



# **PLANNING AND PUBLIC HEALTH: OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES**





# Welcome

**O**ur surroundings, both the built and natural environment, really impact our health and how we feel. The way our homes are designed and where they're located, especially in relation to things like transportation and healthcare, can make a big difference in our overall wellbeing.

The way our living spaces are set up also matters. Having access to green spaces and areas for activities can help us stay active, reduce stress, and keep our minds healthy. And, if our homes are in places with good job opportunities, it not only helps our finances but also supports our overall wellbeing.

Where our homes and businesses are located can impact the quality of the air we breathe and the water we use every day.

How our communities are planned can really shape our health and wellbeing. It's important to think about these things when planning our neighbourhoods to make sure everyone has a chance to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

This bulletin includes articles which cover national, regional and local initiatives, policies or programmes aimed at improving health and addressing inequalities for those communities affected in Wales.

We recently held a conference on this topic which can be viewed on the past events page of our [website](#).

Let us know what you think of our e-bulletin by answering two questions. Click [here](#) for the survey.

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## Policy & Practice

### Spatial planning, public health and health service policies – Public Health Wales Planning and health event 2024

Laura Evans, Public Health Practitioner, Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU), Public Health Wales

Liz Green, Consultant in Public Health, Policy and International Health and Programme Director for Health Impact Assessment, Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) Public Health Wales

The built and natural environment is a key determinant of health, with links between spatial planning and health and well-being well documented (1) (2) (3). As part of Public Health Wales' work on this topic, the organisation hosts an annual event for public health and planning professionals to come together to learn more about each other roles, share knowledge and experience. This year saw 141 individuals attend our virtual event on 8th February which focused on health service policies.

Presentations delivered included: a focus on partnership approach between Cardiff Council and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to Section 106 funding and developments; an overview of the Health Impact Assessment Regulations Consultation from Welsh Government; a spotlight on healthy food environments with a case study from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board; and a presentation of the Healthy Places Collaborative Project being undertaken by the Association of Directors of Public Health.



GIG  
CYMRU  
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Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

Two workshops provided attendees with the opportunity to discuss 'Takeaways in Towns: Where should we locate food uses?' and 'Barriers to influencing Section 106 contributions experienced by planning and health professionals and identifying any solutions/practical steps'.

Ten breakout groups debated the issue of Hot Food Takeaway location during the first workshop led by Hywel Butts from Welsh Government. Conversations highlighted the need for a holistic, whole systems approach, the importance of engaging with local communities and the need for education. Individuals raised the implications of locating food uses within or out of town and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was mentioned.

For the second workshop, led by Andrew Buroni from Savills, the groups discussed the barriers and solutions surrounding Section 106 contributions. Challenges / potential barriers identified included:

- Experiences of variable Supplementary Planning Guidance Planning Obligations across different Local Authorities within one Health Board;
- Differences between policies in various Local Development Plans;
- Resource constraints within health boards to provide support for Section 106 applications;
- A lack of expertise within the health setting for smaller developments;
- The order that developers decide to / can put Section 106 commitments in place could be problematic.

Potential solutions included:

- Engaging with planners and working with communities;
- Having a positive approach;
- Being prepared to speak a different language;
- Understanding the roles and shared objectives of those involved;
- Building a common language between professionals;
- Ensuring public health and planners engage early in the process;
- Knowledge building;
- Using evidence and data;
- Building good relationships.

There was much discussion, debate and engagement. Feedback has been very positive; individuals enjoyed the event and found it interesting and useful, with just under three quarters of those attending saying they would discuss the content of the event with colleagues to inform action.

We look forward to doing it all again next year!

Further details on this event can be found on the [Public Health Network Cymru website](#). See the [Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit \(WHIASU\) website](#) for Spatial Planning and Health resources.

