Prevention Based Health and Care; Reducing Inequalities through Primary and Community Care

- NHS workforce education and skills development

- Public health leadership advocating a healthcare public health approach and anchor organisation role

Many other PHW arenas of work contribute to other domains of public health – health improvement and health protection, for example:

- Delivery of services such as screening and microbiology

- Public health expertise and advice to, for example Immunisation; health impact assessment, evidence based reviews, Best Buys in Public Health, public health economics, behaviour change science, research and evaluation of public health programmes, quality improvement, adverse childhood experience, environmental health

- Leading or providing significant support for delivery of relevant programmes in partnership with the NHS and wider partners e.g. Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme; First 1000 days; National Exercise Referral Scheme; Help Me Quit; Healthy Weight Pathway

- Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response, All Wales Acute Response

- Communications to the public on public health issues

Healthcare public health expertise and application of its principles are spread across multiple PHW directorates and embedded within existing programmes and services.

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A healthcare public health framework for Wales

The framework we propose, and the recommendations of this work, have focused around illustrating in broad terms what taking a public health approach in healthcare settings means and how the healthcare system in Wales could be strengthened using a healthcare public health approach, drawing on the desktop review of key publications, and conversations with over 40 stakeholders in Wales and the UK.

It illustrates a range of technical tasks and processes that can be applied to achieve it under four overarching themes. It also highlights the role of specialist public health in supporting a healthcare public health approach.

The Framework is split into three parts.

Part 1- A whole system approach

Articulating the architecture and principles of what this approach should look like, and the intended impact and benefits

Part 2 - Application of a healthcare public health approach

Setting out the areas of application and the activities that are being taken, and that should be taken, for an All Wales approach to Healthcare Public Health

Part 3 – Tools, roles and responsibilities and worked examples

Including questions to help organisations discern key activities they need, suggested roles and responsibilities for different system partners, worked examples of the impact and an accompanying summary slide deck to help dissemination, as well as a <u>web-based toolkit</u>, hosted in <u>Primary Care One</u>

Part 1 - A whole system approach

A healthcare public health approach can be taken across the whole system of healthcare and in any part of it, as well as in partnerships with social care and third sector focused on regional joint working and integration such as Regional Partnership Boards – with people and local communities at the centre. It can be applied in primary care and community health services, in secondary and tertiary healthcare, and in clinical and service pathways that join them (**Figure 3**).

Arenas of application

The framework outlines what good looks like in applying a healthcare public health approach. It illustrates that this approach can be applied to a key set of influential change arenas at different levels of the healthcare system. These key arenas relate to leadership and responsibilities nationally and locally/regionally, for example:

Nationally:

- By Welsh Government (WG) and by WG clinical leads (Medical; Nursing; Allied Health Professionals) and professional leads such as Finance; Workforce; Operations and Digital to inform:
  » legislation, policy, strategy; the NHS planning and performance management frameworks; other accountability mechanisms, and decision-making and resource allocation

- By the NHS Wales Performance and Improvement in its national leadership and coordination of major NHS arenas and programmes such as:
  » Planning; service development and transformation, and performance through the strategic programme for primary care; clinical networks; planned care; urgent emergency care and Quality, improvement and patient safety

Locally and regionally:

- By Health Boards strategically in strategy development; integrated medium term plans (IMTP); Board and Committee accountability and performance mechanisms; decision-making and resource allocation, and service development and transformation

- By divisions, directorates and through clinical and managerial leadership in IMTP planning, and in service developments and transformation

