

Shift the dial on child health inequalities in Wales

Briefing notes on our open letter signed by over 100 paediatricians and child health experts in Wales calling for action to reduce child poverty and tackle child health inequalities.

Shifting the dial

114 members of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) have signed an open letter to the First Minister today (17.10.22) urging him to commit to clear cross-government strategy to reduce child poverty and the child health inequalities it causes. They're joining over 1000 paediatricians and child health professionals UK-wide calling for action to reduce child poverty and tackle child health inequalities.

The letters, which you can [download here](#), are addressed to political leaders in each nation, and outline a number of key recommendations which will help shift the dial on health inequalities and improve outcomes for children and young people.

What we're calling for in Wales

In Wales, we acknowledge important steps the Welsh Government is taking, including that of rolling out free school meals to all primary school children. We also note that reducing health inequalities is a Welsh Government objective across a number of policy areas, including its obesity strategy and plans for health and social care services. However, we lack a focussed and prominent strategy setting specific targets to reduce child poverty and unequal health outcomes.

In Wales, the letter calls upon the Welsh Government to:

- Acknowledge high child poverty rates, review existing programmes and publish a revised strategy to reduce child poverty
- Provide national targets to reduce child poverty rates, with clear accountability across Government.
- Expand the Children and Young People Plan so that future iterations form a comprehensive cross-departmental child health and wellbeing strategy that will address health inequalities and the impact of child poverty.

RCPCH Officer for Wales, Dr David Tuthill said:

“It is shocking to think that across the UK approximately four million children are living in poverty – and that Wales now has the worst child poverty rate of all the UK nations at 31%. The child health inequalities associated with poverty, such as poor nutrition, respiratory issues and higher rates of mortality are now more visible than ever. With this open letter to leadership, Welsh child health professionals have spoken. We can no longer ignore the damage being inflicted on children, young people and their families through poverty and inequality. Urgent action is needed.

“We are urging the Welsh Government to acknowledge our exceptionally high child poverty rates, review existing programmes and publish a revised strategy to reduce child poverty. The strategy should provide national targets to reduce child poverty rates and specific health inequality targets for key areas of child health, with clear accountability across Government. All our futures depend on how we support children and young people to develop into healthy, robust adults.”

About the RCPCH and our work on poverty and child health inequalities

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) works to transform child health through knowledge, innovation and expertise. We have over 500 members in Wales, 14,000 across the UK and over 17,000 worldwide. The RCPCH is responsible for training and examining paediatricians. We also advocate on behalf of members, represent their views and draw upon their expertise to inform policy development and the maintenance of professional standards.

With insight from paediatricians, children and young people, we have a range of resources on child health inequalities on our website, including our full policy position statement, case studies of innovative working happening within paediatrics and a toolkit for paediatricians to draw upon in their clinical practice.

You can find all of that here: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/key-topics/child-health-inequalities>

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