## References:

Marmot Review Team (2011) The Marmot Review: implications for spatial planning. Available from: [The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning - IHE \(instituteofhealthequity.org\)](#)

Public Health England (2017) Spatial planning for health. An evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places. [Online]

Available at: [Spatial Planning for Health: an evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Public Health Wales (2018) [Creating Healthy Places and Spaces. \[Online\] Available at: Creating-healthier-places-spaces.pdf \(phwwhocc.co.uk\)](#)



**Practice**

# Placemaking for wellbeing: Reuniting Planning and Health Systems

Sophia Bird, Principal Public Health Practitioner, Health Improvement, Public Health Wales  
 Dr Ilona Johnson, Public Health Consultant, Health Improvement, Public Health Wales  
 Medwyn Griffiths, Advanced Practitioner Trainee, Health Improvement, Public Health Wales

In Wales more than half of the adult population now experience overweight or obesity; being overweight is normal.

Work has been undertaken in Wales to develop a whole systems approach to obesity in Wales. Engagement with stakeholders in each of the seven health boards identified the pivotal role that planning has in shaping our physical and food environments including our local high streets and our current food provision, and infrastructure in terms of roads and public buildings such as schools.

## Reuniting planning and health event

An event held in Oct 2023 brought together stakeholders from Welsh Government, planning and public health. The aim was to initiate the development of a systems approach to planning for healthier people working with key stakeholders within the planning and public health systems. Key stakeholders considered current challenges, steps to address these challenges and the vision for the future system.

The 3 Horizons model was used to shape the workshops. This conceptual model promotes planning for the longer term, and identification and co-creation of transformation. It is an

approach that acknowledges complexity and uncertainty. This model:

- Encourages articulation of possible futures

- Creates a space for diverse stakeholders to share their perspectives.

- Takes an adaptive management approach based on three distinct categories of growth, providing a framework for identifying and systemically responding to changes in the environment.

Starting with Horizon 1 (H1) participants were encouraged to collectively identify the current system, trends, and issues, and the need for change.

Participants then moved on to H3, the desired future, and finally, to H2, the transformative action or steps to be taken to get towards that future vision they had collectively articulated.

### H1: Current systems for planning and health

The current systems were commonly described as disjointed, constrained and not working effectively to support the development of shared vision and priorities.

### H2 & H3: Themes identified to move towards the desired future system

Areas identified to support change towards the desired future system included the need to develop:

- A shared vision and shared

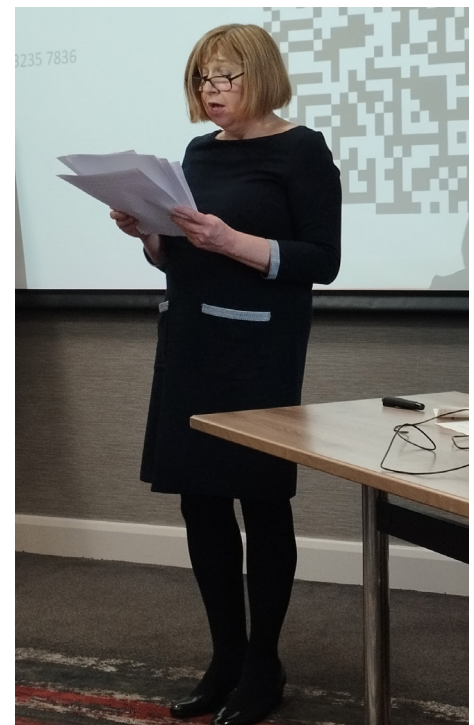
- priorities for population and environmental wellbeing,

- Increased collaboration and changes to ways of working to enable joined up, holistic and proactive approaches across the different parts of the system such as Planning, Public Health, NHS, and Business,