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Figure 3 Healthcare public health framework Part 1 – Whole system approach
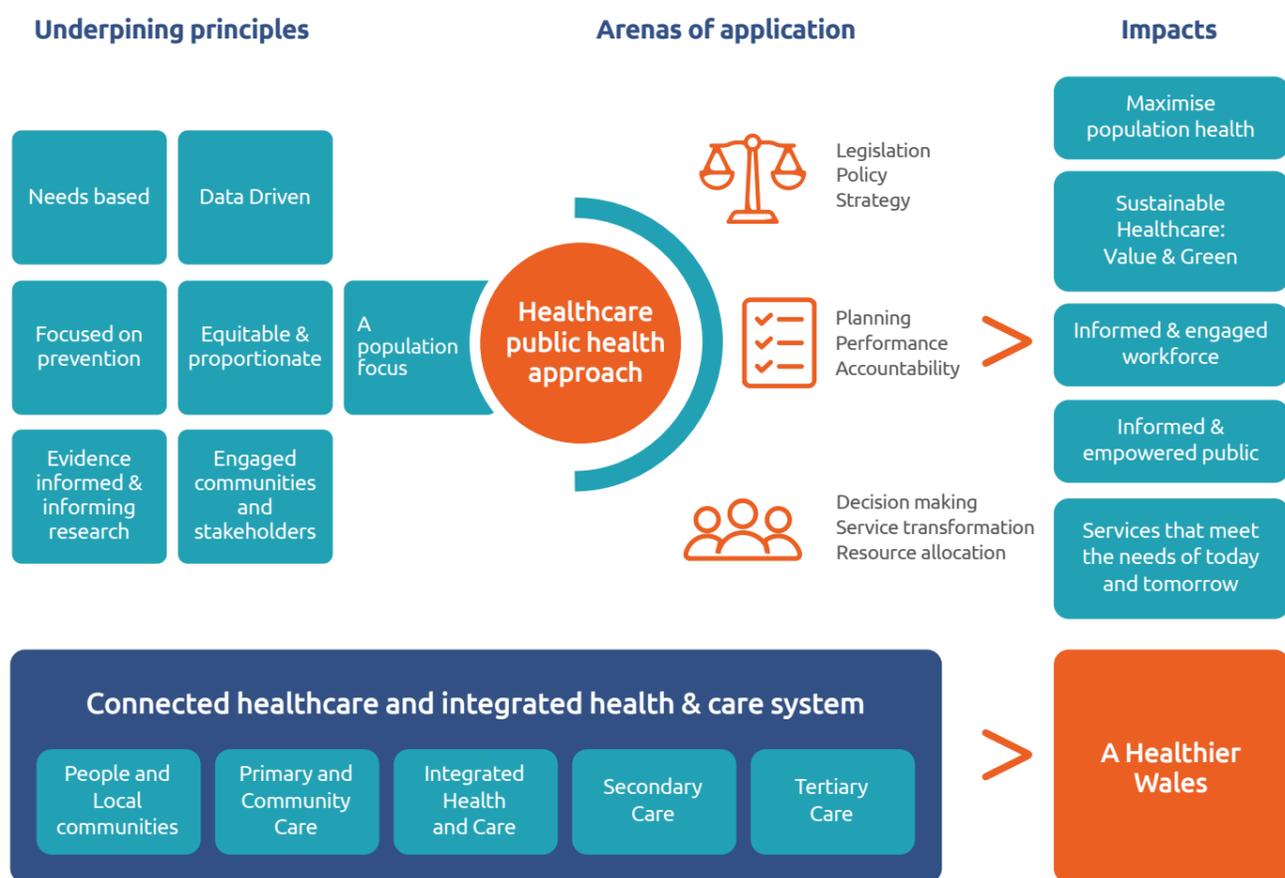
A set of underlying principles

In brief, the Framework illustrates that taking a healthcare public health approach means applying the following principles:

- **Needs-based** – that mechanisms are used to identify the needs of the population that a healthcare service will be provided or further developed for – this could be for example a geographical population, or a specific community with common characteristics. A needs-based approach forms a key part of providing quality health services that are appropriate and accessible. Needs assessment should be used alongside health service demand management to plan, identify priorities, and develop or adapt services

