



# We need a poverty action plan to fight health inequalities

## Our call for action on health inequalities in Wales

December 2022

Poverty causes ill-health on a massive scale. Audit Wales recently called it the single major challenge facing all tiers of government.

**The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) is calling for a cross-government delivery plan on poverty and inequalities that sets out milestones, timelines and clear targets detailing what every Welsh government department is doing to tackle poverty, and how ministers are working together to reduce the impact of deprivation.**

- > **74%** of people in Wales are worried about their ability to stay warm and healthy this winter.\*
- > **60%** feel their health has been negatively affected by the rising cost of living.
- > **70%** are planning to use less heating in their home due to more expensive energy bills.
- > **11%** said they wouldn't heat their home as needed, even if cold weather could make a member of their household unwell, or make an existing health condition worse.

We are calling on the Welsh government to:

- 1 consolidate commitments on reducing inequalities and map out existing activity on public health, inequalities, poverty reduction and social security in one delivery plan to improve accountability
- 2 provide more detailed national implementation guidance to local delivery bodies and introduce health impact assessment regulations as a priority

- 3 develop a shared set of performance measures focused on reducing inequalities and improve access to high-quality, robust data for evaluation
- 4 improve access to prevention programmes based in primary and community care, especially for those living in poverty, and invest in innovation, including screening programmes, vaccines and wearable technology
- 5 ensure that funding encourages collaboration and is linked to tackling inequalities and require regional partnership boards (RPBs) and public service boards (PSBs) to tackle inequalities.

Together with the Welsh NHS Confederation Health and Wellbeing Alliance, we have launched:

- > *Everything affects health* describes how organisations from across Wales are working to reduce poverty, ill health and inequalities by breaking down barriers across health, social services, housing, the arts, benefits and welfare advice, transport, loneliness and isolation, climate change, air pollution and much more.
- > *Mind the gap: What's stopping change?* was endorsed by fifty organisations in July 2022. It sets out the case for a cross-government plan on health inequalities, considers what is currently slowing progress in closing the implementation gap, and looks at the role of governments in tackling poverty and entrenched inequalities.

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\* YouGov polling commissioned by the RCP.