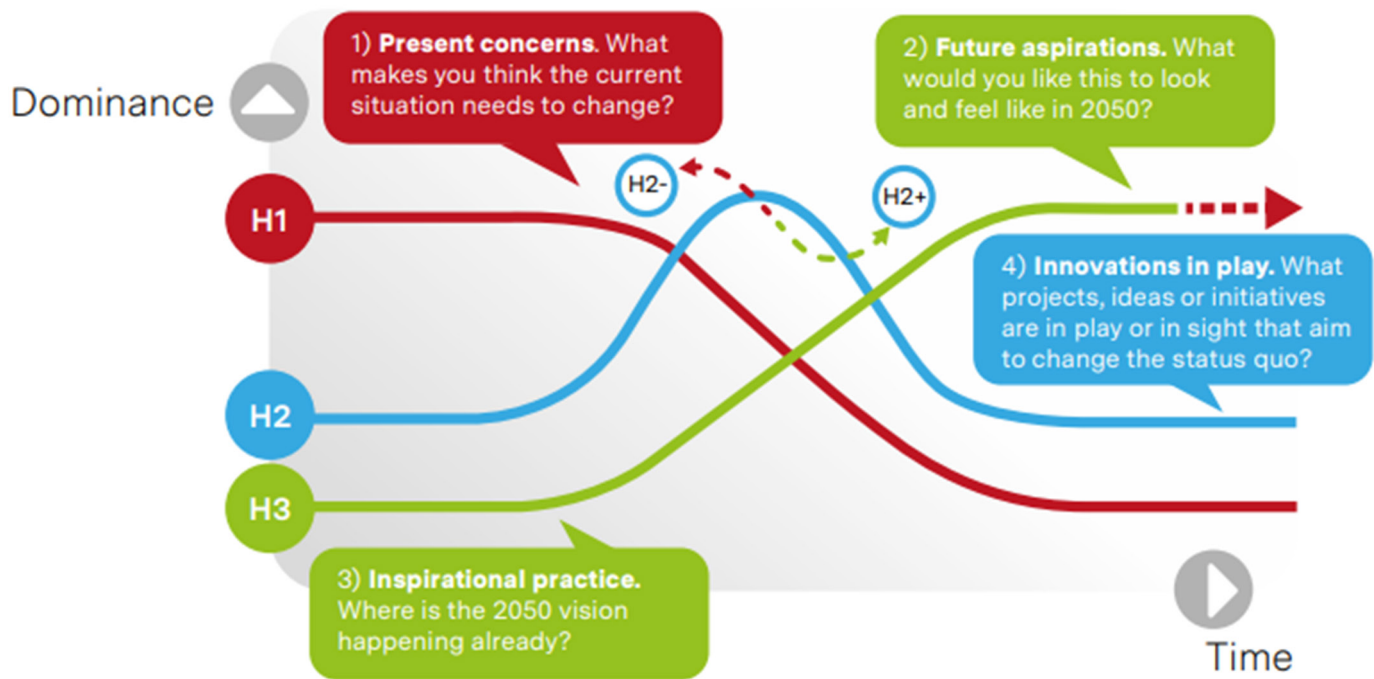
- Changes to system beliefs around designated areas and their health and wellbeing implications,

- Improved, simplified processes with increased consistency and integration of systems,

- Increased use of data to identify where change needs to happen and support decision-making.



*Lyne Neagle, MS, and Deputy First Minister introduced the day.*



**The 3 Horizons Model**

**Source: 3 Horizons Toolkit, Petchey et al, (2020) Future Generations Commission and PHW**

Next steps include working together to prioritise actions within the food and built environment at national and local level, particularly within the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy:

Map causes and identified local actions against current and planned local activity to identify synergies

Identify agents of change, both public and private

Identify mechanisms of change

seen as a first step along the path to a future where the planning system actively, explicitly and consistently supports people’s wellbeing through well designed placemaking.

For further information contact Sophia Bird ([Sophia.bird@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Sophia.bird@wales.nhs.uk)) and check out our animation explaining our systems approach here: <https://healthyweight.wales/systems/>

**Conclusion**

This event drew colleagues together from across Planning, Public Health, Government and Third sector. It provided an opportunity for conversations and the building of relationships, helping to develop a shared understanding of the current challenges for maximising wellbeing and sustainable places through placemaking. This event is



Michael Chang, Programme Manager Planning and Health, OHID.