- **Data driven** – that data should be used to understand and inform healthcare service planning, delivery, and evaluation. A Population health management approach illustrates how data can be used to identify and risk stratify population groups so that the correct effective targeted interventions can be used with the right population to achieve positive impacts

- **Focused on prevention** – preventative actions upstream in healthcare, provided at scale, can both improve population health outcomes and contribute to reduced demand on healthcare. The Public Health Wales (PHW) Prevention-based health and care framework advocates for a tangible shift towards prevention in health and care:

  » Prevention Based Health and Care
  » Prioritising prevention

- **Equitable and proportionate** – key indicators in Wales show persistent inequities in health outcomes in our population: Wellbeing of Wales 2024 . Whilst there are many causes, inequitable access to healthcare, and healthcare which may not meet the needs of the population it serves, play a contributory role. As one of six domains of the Wales' Duty of Quality, equitable healthcare is a requirement in Wales Duty of Quality in healthcare, but there is much to do to understand it, measure it and to provide healthcare services that meet the needs of those who are most in need. One example of support in this regard relates to tools that PHW have developed to help Primary Care identify ways to reduce health inequalities: Reducing Health Inequalities through Primary Care - Primary Care One

  Proportionate is one way of indicating efficiency of healthcare services, which relates to how we use resources in ways that optimise desired outcomes, without compromising quality. Wales' Value in Health Centre and action plan (Value in Health) provides guidance, coordination and support to Health Boards around improving efficiency and outcomes in our healthcare programmes, pathways and interventions

- **Evidence-informed and informing research** firstly highlights the importance of evidence-based approaches in healthcare, both at the level of individual interventions, and at the pathway and programme level. The Value arena also contributes in this regard, including supporting approaches which enable prioritisation of interventions in pathways that have the best impact for the population being considered. Informing research highlights the importance of strong partnership with the academic sector, as well as leading and participating in research such as clinical trials

- **Engaging with communities and stakeholders:** this principle is longstanding in healthcare and in public health, but is not always easy to achieve. For local communities, clinical and other disciplines alike, it's importance lies not only in the difference it can make to improving services, but also in the fact that the process of engagement in itself can have an impact on the wellbeing of those involved – 'lasting change happens when people drive their own transformation' (WHO Community engagement for quality health services 2024). Clinical – across disciplines, managerial and team engagement in healthcare is pivotal – it affects motivation and individual and team wellbeing, the quality of services, and can also improve organisational performance bma-engagement-within-the-nhs-brief-september-2024.pdf

The intended impacts from applying this approach

The Framework also illustrates the broad set of outcomes that a healthcare public health approach contributes to A Healthier Wales and other pertinent Welsh Government policy and strategies mentioned earlier.

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Part 2 - Application of a healthcare public health approach

The second part of the framework provides in more detail four main areas of application in healthcare public health, together with a range of considerations and technical skills for each **(Figure 4)**, for example:

- **Needs based planning** – highlights the importance of involving people who receive the health services under consideration in the process, where possible. It also highlights population segmentation and stratification as a key method that can be used to target the right interventions with the right population, and that identifying health inequalities should be a core component of needs based planning

- **Prioritisation in decision making** – highlights some of the considerations that should inform decisions on priorities between healthcare services or interventions, such as the degree of population health gain and population impact that respective healthcare services under consideration might have. The difficulty of using prioritisation principles in large, complex and fast-paced healthcare arenas is acknowledged, nevertheless the NHS is accountable for the prioritisation decisions it makes, and the principles underpinning those decisions. Many of these principles are consistently illustrated in the literature as important for priority setting

- **Services and care pathways' reviews** – there are clear methods and processes that can be used when undertaking a service review or service development. The key component parts are listed here, as well as highlighting the usefulness of value-based tools to help

- **Evaluation and learning** – this theme incorporates the types of measurement that are important when using a population lens. It also highlights the role of cyclical processes such as quality improvement methodology as key to measuring and developing healthcare. The importance of linking with academia and both carrying out and contributing to research is emphasised

