

**Comisiwn  
Bevan  
Commission**



# What a Waste!

Executive Summary

**What part will you play?**

May 2023

***“It is estimated that \$1.8 trillion of global healthcare spending is wasted every year”<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum***

**International studies estimate that approximately 20-30%<sup>2</sup> of health care spending may be wasted.** In Wales alone, **we spend £8.7bn<sup>3</sup>** on health and social services every year. The elimination of waste could enable the **redistribution of £1.7bn to £2.6bn** to improve and sustain health and care services.

**We all have an obligation to spend public monies most prudently and sustainably.** Addressing waste is **critical issue** which needs urgent attention.

The Bevan Commission, building on the expertise of Bevan Commissioners Professor Don Berwick KBE and Professor Sir Andy Haines, have developed [What A Waste!](#) to help raise awareness and galvanise action against the **often invisible and misunderstood scourge of waste** in our health and care system.

Waste occurs across a wide range of areas, some of which may be less visible, evident and tractable than others. The publication provides an insight to the spectrum of waste in health and care, and points towards some of the potential solutions.

We define waste into 6 categories: **workforce, administration, services, treatment, energy, and systems** (WASTES). Under each of these we set out the key issues and suggest how the concept of prudent healthcare can help us to tackle waste in health and care settings. **Our [Let's Not Waste](#) programme** provides an opportunity to help raise awareness and engage people in finding solutions and taking action together.

***Waste is not the responsibility of any one organisation or professional – it is everyone's responsibility.***

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1 World Economic Forum, Transforming Healthcare: Navigating Digital Health with a Value-Driven Approach, 2024. p. 7

2 Berwick, D.M. and A.D. Hackbarth, Eliminating waste in US health care. *Jama*, 2012. 307(14): p. 1513-6.

3 <https://research.senedd.wales/financial-scrutiny/frequently-asked-questions/how-much-does-the-welsh-government-spend-on-things-like-health-and-education/>

## The Bevan Commission's six domains of Waste

**W**  
Workforce



Staff turnover  
Vacancies  
Volunteers

**A**  
Administration




Appointments  
Patient Communication  
Care Coordinators

**S**  
Services



Food  
Cleaning  
Equipment

**T**  
Treatment




Medications  
Innapropriate treatment  
Errors

**E**  
Energy



Transport  
Buildings  
Utilities

**S**  
Systems



Transfer of care  
Technology  
Innapropriate referral



## Waste is everywhere

- In 2019/20, procurement in NHS Wales produced 11,458,708 kg of CO2 emissions.
- 20% of NHS and social care managers in the UK said that they spend 7-8 hours a day on admin, with many saying they “wasted” more than 20 hours per week on bureaucracy.
- 7.7% of outpatient appointments were not attended across all 7 NHS Wales Health Boards and Velindre NHS Trust.
- In Wales, only 5-10% of walking aids are returned to the NHS and refurbished or recycled.
- Up to 50% of hospital admissions may involve a prescribing error in Wales.
- NHS Wales produces up to 600,000 tonnes of waste each year.
- An estimated 80% of NHS Wales’ carbon footprint is directly linked to the goods and services they purchase.

## So, what will you do differently?

- **Workforce:** how much resource is wasted not fully maximising staff skills or drawing on low-cost support such as volunteers?
- **Administration:** what tasks can we stop doing, or do more effectively using technology? How do we reduce missed appointments?
- **Services:** how can we reduce food waste and ensure we reuse equipment wherever possible?
- **Treatment:** how many unnecessary treatments or drugs do we undertake or prescribe? How can we reduce clinical errors?
- **Energy:** do we always switch off lights, machines, computers etc. when not needed? How do we avoid unnecessary travelling for patients and professionals?
- **Systems:** do we always need to refer on for further appointments? Could we use SOS (See on

Scan to sign the pledge, join the [Let's Not Waste](https://bevancommission.org/lets-not-waste/) community, and access the full paper.

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