**Practice**

# The Great Outdoors: An Outdoor Wellbeing Group for People Living with a Congenital Heart Condition

Rebecca Williams, Patient Representative, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board  
 Dr Anna McCulloch, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, South Wales Adult Congenital Heart Disease Service, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Individuals living with a Congenital Heart Condition (CHC) are at significant increased risk of developing mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. Experiencing depression is a risk factor for illness severity. Promoting good mental health amongst this population can reduce the health inequalities experienced by this cohort and can improve their overall health and quality of life. This outdoor wellbeing group sought to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of people living with CHC's in South Wales. The project took place at The Health Meadow at University Hospital, Llandough. The group learned to care for the meadow, developed peer relationships and discussed helpful ways of coping with their health condition. Activities were adjusted according to need to ensure inclusivity. Group members reported improvements in wellbeing, self-confidence, social connection and in attitudes towards fitness and exercise.

There are many factors that contribute to the psychological-social difficulties faced by individuals living with a CHC. Living with a CHC can disrupt normal developmental stages and can have a significant negative impact on educational attainment, the development of friendships and on feelings of self-efficacy and hopefulness (1). Such challenges can be made harder by the impact



of worsening symptoms and uncertainty about health outcomes. Psychological wellbeing, social connection and engagement in movement and exercise are predictors of health outcomes in CHC's. For example, experiencing depression or anxiety is associated with poorer health outcomes (1).

We describe an 18-month collaboration between our South Wales Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) team, Cardiff and Vale Health Charity and Down to Earth. Group members attended weekly, four-hour sessions based in The Health Meadow at University Hospital, Llandough. The sessions involved learning how to care for the meadow and learning new skills. Members had access to support from the clinical psychologist and an ACHD nurse. Group based interventions encourage peer support and can reduce feelings of isolation. Access to nature improves wellbeing (3). Engaging in meaning activities and learning new skills encourages

wellbeing and self-efficacy (4). Qualitative and quantitative feedback demonstrated improvements in: Peer relationships and feelings of social connection that were maintained outside of the group setting

Feeling connected to nature

Self-confidence

Confidence in exercising and moving

Relationships with the ACHD team

Coping skills



Examples of quotes include:

“I don’t know where I would be without this group”.

“The others I have met and what I have achieved has been a source of encouragement and a can-do attitude”.

“I took a run up a hill yesterday. That has never been me”.

The key learning from this project highlighted that:

- Peer support is important for those with CHC’s and encourages feelings of inclusion and social connection. This connection remained once the project had ended.
- Providing an outdoor space on a hospital site meant group members associated the hospital with positive experiences and reduced the anxiety experienced when attending hospital appointments.
- Having nurses attend the sessions improved patients’ confidence in participating in physical activities and improved nursing-patient relationships, making clinic appointments less stressful. Some group members went on to exercise independently.
- Having access to a clinical psychologist helped encourage shifts in thinking and behaviour.
- People living with a CHC face barriers in accessing (1) outdoor spaces, (2) opportunities to learn new skills and (3) places to exercise. This project shows

the benefits of providing service specific groups to help provide patients with these opportunities.

References

- (1) Livecchi, T. & Morton, L. (2023). *Healing Hearts and Minds. A Holistic Approach to Coping Well with Congenital Heart Disease*, Oxford Press
- (2) Kovacs, A.H., Brouillette, J., Ibeziako, P., Jackson, J.L., Kasparian, N.A., Livecchi, T., Sillman, C., & Kochilas, L.K. (2022). *Psychological Outcomes and Interventions for Individuals with Congenital Heart Disease: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, 15, 8.
- (3) Capaldi, C.A., Dopko, R. L., Zelenski, J.M. (2014). *The relationship between nature connectedness and happiness: a meta-analysis. Front Psychol*, 5, 976

Davies, J., McKenna, M., Bayley, J., Denner, K., & Young, H. (2020). *Using engagement in sustainable construction to improve mental health and social connection in disadvantaged and hard to reach groups: a new green care approach. Journal of Mental Health*, 29, 3, 350-357.