Figure 4 Healthcare public health framework Part 2 - Application of a healthcare public health approach

Needs Assessment in planning and delivery	Prioritisation in decision making	Services and care pathways reviews	Evaluation and learning
• Evidence based and data driven approach • Community insight and engagement • Emphasising opportunities for prevention • Population segmentation & stratification • Identifying inequalities • Proportionate allocation of resources according to needs	• Prioritisation principles and approaches: - Clinically effective - Health gain measurement & comparisons & population health impact - Health Economic approaches – cost effective & affordable - Patient experience • Value based approaches and tools	• Multiple step process • Facilitate clinical leadership • Evidence based services and interventions • Identify positive and negative variation • Gap analysis • Health equity audit • Options appraisal • Environmentally sustainable practice • Value based approaches and tools	• Process, clinical and population outcomes, and impact evaluations • Development and monitoring of population focused metrics • Continuous cycles of quality improvement • Collaboration for research on prioritised areas • Links with academia

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Part 3 - Tools, roles and responsibilities and worked examples to help organisations discern key activities they need

A short set of questions have been devised to support those working in healthcare nationally or locally to identify ways they could strengthen their approach to applying a healthcare public health approach **(Figure 5)**.

Figure 5 Questions for NHS organisations and teams to ask

Healthcare public health themes	Questions
Needs assessment in planning and delivery	• In what ways could your approach to needs-based planning be strengthened?
Prioritisation in decision making	• Which prioritisation principles do you use when making key decisions?*** How could their use be strengthened? • Which key decisions have you made in the past year that will have the biggest population health gain? • How could you strengthen the balance of your organisational, programme or departmental investment between hospital, community and preventative services or interventions? • What opportunities do you have in the medium term for resource shift upstream, for greater population health impact?
Services and care pathways' reviews	• How is a population health lens and expertise being incorporated into major service reviews and developments? • Which service reviews/developments are you planning that could have the biggest population health gain?
Evaluation and learning	• How could you track the extent of impact on clinical and health outcomes over time? • Are there academic institutions or academic-applied partnerships elsewhere in the UK developing models that could help assess and target the right population with the right intervention?

*** confidence in clinical evidence; the nature and size of health gain/the number of individuals benefitting; priority status - national/local; addressing health inequalities including in access & outcome; comparative cost effectiveness & affordability; accessibility

A **web-based toolkit** has been created, hosted in Primary Care One, which includes tools for each of the four themes of the Framework, as well as examples in practice from Wales and other parts of the UK **(Figure 6)**. This toolkit can be further developed over time. Further reading can be found in appendix 3.

Figure 6 Healthcare public health framework toolkit

This toolkit brings together a number of tools and frameworks which could be used alone or in combination to support healthcare settings, systems, and partnerships to assess and optimise their services with a population lens.

The toolkit is a resource to aid in the identification of trends, needs, and disparities within communities, and to support effective planning and delivery, making the most efficient use of resources. The tools it contains are not intended to be prescriptive but to act as a guide to enable decisions to be taken in a systematic way.

Needs Assessment in planning and delivery	Prioritisation in decision making	Services and care pathways reviews	Evaluation and learning
Tools to help in the systematic assessment of needs of the population to allow evidence-based decision making.	Tools to allow informed decision making in setting, assessing, and changing priorities within healthcare systems.	Tools to aid in the assessment of the performance of services, and in designing and evaluating improvements.	Tools to assist in evaluation of healthcare practice and to disseminate learning throughout the wider system.

