



**Comisiwn
Bevan
Commission**

The Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care in Wales

Creating a Sustainable National Health and Care Service
for an Equally Well Wales

Executive Summary

February 2024



“The NHS is the child of Wales - born from the nation’s values of compassion and equality. The founding father, Aneurin Bevan, would be immensely proud of the adult it has become but also, like every parent, fear for its future...In 2050 the NHS - set up to care for us from the ‘cradle to the grave - will be over 100 years old. But here in Wales we are not preparing its obituary, we are planning for its future. I believe in its future, but we cannot be complacent, we cannot stand still. We must adapt and plan for a health service we can all be proud of in 2050. Born in Wales, the modern health service can be reborn in Cymru.”

Taken from Celyn Jones (2nd year Medical Student Cardiff University 2023), essay written as part of the Bevan Commission’s Future Thinkers programme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CASE FOR TRANSFORMING THE HEALTH AND CARE IN WALES

The Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care in Wales takes account of the economic, climate and wider pressures on the health and social care system in Wales to find sustainable solutions for the future. Drawing upon the resources of the people, communities, and wider stakeholders, this report suggests a new way of approaching these challenges in Wales. *The Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care in Wales* sets out the agenda to achieve sustainable, high quality, equitable health, and care, for an equally well, resilient and resourceful Wales. To inform our thinking we look back at changing trends, review the present and look into the future to help us identify the foundations for the future.

In Wales, 49% of the national budget is spent on health and care in 2022/2023, similar to the past 3 years. Public spending per person in Wales was 13%, above the UK average of 11%, but lower than in Northern Ireland (18%) or Scotland (17%), above the UK average in 2021/2023. Inefficiencies in the organization of the workforce data and technology will continue to cause further costs and wastage.

Hindsight

Over the last 75 years, since the inception of the NHS, health services have adapted in tandem with Wales' changing health needs, and in turn, people's expectations of health services have shifted too. They have included supporting new medical possibilities, technology, and a range of new services to meet needs such as mental health, cancer, and dementia. The result of this has been:

- Average life expectancy extended by nearly 40 years in the years since the inception of the NHS in the UK.
- The most common causes of death are related to dementia, cancer, heart conditions or external causes e.g., accidents and suicide as well as environmental stressors.
- Demand has shifted towards chronic treatments and end-of-life services, instead of younger populations driving the demand for primary care before.

Insight

Population age-groups have dramatically changed in the past two decades in the UK, creating new challenges. The patterns of health, ill health and death are an important factor in shaping the demand for NHS and social care services.

- Sickness causes inactivity, and the number of working aged people who are inactive due to sickness is rising. Wales has the second highest economic inactivity rates (23%) in the UK, due to its socio-economic heritage. The employment gap due to long-term sickness is twice as high in most deprived areas in Wales.
- The life expectancy gap between the least and most deprived populations in Wales has been increasing, marking a growing inequality within the population.
- Further strain is caused by climate change and external factors, such as air pollution, that primarily affect the most vulnerable groups.

Foresight

Despite the increase in life expectancy, people's health will not improve, as more complexity in illness and expansion of morbidity is expected. Demographic changes and their impact on long-term conditions will change the age profile of Wales diagnoses.

- Diagnoses will rise in younger age groups, as well as in the 70-79 age group. The average age at which major illnesses are projected to develop is 70 years. With the increase in life expectancy, the years spent with ill health will increase too.
- More than a third of the population will have major illness by 2040, in Wales this will affect 1.2 million people. The complexity of illnesses and multimorbidity will substantially increase in Wales by 2035.
- The number of people with major illness is growing faster than the working age population.

Bevan Commission's Four Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care

1. Resilient and Resourceful People and Communities

Health and care services will only become sustainable in the face of increasing life expectancy and growing demand by recognising the importance of the environments in which we live, work and play and the wider social support opportunities in promoting good health. Public health and illness prevention plays a pivotal role in enhancing the resilience of people and communities by actively involving people in their own well-being, as well as others, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to take action. Programmes and services should utilise all resources available in communities to support and empower people of all ages to “stay healthy at home”, self-care and support others in need through intergenerational and other community-based services.

2. Prudent, Integrated, and Equally Well Care

Integration of services and systems are essential for ensuring high quality and prudent services which best meet people's needs. A whole population approach is needed, including new health and care roles, cross sector working, quality-centric approaches, and place-based integration of health and social care teams. Integrated systems at a national, regional, and local level, focusing on key areas such as service planning, workforce, data, and digital health will be needed to support this. The goal should be to bring more joined up care closer to individual's homes and tailor services to meet the needs of different populations, through innovative, creative, and collaborative planning and working. Upskilling and diversifying the workforce, embracing third sector and volunteers, valuing community skills and caregiver expertise are essential for prudent and sustainable joined up service delivery.