**Research**

# Using linked environmental, administrative and health data to better understand the wider determinants of health

Theodora Poulidou, Senior Data Scientist, Environment and Health Research Centre, Population Data Science, Swansea University  
 Samantha Turner, Senior Research Officer, Environment and Health Research Centre, Population Data Science, Swansea University  
 Lucy Griffiths, Professor of Paediatric Epidemiology, Environment and Health Research Centre, Population Data Science, Swansea University  
 Richard Fry, Professor of Environment and Health, Research Officer, Environment and Health Research Centre, Population Data Science, Swansea University

The Environment and Health Research Centre (ENVHE) uses advanced data analysis techniques to understand social and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing. ENVHE brings together geographers, epidemiologists, statisticians, and data scientists who work together to generate policy-relevant insights from routine data on the complex interactions between the world we live in (social and built environment) and our individual health and well-being.

All data are accessed and analysed via the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank, a Trusted Research Environment (TRE), hosted at Swansea University. For each data source within the SAIL Databank personal identifiable data are removed and replaced with an Anonymised Linkage Field (ALF) for each person to enable linkage of records from various sources.

Example projects from the ENVHE team:

Household level linkages  
 Funder: ADR UK and HDR UK

Household level linkages in SAIL allow us to build a picture of a person’s home life. Computer



models of homes and the local community have been developed, using social and environmental data that capture changes over time. This data can be anonymously linked in SAIL to health and administrative data using an encrypted property identifier (UPRN). This allows us, for example, to understand household composition and health and to link high resolution geospatial and environmental data at address level.

Blue and Green Spaces  
 Funder: NIHR

Main objective of the project was to explore the potential associations between the environment and mental health disorders. An e-cohort was created by linking environmental and mental health data with 24.9 million-person-years of follow-up. Main finding was that living closer to a green space reduced the odds of being diagnosed of a chronic mental disorder, especially for deprived communities



Built Environments and Child Health in Wales and Australia (BEACHES)  
 Funder: MRC and NHMRC

This is an international study comparing built environments and child health in Wales and Australia. In Wales, we are using linked electronic health records and data from the Child Measurement Programme to investigate childhood Body Mass Index (BMI) in relation to a number of built environmental measures, such as neighbourhood walkability, distance to school, local green space and access to parks and leisure facilities.

Children’s Social Care / Family Justice  
 Funder: Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and HCRW

By linking health data to Children Receiving Care and Support, Children Looked After and Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) datasets, a number of projects have explored social determinants of health in children and young people (CYP); such as, parental characteristics (health, substance use and health care utilisation) of CYP involved in public and private law proceedings, and those receiving welfare support. Individual journeys and outcomes through these systems have also been explored, providing policy and practice recommendations to better experiences and outcomes.

Maternal And preGnancy  
hEalth aNd elevaTed heAt  
(MAGENTA)

Funder: The Wellcome Trust

This is a novel data-linkage study to understand how temperature impacts pregnancy outcomes for people living in deprived communities in Wales and London. The project involves, environmental modelling of heat across Wales and London; the development of an e-cohort of linked environmental and health data as well as the bio-sampling of pregnant women in Swansea to measure biological response to heat events and finally the forecasting of future outcomes in relation to climate change scenarios.

For further Information on any of these projects please contact: [S.Turner@Swansea.ac.uk](mailto:S.Turner@Swansea.ac.uk)

# The Grapevine

Policy

## Fast Track Cymru: Ending HIV in Wales

Dr Adam DN Williams, Research & Evaluation Lead, Fast Track Cardiff & Vale



Fast Track Cymru is a network of Fast Track Cities across Wales working to collectively reach the UNAIDS 95/95/95 targets, as well as reaching zero new transmissions of HIV in Wales by 2030 and the goals of the [Wales HIV Action Plan](#). Fast Track Cymru is currently funded to March 2025 by the Welsh Government. At present Fast Track Cymru has four active regions – Cardiff & Vale, Newport, Swansea Bay, and North Wales. Each of these regions has a coalition of interested parties in the health board area, including healthcare professionals, local authorities, academic researchers, and community groups working on sexual health locally. While each region is autonomous, we all feed into the national Fast Track Cymru network to work together and inform best practice.