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Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities in a Healthcare public health approach, from policy to delivery, are summarised (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Roles and responsibilities in a Healthcare public health approach

Desired Outcome	Wales applies a healthcare public		health approach from policy to delivery - clear roles & responsibilities			
What needs to be in place?	Clear & holistic population health approach embedded in Wales' NHS policy & strategy	Needs-based planning evident throughout Wales NHS Planning Framework & organisational IMTPs	Prioritisation in decision-making for delivery leading to greatest health gain & social impact; and Value	Performance mechanisms include focus on population health delivery in all major programmes, services & integrated programmes	Service reviews & transformation: - Major programmes - Planned care - Unscheduled care - Clinical networks (greatest population reach; best clinical & health gain)	Evaluation & learning
Who needs to lead?	Welsh Government	**National:** Welsh Government **Local:** Health Boards; Trusts & their divisions & directorates	**National:** Welsh Government; and NHS Wales Performance and Improvement **Local:** Health Boards; Trusts	Welsh Government and NHS Wales Performance and Improvement	**National:** Welsh Government and NHS Wales Performance and Improvement, strategic & clinical leads **Local:** Health Boards, divisions & directorates	**National:** Welsh Government and NHS Wales Performance and Improvement **Local:** Health Boards; Trusts & their divisions & directorates
What is PHW Role?	Advice & advocacy to Welsh Government on policy & strategy Provide tools and methods and assistance to system colleagues. Convene the system to share learning and use this for improvement	Technical advice on data national HNAs; horizon scanning Advice and support to Healthcare bodies (eg 2025 work on CAMHS pathway review)	Advice, advocacy, evidence on best health & social gain arenas Advice and support to Healthcare bodies (eg 2025 work on CAMHS pathway review)	Advice on what to measure; indicators Advice and support to Healthcare bodies (eg 2025 work on CAMHS pathway review)	Technical advice and expertise on need, pathways and specifications. Co-production role with local leads for prioritised areas Advice and support to Healthcare bodies (eg 2025 work on CAMHS pathway review)	Advice; technical expertise; research; links with academia & UK/international research partnerships Advice and support to Healthcare bodies (eg 2025 work on CAMHS pathway review)
What is current situation?	• Population health approach needs strengthened • Less focus currently on upstream & prevention	• Needs based planning needs refreshed in NHS framework & strengthened in local IMTPs	• Population health for best clinical, health & social gain is not currently prioritised	• NHS performance arena dominated by NHS challenges, including waiting list performance	• Limited population health expertise available and applied in many major arenas	• Needs strengthened

The role of specialist public health

The FPH has published essential functions of a public health system including healthcare public health, which articulate the standards to expect, and the types of contribution that could be made, by the specialist public health workforce.

Alongside a range of other disciplines and roles in the NHS, specialist public health contributions to a healthcare public health approach can be made in the following areas:

- **Effective and cost effective health services' commissioning**
- **Healthcare development and planning**
- **Prioritisation of health and social care services**
- **Equity of service provision**
- **Clinical governance and quality improvement**
- **Healthcare audit, evaluation and research**
- **Contribution to patient safety systems**
- **Contribution to leadership for healthcare**

In practice, specialists in public health can support population healthcare by, for example:

- **Providing the evidence and data intelligence (where it is available) to support decisions and developments** through needs assessments; service reviews; identification of health inequalities; health impact assessments and health equity audits

- **Providing the tools for effective service transformation** - to help decide priorities; in planning capacity and managing demand; in developing clinically led models of care; for service design and redesign; in engaging public and communities; for option appraisal; in systems' approaches; in supporting the development of business cases and the case for change; in procuring services

- **Developing effective assessment of impact and outcomes** through advice on design of monitoring and evaluation, development of population, clinical and patient outcomes, and supporting evaluation and research with the academic sector

More about how public health specialists can apply a healthcare public health approach can be found here. A more detailed development framework to support improving quality of public health advice to health and care systems was produced for England jointly by Public Health England and the Association of Directors of Public Health. A great deal of the principles and practice in this can apply to Wales, even though the policy landscape is very different.

It is important to highlight that, given the breadth of public health practice, involvement of public health specialists in different arenas of work may need to be prioritised with colleagues and partners and planned over time.

