



The road to recovery

Our action plan for the next Welsh government

People: address the NHS recruitment crisis with a long-term workforce plan for health and social care

The medical workforce is over-stretched and burnt out. Only 42.8% of GMC-registered doctors who trained in Wales remain working in the Welsh NHS.

59% of consultant physicians report vacant consultant posts in their department and 62% are aware of gaps on resident doctor rotas, either daily or weekly. We need a joined-up, long-term workforce plan that considers recruitment and retention across health and social care.

Prevention: tackle health inequalities with a cross-government delivery plan to tackle poverty and inequalities in Wales

Inequalities in Wales are deepening. Almost one-third of children (29%) in Wales are living in poverty. The RCP is working with 46 other charities to call for a cross-government delivery plan to tackle poverty and health inequalities in Wales. The plan should set out milestones, timelines and clear targets for every Welsh government department to tackle inequalities.

Parity: develop and implement a fully costed plan for social care

Too many patients are being treated in corridors and chairs in Welsh hospitals. The greater the number of patients unable to leave hospital despite being medically well enough to do so, the fewer beds there are for people coming into hospital who are acutely ill.

Addressing the crises in our health service means addressing underinvestment in social care. **Social care must be an equal partner to the NHS – this means parity in status, funding and governance.**

Protect: implement The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024 to protect public health

Air pollution is the biggest environmental risk to public health and contributes to between 1,000 and 1,400 deaths per year in Wales. The 2024 Environment Act recognises air pollution as a public health issue and protects our right to breathe clean air – now **it must be implemented so we can meet the WHO guidelines on air quality.**

This briefing was developed by the RCP policy and campaigns team, in consultation with fellows and members, and approved by the RCP vice president for Wales in March 2025.

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