Fast Track Cymru is built on an alliance of non-governmental organisations, engaged health services, and local authorities with the aim of improving the response to HIV. This alliance provides a strong and connected platform to make a difference across our communities in Wales, with the aim of eventually broadening its work to the whole of Wales.

### Ending HIV in Wales

#### Dôd a HIV i ben yng Nghymru

A key focus for these ambitions has always been on engaging and empowering communities and collecting and understanding data to drive innovation and improvements in services. The initiative has been very successful, helping to develop the Wales HIV Action Plan, engaging with local communities to reduce HIV stigma, developing a National HIV Testing week for Wales, and conducting various pilot projects.

We're currently finalising next year's work programme. We'll still be working on testing and prevention but one of our biggest goals for 2024 is to support people living with HIV and allies who want to become HIV community champions and challenge stigma.

We've got a range of plans which we're consulting on with partner organisations which include [Terrence Higgins Trust](#), [HIV Outcomes UK](#) (supported by National AIDs Trust) and fellow Fast Track Cities in Scotland.

We're planning a very exciting anti-stigma

campaign upcoming on social media in May. Please fill in our survey [HERE](#) if you'd like to be part of shaping the campaign– we particularly welcome responses from people living with HIV, but all voices are also welcome. Once the campaign is designed we'd love it if you could amplify it by re-tweeting, re-threading, sharing our Insta and Facebook, talking about HIV and helping to challenge stigma.

Challenging HIV stigma is extremely important. We have supplies of free leaflets and badges – if there is an event that you think would benefit from these, please do let us know at [advocacy@hiv.wales](mailto:advocacy@hiv.wales). Alternatively, we have a PDF version of our HIV 101 leaflet on our website ([HERE](#)) that you are welcome to print at your leisure.



## Policy

# Narratives of Personal Renewal: Making and Writing with Carers in West Wales

Phil Jones, Research Assistant and Project Co-ordinator, Aberystwyth University Centre for Creativity and Wellbeing



Narratives of Personal Renewal is a new project that explores wellbeing outcomes through interdisciplinary arts. After a successful seed project working with NHS staff and the Hywel Dda Healthboard, the project is working with carers in West Wales. Full days of creativity are offered as a break from normal routines to help with isolation, mental health stresses, lack of opportunities to engage with hobbies and arts.

Carefully curated days establish safe but active space for exploring wellbeing, while activities are introduced so that no previous experience is needed. New ways of approaching, managing and articulating physical or psychological health issues are encouraged, allowing participants to address complex experience and emotions.

This project represents a new partnership between Aberystwyth University's Centre for Creativity and Wellbeing and the Fathom Trust. Writers at the Centre for Creativity and Wellbeing have been running projects investigating effective ways of using writing and language as interventions in healthcare and wellbeing settings. Meanwhile, the Fathom Trust works with individuals and groups in Powys suffering with stress, fatigue, and physical and psychological conditions.

During the 2023 seed programme, NHS staff were offered three days of movement, crafting and creative writing in scenic settings. This provided time out from the usual patterns of the working week to cater to the whole person and offer positive paths to recovery, resilience, and regeneration. Evaluation showed an overwhelmingly positive response: 100% of participants reported an improvement in wellbeing after attending, while 94% suggested it had inspired them to introduce creative activity into day-to-day life.

A participant said, "The whole approach smashed my preconceptions about what true healing could feel like, and broke open a shell of unhelpful resignation I have harboured way too long. The subtle but immensely effective blending of physical movement, creative playfulness and tactile discovery, and deep reflection via words and poetry worked brilliantly."