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The range of contributions to a healthcare public health approach in Wales

There are many arenas of work in Wales already contributing to a healthcare public health approach in healthcare services, driven forward by different leaders and teams nationally and locally. **Figure 8** illustrates some of the existing national healthcare policy frameworks in Wales and explains what each arena is trying to achieve:

Duty of Quality 6 domains

These are pivotal to a healthcare public health approach but alone do not encompass all aspects needed for an effective healthcare public health approach

Reducing inequalities through primary and community care framework

This is a way of helping colleagues and teams think about how they assess whether inequalities exist in their arena of work and how they could go about investigating and tackling them
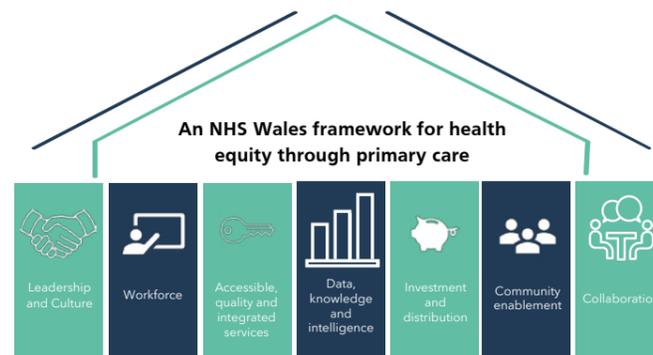
Prevention based health and care framework

Provides a method to examine both how prevention can be built into plans and delivery, and also how we can shift services to be more focused upstream

An NHS Wales framework for health equity through primary care

Value in healthcare approach and action plan

This approach, action plan, and local initiatives and application join up cost, quality and outcomes to ensure we are providing the right services to achieve the right outcomes in the right places
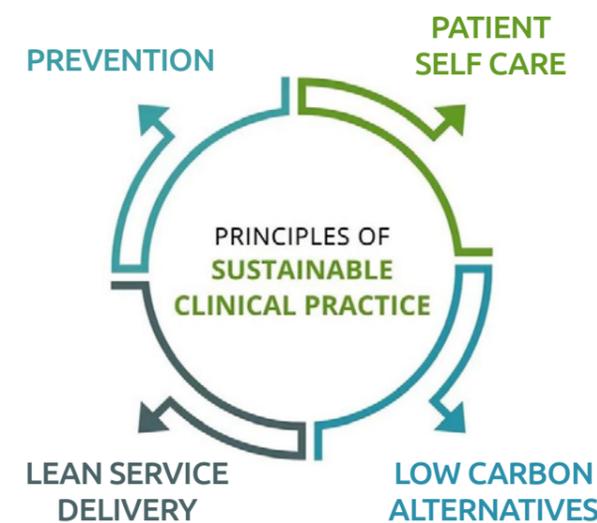
Environmentally sustainable healthcare

Supports improvements in healthcare, through partnership, in order to meet the Net Zero Wales ambition

Population health management

A way to use (linked) datasets to identify, risk stratify and target appropriate action with populations to improve health

In complex healthcare systems, each of these arenas can be drawn on to design, improve and transform services, contributing in different ways to improving clinical and health outcomes and in reducing health inequalities in our population. They should not be used in siloes, but could add value to each other depending on the context; the policy focus; or the service planning or review being considered.

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Figure 8

A Healthcare public health approach as an umbrella encompassing established and evolving work

Prevention Based Health & Care

- A vehicle to drive policy into practice and achieve a tangible shift towards prevention across the health & care system

- The PBHC Framework aims to enable prevention to be embedded by those involved in strategic and operational planning; designing and implementing service pathways; improving the quality and delivery of frontline care; and leading service transformation and delivery

- Highlights the need to address workforce capability (C), opportunities (O) and motivation (M) in leading/delivering preventative action

Reducing Inequalities through Primary and Community Care

- Partnership engagement and influence to enhance understanding of health inequalities, through provision of data, evidence and signpost to training

