



# General principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill

## RCP (Wales) consultation response

### About us

The Royal College of Physicians plays a leading role in the delivery of high quality patient care by setting standards of medical practice and promoting clinical excellence. We provide physicians in Wales and across the world with education, training and support throughout their careers. As an independent body representing more than 30,000 fellows and members worldwide, including 800 in Wales, we advise and work with government, the public, patients and other professions to improve health and healthcare.

### Amdanom ni

Mae Coleg Brenhinol y Meddygon yn arwain y ffordd o ran darparu gofal o ansawdd uchel i gleifion drwy osod safonau ar gyfer arferion meddygol a hybu rhagoriaeth glinigol. Rydym yn darparu addysg, hyfforddiant a chefnogaeth i feddygon yng Nghymru a ledled y byd drwy gydol eu gyrfa. Fel corff annibynnol sy'n cynrychioli mwy na 30,000 o gymrodorion ac aelodau ym mhedwar ban byd, gan gynnwys 800 yng Nghymru, rydym yn cynghori ac yn gweithio gyda'r llywodraeth, y cyhoedd, cleifion, a gweithwyr proffesiynol eraill i wella iechyd a gofal iechyd.

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**GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) BILL**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales Environment and Sustainability Committee inquiry into the general principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill. Our response is informed by our fellows and members in Wales.

1. The RCP believes that the Welsh Government must take this opportunity to reduce health inequalities by addressing why so many people in Wales have poor health outcomes. We know that these outcomes can be linked to poverty, lifestyle, culture and deprivation. Many of these reasons are historical and deep-rooted in some communities in Wales, and will require a raft of measures.
2. This is why the RCP believes that legislation is only one part of the toolkit for improving public health. All levers must be used to improve and protect health. We believe that our members and fellows have a key leadership and advocacy role to play in tackling the social determinants of health. Doctors and public health specialist teams should work together more closely in shaping services and developing programmes to promote and protect people's health, prevent ill health and tackle health inequalities. However, doctors and healthcare teams must be supported by a strong legislative framework.
3. The focus of public health should lie on preventing, not just managing poor health. Many of the underlying reasons for health inequality in Wales cannot be solved by solely local initiatives and local authorities but will need a more strategic national approach by the Welsh Government. The Well-being of Future Generations Bill should provide an enabling framework which will galvanise and support the Welsh Government and other bodies to address emerging public health issues proactively as they arise.
4. The Welsh Government should be prepared to use a number of public health interventions available (including regulation) and must coordinate action across different government departments and partners. We are supportive of legislation that takes an 'all society' approach to a broader conception of health problems and we would support a requirement on appropriate bodies to consider how to reduce and prevent health inequalities and involve

communities in their decision making. However, we urge Welsh Government to consider the specifics implied by this Bill in more detail as soon as possible.

5. We recommend that integration and collaboration on public health must be embedded across the NHS, local authorities and the Welsh Government. We strongly believe that a greater emphasis on joint working across bodies will be vital to the success of this legislation. **This is why we are calling for a duty on Ministers to consider the health impact of all policies coming out of the Welsh Government.** This was in the Welsh Government's green paper on public health last year, and we are extremely concerned to see that it is no longer being proposed in the recently published white paper. However, these health impact assessments must not become a box-ticking exercise. The Welsh Government must consider how best to ensure that reducing inequality and improving health outcomes underpins everything they do.
6. There must be a solid evidence base for all reforms to support public health knowledge, policy and practice. The Welsh Government must put in place a system to measure outcomes (for example, diet, physical activity and actual BMI) and process, with a particular emphasis on barriers to success. An economic evaluation would also be valuable. In addition, there must be sufficient investment in effective and sustainable public health services. This will save the Welsh NHS money in the long term.
7. New legislation on public health would provide us with a collective response to preventing and reducing public health harms and would pave the way for future behaviour change. Legislation has a role in changing socio-cultural norms: by putting in place penalties for unacceptable behaviour, we make a statement about that behaviour. Two excellent examples of this approach are seat-belt legislation and smoke-free legislation, which are widely understood to be fundamentally-important catalysts in changing attitudes, expectations and behaviour in road safety and smoking respectively. Law can be an essential tool for creating the conditions that enable people to live healthier lives.
8. In November 2014, the RCP will be partnering with the UK Health Forum and the Royal Society for Public Health to host a policy development roundtable looking at the aims, objectives and outcomes from this Bill. We are keen to use these discussions to influence further evidence which we would like to submit to the committee ahead of Christmas recess for their consideration.

The RCP welcomes this opportunity to respond to your inquiry into the general principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill. We are happy to give oral evidence, if invited. If you have any questions, please contact our colleague, Lowri Jackson, RCP senior policy adviser for Wales, at [Lowri.Jackson@rcplondon.ac.uk](mailto:Lowri.Jackson@rcplondon.ac.uk) or on 029 2050 4540.

With best wishes,



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