In addition to working with participants, the project provides a new hub for arts facilitators working in wellbeing to innovate with interdisciplinary approaches. Artists involved include writers Clare E Potter, George Sandifer-Smith, Christina Thatcher and textiles artist Laura Thomas. Facilitators are encouraged to engage with each other's work and

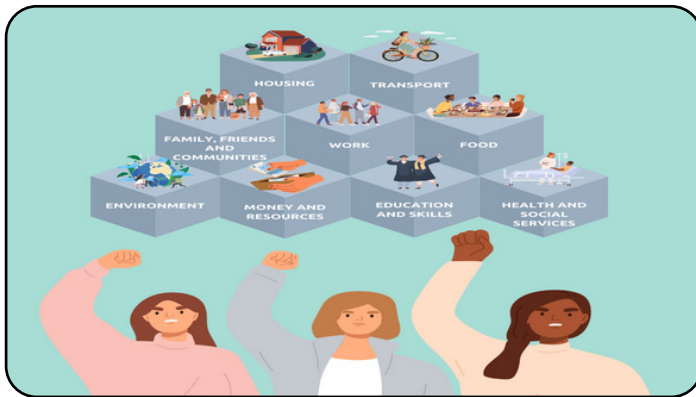
collaborate on session planning, creating fertile ground for disciplinary crossover and leading to bespoke sessions that carry an interdisciplinary thread.

Facilitator, Laura Thomas, said, "it's the first time I've delivered in a collaborative way ... I found it deeply inspiring to see how successful it seemed to be for the participants. I just loved hearing the words written stemming from the weave activity – just wonderful."

Funding from the Shaw Foundation is carrying the project forward to work with carers, for whom the interdisciplinary creative activities have great potential for meeting the needs of carers (1). Through a process of partnership working and codesign, the project is reaching those who will benefit most, with the ultimate aim of developing an effective and sustainable model that can be rolled out to wider groups who are also in need.

To find out more, contact Phil Jones: [phj13@aber.ac.uk](mailto:phj13@aber.ac.uk) Carers Trust and prepared for The Department of Health and Social Care and the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance (2022) 'Social Prescribing and interventions combatting loneliness amongst unpaid carers: Good Practice examples' <https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/137-social-prescribing-good-practice-and-top-tips->

# Videos



## Building blocks for gender equity: Strategies for a prosperous future for women in Wales

This webinar explored the links between gender and the wider determinants of health and discussed the role of gender-inclusive policies in shaping equitable economies and health systems. It was an opportunity to look at the prevailing gender inequalities which impact health beyond health services.

[Watch](#)



## A participatory systems mapping approach to exploring education achievement in Wales – a reflection on theory and practice

This webinar gave an overview of the Wider Determinants of Health Unit’s work in relation to education as a determinant of health

[Watch](#)



## Spatial planning, public health and health service policies: opportunities for improving health and addressing inequalities

This event focused on changes in the planning policy agenda, public health and healthcare services’ involvement in influencing the use of Section 106 monies, policies facilitating healthy food environments and an update of the Welsh Government Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Regulations. Relevant projects and case studies were presented.

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# News & Resources



[Health experts welcome downward trend in childhood dental extractions under general anaesthetic](#)

02-04-2024



[Long-term thinking resource helps organisations protect the health of future generations](#)

02-04-2024



[Case studies released to demonstrate how organisations can unite to respond to cost of living](#)

20-03-2024

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[Keeping warm at home during winter in Wales: Differences in heating behaviours, coping strategies, and wellbeing from 2022 to 2023](#)

Public Health Wales

[Beyond the present: How to apply long-term thinking to reduce health inequalities](#)

Public Health Wales

[All Resources](#)

# Next Issue

## EDUCATION IN WALES



A good education is a building block for health and well-being and can increase our chances of living a long and healthy life. In turn, our health and well-being can affect our ability to learn. Education provides the skills, attributes and knowledge needed to secure good jobs and participate in society.

For our next e-bulletin we would welcome articles which cover national regional or local initiatives, policies or programmes aimed at improving or enhancing education in Wales. This includes initiatives within settings such as pre-schools, schools, higher education or the community.

Our [article submission form](#) will provide you with further information on word count, layout of your article and guidance for images.

Please send articles to [publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk) by 19 April 2024.

[Contribute](#)