- System working to develop a culture of curiosity about where and why health inequalities exist and champion proportionate actions

- Supporting identification of need through collaboration with people with lived experience and those on the front line and in communities

- Co-production of solutions with people with lived experience

Value in Health

- A philosophy, a policy and a tangible action plan being delivered by Health Boards across Wales, based on Prudent healthcare principles

- Cost - Quality - Outcome

- Focuses on development of outcomes' measurement (PROMs / PREMs)

- Using data to support the improvement of healthcare services and value for patients; costing measurement and analysis; unwarranted variation; programme budgeting & marginal analysis

- Supporting leads to be stewards of resource by influencing high value care for the populations they care for

Environmentally sustainable health and care e.g. Greener Primary Care

- Globally, the healthcare sector is responsible for approximately 4-5% of greenhouse gas emissions

- Greener Primary Care supports the four independent primary care contractor services in Wales to improve the environmental sustainability of their day-to-day practice and to reach the Welsh Government decarbonisation targets

- Advocates for a large number of people making small changes, as this will have a bigger impact overall than a small number of people making big changes

- The work is equally applicable to the wider healthcare and integrated health & care system

Population Health Management

- Data-informed planning and delivery of proactive care to achieve maximum impact for the health and wellbeing of the population

- Highlights a short to long term approach for developing population health management in Wales

- Advocates for collective action - health and care share a cohesive population health approach; strong emphasis on linked, person-level datasets for the whole population to enable segmentation, risk stratification

- Focus on prevention and community well-being

How could we strengthen the healthcare system using a healthcare public health approach in Wales?

From examining what good looks like in taking a healthcare public health approach, talking to colleagues and partners in Wales and other parts of the UK - both public health specialists and a range of other colleagues - and in the creating of a Healthcare public health framework, elements in the system have been identified that could be made stronger to address clear gaps.

These would go a long way to strengthening our Healthcare public health approach in Wales:

- **A strengthened** Healthcare public health **approach to NHS policy, planning, resource allocation & performance**

- **A stronger joined up approach** between **national and local specialist public health,** working on high impact examples, with best use of respective skillsets and resources

- **A joined up approach** to healthcare public health **across directorates of Public Health Wales**

- Strengthened **public health expertise into major NHS Wales Performance and Improvement arenas** where there are gaps – Planned care; Urgent and Emergency Care; Quality, Improvement & Patient Safety; Clinical Networks

- **Core support infrastructure in the right places** – nationally supporting the NHS Wales Performance and Improvement and locally supporting Local Health Boards: health economics; strengthened datasets; population health data intelligence and modelling

- **Strengthening capacity and capability gaps in the system** – specialist and generic, especially data analysis, modelling, health economics' input, evidence reviews for service reviews/transformation, upskilling of relevant healthcare teams to support them to take a population health approach

Strategic recommendations to further develop and embed this framework

This work and identification of ways to strengthen the system have led to the following strategic recommendations:

1. To strengthen understanding, capability and practical application in strategic roles and functions across the healthcare system in taking a Healthcare public health approach

2. To strengthen capacity and capability in the specialist public health system to advise on, and support, delivery of a healthcare public health approach in Wales at a national, regional and local level

3. To co-produce a roadmap & steps for practical application of a healthcare public health approach, to deliver tangible improvements towards a sustainable health and care system by 2035

A suggested set of action arenas for each strategic recommendation can be found in appendix 2.