3. Sustainable Workforce, Services and Systems

A mainstreamed perspective on sustainable health and care, addressing the social determinants of health with a whole society and health in all policies approach is needed. We must come together to find combined sustainable solutions and modes of operation benefiting everyone including financial, environmental, and social solutions. This will need to go beyond the ‘volume approach’ to waste, reflecting on the inappropriate and inefficient use of resources and redesigning a prudent, lean health and care system fit for the future. Using data and technology to identify, develop and target services and support at those with greatest need will be crucial.

4. Dynamic, Innovative and Transformational Culture

No one person or organisation has the solution to meeting future needs. Changing needs require changing approaches able to flex and respond quickly. In an adaptive, complex health and social care system, change in one area will inevitably have implications in other areas. System transformation should begin by addressing local needs, encouraging, and supporting innovation to be driven collaboratively at all levels, between organisations, professionals and local communities. Engaging with place-based needs from the outset, will also help develop and discover more innovative ways of working, which can be rapidly adopted nationally, regionally and locally to deliver better health and efficient ways of delivering health and social care across the population.

Putting the Prudent Principles and Communities in the Centre

To create an equally well and sustainable Wales, an orchestrated, combined effort, bold decision-making, accountability, and commitment is needed.

We propose that the future of health and care should be defined by sustainable services, shared responsibility, and a whole society approach.

We recognise that good health and wellbeing cannot be achieved by any one professional, agency or organisation alone. It requires strong collaborative working between the public, professionals, and all key organisations, sharing responsibility for creating healthy environments, preventing ill-health, and delivering prudent health and social care services to meet people's needs. Urgent action, collaboration, and shared responsibility is essential to create, maintain, and improve health and wellbeing in the future.

Acknowledging the pressures on the health and care system, including systemic inefficiencies, inappropriate waste, rising costs, technological shifts, workforce challenges, changing expectations, demographic pressure, growing inequalities and climate change, we argue that the current system demands urgent, creative transformation without compromising its founding principles.

The Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care is a new way of approaching policy design and delivery. It draws upon the resources of people and communities, wider stakeholders, decision-makers and sets the agenda for a high quality, equitable service-provision for a healthy, resilient, and resourceful Wales. It builds upon the founding principles of the NHS, placing the Prudent Principles, people, and communities at the core.

Recognising that transformation will need to engage people and professionals, cross-sector and national policies, our **four foundations** rely on national, local and cross-sectoral experiences, initiatives and policy frameworks. The four foundations will be underpinned and enabled by all of the following

Key Enablers:

Partnerships

Cooperation and collaboration, not competition, is needed alongside a willingness to share learning and adapt and adopt new ideas together.

Data

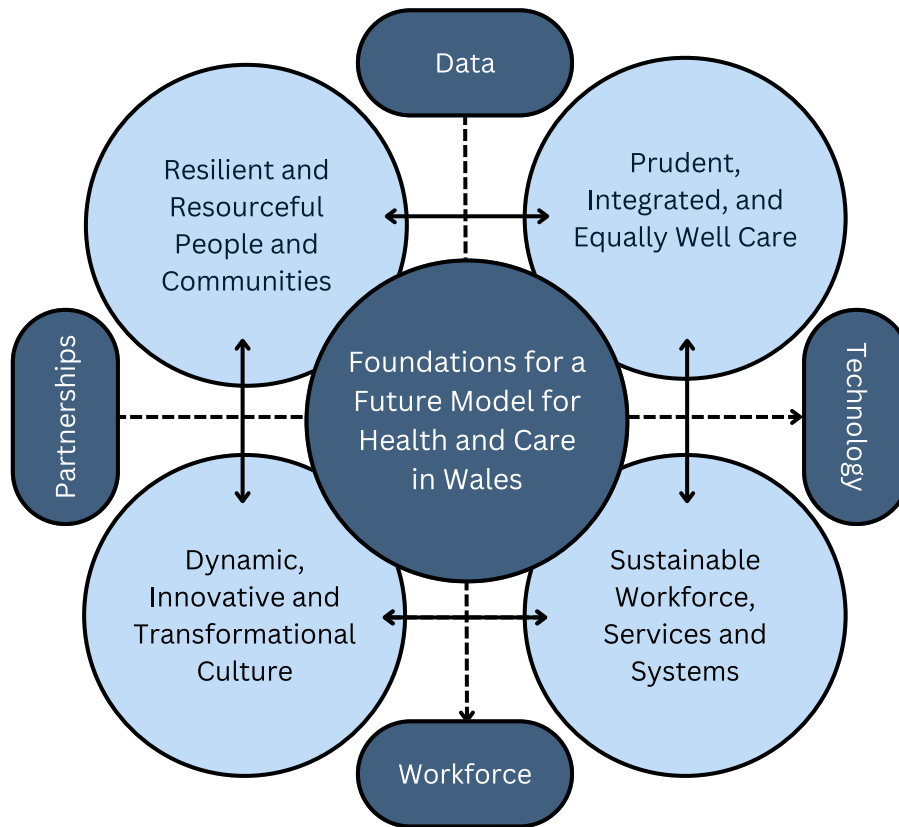
The effective use of data will be critical to ensuring we target all the resources we have available, especially those in greatest need, in the most efficient way.

