



By email

21st of January 2025

Re: Prevention in the Welsh Government's budget

Dear Mark,

I was heartened by statements made before Christmas by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Jeremy Miles MS, and the importance he attached to investment in prevention services as well as to reducing waiting lists.

I also strongly welcome the emphasis the new UK government has placed on prevention in health, crime and other public services. We now need the Welsh Government to make a similar commitment to prioritising action on prevention across devolved areas of responsibility.

Following engagement with Local Health Boards and other public bodies that fall under the Well-being of Future Generations Act, I am calling on the Welsh Government to protect and ringfence funding for prevention in future Welsh Government budgets. I am recommending that this includes each Welsh Government department having funding that is ringfenced for prevention. I am supported in this call by the Welsh NHS Confederation and the Health Foundation.

Current fiscal frameworks do not distinguish clearly between spending on acute services and prevention, despite the evidence that investment in prevention can deliver greater long-term return. Without action, spending on prevention will continue to be a casualty of intense pressures on day-to-day budgets and a victim of short-term thinking. This will undermine the Welsh Government's commitment to taking a long-term, prevention-led



approach to improving public services which is a duty under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

To quote the Health Foundation: “Public policy is littered with examples of prevention spending being cut to provide short-term funding to patch up front-line services, and there is too little incentive to invest in services that deliver long-term benefits.” Wales is no different. An example is the reduction of funding to Sports Wales despite the evidenced return on investment in social value of £4.44 for every £1 spent, at a time when demand from obesity and mental health needs are exponentially rising.

We saw similar thinking to protect funding for longer term outcomes when former Chancellor Gordon Brown introduced the split between capital and revenue expenditure in 1998. The creation of the RDEL (limits on resource spending) /CDEL (capital spending) split enabled the government to better track capital expenditure and boost long-term investment.

My office is actively contributing to the Welsh spending review process and promoting the agreed definition of prevention to raise awareness of the level of prevention spend and to make the case for protected preventative allocations. (See Annex below). My office is also working alongside the ZOE Institute to help define a methodology for assessing the Draft Budget in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and my Cymru Can strategy.

Over the next few years, through working closely with your Budget improvement team, we hope to see tangible improvements in the way the budget is determined to include transparency around the share of the Budget dedicated to prevention and the ways in which the Budget reflects the five ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.



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**Future
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Commissioner
for Wales

Significant investment in prevention is our only option to turn the tide on health outcomes for the people of Wales. Both our current population and our future generations need us to act boldly and urgently.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Walker

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales



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Annex: Definition of prevention as agreed by the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and Welsh Government

The definition of prevention
As agreed by Welsh Government and the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Primary prevention:
Building resilience – creating the conditions in which problems do not arise in the future. A universal approach.

Secondary prevention:
Targeting action towards areas where there is a high risk of a problem occurring. A targeted approach, which cements the principles of progressive universalism.

Tertiary prevention:
Intervening once there is a problem, to stop it getting worse and prevent it reoccurring in the future. An intervention approach.

Acute spending:
Spending, which acts to manage the impact of a strongly negative situation but does little or nothing to prevent problems occurring in the future. A remedial approach.

More information available [here](#).