Acknowledgements

APPENDIX 1

AUTHORS

ENGAGEMENT CONVERSATIONS

Many thanks to all colleagues and partners who provided their valuable insights and input to the development of this framework for Healthcare public health in Wales:

Health Boards

- Executive Directors of Public Health
- Executive Directors of Planning
- Executive Medical Directors
- Executive Director of Allied Health Professionals, Health Scientists and Community Services Development, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
- Executive Director of Nursing, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Consultants in Public Health, Local Public Health Teams
- Head of Effective Clinical Practice, Hywel Dda University Health Board

Regional Partnership Boards

- Director of Health and Social Care Integration, Regional Partnership Board, Cardiff & Vale

Public Health Wales

- National Director Health and Wellbeing
- National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services; Medical Director
- National Director for Public Health Knowledge & Research
- National Director of Policy and International Health
- Executive Director of Quality & Nursing
- Director of Primary Care & Programme Director for the Strategic Programme for Primary Care
- Strategic Business Executive Team (SBET) Members
- Head of Strategy, Planning and Corporate Affairs
- Consultants in Public Health/Public Health Medicine and Team Leads, across Directorates
- Public Health Registrar, Primary Care Directorate
- Data scientist team, Research, Data & Digital Directorate
- Public Health Economics and Value Team, Policy and International Health Directorate

Welsh Government

- Director – Public Health
- Director - Planning
- Chief Digital Officer
- Deputy Director - Public Health Improvements
- Head of Health Inequalities & Healthy Communities

Wales NHS Wales Performance and Improvement & Clinical Networks

- National Clinical Director for Networks & National Clinical Leads
- National Director for Networks and Planning
- National Director Digital, Technology, Innovation & Value, and Value in Health Team
- National Director Strategic Programme for Primary Care & team
- Consultants in Public Health Medicine
- Goal 1 Lead, National Programme Six Goals for Urgent & Emergency Care
- Head of Strategic Quality and Safety; Improvement & Innovation Hub Lead, and National Mental Health Service Improvement Manager; Quality, Safety & Improvement Directorate

Welsh NHS Confederation

- Director

Other Wales national bodies

- Implementation Consultant for Wales, National Institute for Health & Care Excellence

External experts (England and Scotland)

- Chair, Health Services Committee, Faculty of Public Health
- Director of Public Health, NHS England
- Head of the National Public Health Team, NHS England
- Public Health Policy Manager, National Public Health Team, NHS England
- South West Deputy Director of Regional Health Programmes, NHS England (former President, Faculty of Public Health)
- President, Association of Directors of Public Health
- Director of Public Health, Sheffield City Council
- Director of Public Health, Portsmouth City Council & ADPH Policy Advisory Group on the NHS, Integrated Care Systems & Social Care
- Director of Public Health, Forth Valley Health Board and Health Care Public Health Lead for Scottish Directors of Public Health
- Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Scotland & Tayside Health Board

APPENDIX 2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS – SUGGESTED ACTION AREAS

RECOMMENDATION 1
To strengthen understanding and capability in strategic roles and functions:

- Joined up leadership & advocacy by PHW & Exec. Directors of Public Health in this arena
- Identifying & working on practical opportunities in Health Boards & in national planning, networks & programmes
- 'Once for Wales' tools, resources and support, available online, to support partners to take a population approach in key decisions and service development/transformation

RECOMMENDATION 2
To strengthen capacity and capability in the specialist public health workforce:

- Establish a modus operandi between PHW & Exec. Directors of Public Health including specified roles and responsibilities
- Identify resource opportunities at a local & national level to provide practical support & action (e.g. for needs assessment; resource allocation-prioritisation; service reviews & transformation; equity work)
- Work with partners (academia and HEIW) to develop training and skills development opportunities for Public Health specialists and key wider NHS/integration arenas
- Establish and lead a community of practice in a Healthcare public health approach, including opportunities for practical experience's across the NHS/integration system in Wales

RECOMMENDATION 3
To co-produce a roadmap & steps for practical application:

- Identify high value interventions that support a focus of resources (financial, workforce) on prevention and early intervention and reducing health inequalities
- Strengthen governance and accountability for a Healthcare public health approach, including within the NHS planning framework, performance measures and application of relevant legislation e.g. the Duty of Quality; Socioeconomic Duty

APPENDIX 3 REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

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