

# **Shift upstream in investment of resources to deliver prevention at scale: A Public Health Approach in Primary and Community Care by 2035**

## **Why the shift matters**

Wales faces rising healthcare demand, driven by preventable chronic conditions. To address this, investment must shift upstream—toward prevention and community-based care. Despite strong policy support, structural and cultural barriers, especially the dominance of secondary care in decision-making, continue to hinder progress. A public health approach requires embedding prevention into routine practice, aligning funding with population outcomes, and working across sectors to tackle the wider determinants of health. Healthcare accounts for only about 20% of the factors influencing overall health. Despite this, many people in Wales believe healthcare contributes close to 90% of health improvements, according to the PHW Time to Talk survey. At the same time, the Welsh Government allocates around 49% of its total spend to health and care of which a very small proportion is allocated specifically to prevention interventions. This mismatch highlights the need to shift resources toward prevention and population health, engage the public in understanding what really drives health, and position secondary care as the exception rather than the norm.

## **What Success Looks Like**

By 2035, a public health approach would deliver a system where:

- Prevention is systematically embedded within primary and community care, becoming routine rather than exceptional.
- Multidisciplinary teams effectively collaborate, using integrated data to proactively manage people's health.
- Healthcare resources are strategically allocated towards preventive interventions, significantly reducing hospital admissions.
- Health inequalities are substantially narrowed, particularly benefiting those in deprived communities.
- The healthcare system is financially sustainable, driven by lower prevalence of chronic diseases and reduced acute care demand.
- The population experiences measurable improvements in overall health and wellbeing, with fewer years spent in poor health.

## **High Level Recommendations**

### **1. Redistribute Funding**

- Shift resources from reactive hospital-based services towards proactive, community-based preventive interventions to manage demand sustainably and improve outcomes.

### **2. Fully Implement the Prevention-Based Health and Care (PBHC) Framework**

- Embed prevention systematically across all levels of health and social care practice.
- Develop clear, outcome measures for shifting towards preventive approaches.

### **3. Scale-Up Proven, Cost-Effective Interventions**

- Systematically scale prevention programmes targeting key areas such as cardiovascular, diabetes and cancer risk reduction as well as immunisation and screening programmes.
- Prioritise primary prevention strategies, ensuring interventions reach populations early to maximise health and economic benefits.

#### **4. Equipping Primary and Community Care Teams for Prevention**

- Provide comprehensive training, resources, real-time data systems and time to enable effective and consistent preventive care.
- Foster multi-disciplinary collaboration, aligning health services with broader social determinants including housing, education, and employment.

#### **5. Align Funding Mechanisms and Performance Measures**

- Design transparent and flexible funding models allowing resources to flow dynamically towards high-value preventive activities.
- Introduce performance measures rewarding long-term health outcomes rather than short-term service outputs.

#### **6. Empower Decision-Making and Leadership in Primary and Community Care**

- Shift decision-making authority from predominantly secondary care structures toward strengthened primary and community care leadership.
- Promote cultural transformation, valuing proactive and preventive health strategies across the system.

#### **7. Empower Communities and Individuals**

- Support people to take an active role in their health through accessible information, tools, and services.

#### **8. Align Policies Across Sectors**

- Ensure national and local policies prioritise prevention, supported by long-term political commitment and accountability.

#### **9. Enable Data-Driven Planning**

- Provide real-time access to integrated health records and population health data to support planning targeted interventions and continuous improvement.

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