Technology

Technology will be key to ensuring we empower and engage people in their own health and wellbeing and in supporting professionals to achieve the most prudent systems and solutions.

Workforce

Developing a workforce including professionals, patients, unpaid carers and the third sector, with the flexible skills and competencies to address future needs, building upon all the above, will be critical.



The Foundations for the Future Model of a Sustainable National Health and Care Service for an Equally Well Wales.

In Conclusion

The current system requires **urgent and creative transformation** towards a prudent, social model of health, ensuring sustainable, healthy, thriving people and communities and care in Wales, without compromising Aneurin Bevan's founding principles.

We recommend that Welsh Government should adopt a **whole society and health in all policies approach', where health and well-being is embedded into education, regeneration, and employment** etc., reinforcing and aligning with the goals of the Future Generations Commission.

Prevention and early intervention are crucial for system sustainability. Preventing people becoming ill and helping them to make healthier choices and share responsibility for their health and well-being will be necessary. Moving away from a focus on illness, towards one on building longer, sustainable and healthier lives together. Public engagement will be critical to achieving this.

Collaborative leadership is essential to address the complex challenges and growing inequalities, in order to make Wales a thriving and healthy nation, harnessing all skills and resources effectively, particularly those within local communities.

NHS Wales and the social care sector in Wales should commit to **prudent integrated working, combining planning, budgets, data, and accountability**, to best serve the needs of people in Wales.

The health and care system should **prioritise equity, flexibility, and interoperability**, adapting roles as needed, informed by public engagement, technology, and data. Professional bodies and agencies should also contribute to finding solutions for these changes.

A healthy workforce is essential for Wales' prosperity. Employers across all sectors should be encouraged to support health and well-being within the workplace, alongside their commitments to Corporate Social Responsibility.

Policies, planning and performance approaches and tools will also need to change to enable this to happen, along with aligned incentives and targets. To date, the focus of services has been on what goes into services (money, staff time, new hospitals etc.) and traditional measures such as length of stay/waiting times etc., rather than the wider impact on health. We must move away from a focus solely on illness and sickness services towards one that develops a shared responsibility for creating and sustaining health and well-being.

Be prudent and reduce waste. The four **Prudent Principles** provide a sound basis from which to operate for improved and sustainable health and care. Continuing to measure the benefit and value of health and care services based on the amount of "activity" can lead to waste, whilst also missing those in greatest need. Activities may be unwanted and imprudent, involving unnecessary treatments, bureaucracy, wasted time, skills, and other resources.

The four Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care outline a 'Whole Society' Approach.

The recommendations presented in this report complement wider policies in Wales, and prioritise actions to be taken in partnership by a range of social actors, particularly:

- **The Welsh Government** can regulate, incentivise and enable change. It can design funding schemes, set up collaboration platforms, unify processes, and dataflow.
- **National Lead Agencies** have an all-Wales perspective and they lead and develop services and provide support across Wales.
- **Health Boards and Trusts** have a key role in implementation, supporting and enabling change to address local needs through the effective linkages of people, patients, and practitioners.
- **Local Authorities** are essential in enabling and supporting healthy people and environments, implementing, and monitoring integration plans, and facilitating change by coordinating local partnerships.
- **Businesses** can support, enable, invest into and provide solutions for employee health and well-being, change through innovation and also their corporate social responsibility.
- **The Third Sector** is essential in reaching out and engaging with hard-to-reach people and neighbourhoods, linking with social groups, supporting data-collection, and bringing to light needs and innovations in local communities.
- **Citizens** have a key role in creating health and wellbeing for themselves and their communities. By learning, adopting, and spreading healthy and sustainable behaviours, everyone can be involved in change, sharing insights, ideas and data.

• **Academic Partners** can provide support in research and impact design, data-gathering, evaluation, and impact assessment, as well as policy evaluation, or regulatory framework assessment.

The Bevan Commission recommends that:

- The Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care be adopted; and
- That accessible and detailed versions of the recommendations are developed and integrated into cross-sectoral, national, and local policies, and programmes.

We are by no means the first think tank to decry the failure to shift the focus of services to health outcomes, but we believe the four core foundations for a future model of health and care set out in this report, underpinned by the Prudent Principles, provides the framework to make the essential changes needed in Wales. As Don Berwick pointed out in his recent speech at 2023's major conference [The Tipping Point: Where next for health and care?](#):

"Wales has it all: it has the Prudent Healthcare Principles, strong legacy in investment into science of health, and a communitarian ethos."

We therefore make a plea to politicians, policy makers, practitioners, and the public to come together to make a real commitment to work towards a sustainable and equally well model for health and care fit for the future in Wales – one that other nations will wish to emulate as the world continues to change.

Comisiwn Bevan Commission

School of Management,
Swansea University Bay Campus,
Fabian Way, Swansea SA1 8EN

www.bevancommission.org
bevan-commission@swansea.ac.uk
+44 (0)1792 604 630
