

Building a Fairer Gwent

Trauma-informed Communities

A spotlight series



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Trauma-Informed Communities

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Acknowledgements

ACE Hub Wales would like to thank Professor Tracy Daszkiewicz, Joanne Foley and Stuart Bourne from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board for their contribution to this report.

Funding

The report was produced by the ACE Hub Wales, with funding from the Welsh Government. ACE Hub Wales was founded in 2017 and was set up to support Welsh Society to help create an ACE Aware Wales and make Wales a leader in tackling, preventing and mitigating ACEs. We promote the sharing of ideas and learning, and to challenge and change ways of working, so together we can break the cycle of ACEs. ACE Hub Wales is funded by Welsh Government and is hosted by Public Health Wales and is part of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Investment in Health and Wellbeing.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

ISBN: 978-1-83766-546-4

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Introduction

Research by ACE Hub Wales identified a range of initiatives at the community level which aim to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)¹, adversity, and trauma (Addis, 2022). Additionally, the publication of the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework (ACE Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales, 2022) provides an all-society approach to support a coherent, consistent approach to developing and implementing trauma-informed practice across Wales.

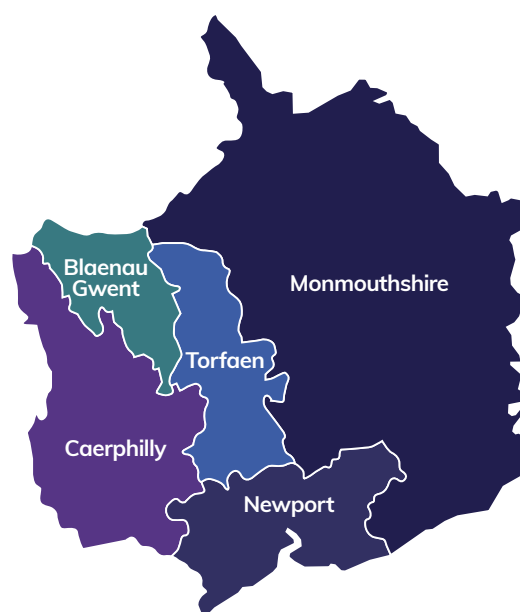
This report forms part of a series of spotlight reports, undertaken by ACE Hub Wales which focus on initiatives at the community level across Wales which align to the principles of a trauma-informed approach. This short report will outline how the Gwent region has become the first in Wales, and the first outside England, to take an approach developed by Sir Michael Marmot. 'Building a Fairer Gwent' demonstrates a trauma-informed approach through regional development to overcoming trauma and adversity linked to adverse community environments.

Gwent

Gwent is one of five electoral regions in Wales with urban, town and rural areas. It is situated in the Southeast of Wales and covers five local authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen (Figure 1).

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) measures a set of factors that include levels of income, employment, education and crime. Close to half of the areas in Blaenau Gwent are in the most deprived quintile of the WIMD, the highest for any local authority in Wales. Newport, Torfaen and Caerphilly have more than one in four areas in the most deprived quintile (Institute of Health Equity, 2023).

Figure 1: Map of Gwent



1 ACEs are traditionally understood as a set of ten traumatic events or circumstances occurring before the age of 18 which have been shown to increase the risk of adult mental health problems and debilitating diseases. Five ACE categories are forms of child abuse and neglect and five represent forms of family dysfunction that increase children's exposure to trauma.

The Gwent Well-Being Assessment (2022) highlights the significant inequalities across communities in Gwent, these include health inequalities, educational attainment, accessing good employment and home ownership (Aitken, 2022). As with other regions, inequalities across Gwent have been amplified by the direct and indirect harms of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. In Gwent, mortality from COVID-19 has been highest in the most socio-economically deprived communities, and there is now a 20-year difference in how many years women live in good health in the most and least socially deprived communities (Director of Public Health Annual Report, 2022). The report 'Building a Healthier Gwent' described the challenge of reducing health inequalities across Gwent, resulting in a reduction in the inequality gap in the number of years lived in good health between the most and least deprived communities (Director of Public Health Annual Report, 2019).

Adverse Community Environments

Resulting from adverse community environments, adverse community experiences, such as, concentrated poverty, segregation from opportunity, and community violence contribute to community trauma. Community trauma is the impact of chronic adversity across a community from various factors, including the harm that individuals, families and communities experience from economic and social structures, social institutions and relations of power, privilege, inequality and inequity (Prevention Institute, 2017).

It is acknowledged that focussing on adverse community experiences and community trauma is important in reducing exposure to ACEs, as well as minimising their long-term impact. This is in recognition that the risk of children suffering ACEs can be affected by a wide range of individual, family, community and societal circumstances and living in a community characterised by poverty and inequality increases the risk of negative life chances, including ACEs (Bellis et al., 2023).

An important part of mitigating the impact of ACEs is building resilience² and a range of approaches can prevent and respond to, the impact of ACEs and their consequences. At the community level, individual resilience can be developed by supportive social networks and strategies that help build resilience using multi-component programmes which combine different strategies to address multiple risk factors. Through the provision of programmes or services, initiatives such as parenting programmes, mentoring interventions, schools-based programmes, psychological support and community-based programmes strengthen local resources and relationships (Bellis, et al., 2023).

A growing number of cities and regions in England, including Coventry, Greater Manchester and Leeds are working with the Institute of Health Equity as 'Marmot Communities' to develop local programmes of work to take action to improve health

² Resilience typically describes the ability to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten development of a positive life course or the ability to resume one following periods of adversity (Bellis et al., 2018).

equity (Director of Public Health Annual Report, 2022). Marmot Communities recognise that health and health inequalities are mostly shaped by the social determinants of health, and work with the Institute of Health Equity to reduce inequalities in health by developing and delivering interventions and policies to improve health equity, embed health equity approaches in local systems and take a long-term, whole system approach to improving health equity (Institute of Health Equity, 2024).

The Marmot Principles

Published in 2010, the Marmot review ‘Fair Society, Healthy Lives’ was a comprehensive report that examined health inequalities across England and what could be done to reduce them (Marmot et al., 2010). The key findings were that people living in the poorest neighbourhoods would die on average seven years earlier than those living in the wealthiest areas. The report also found that the lower a person’s socioeconomic status, the more likely they were to live in poor health (Thomas, 2024). The report highlights that health inequalities result from social inequalities, as a result, action on health inequalities requires action across all the social determinants of health. Marmot also introduced the concept of ‘proportionate universalism’, where the approach is universal, benefitting all members of society but which implements more intensive support and interventions in sections of the community where the need is higher.

In 2010, the Marmot report identified six policy objectives that were necessary to reduce health inequalities; subsequently, two further principles were added (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Eight Marmot Principles

- 
- 1 → Give every child the best start in life
 - 2 → Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
 - 3 → Create fair employment and good work for all
 - 4 → Ensure a health standard of living for all
 - 5 → Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
 - 6 → Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention
 - 7 → Tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes
 - 8 → Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

(Institute of Health Equity, 2023)

A recent report by Marmot et al., (2020) highlights the socioeconomic gradient in ACEs, with children growing up in deprived areas, in poverty and those of a lower socio-economic position more likely to be exposed to ACEs compared to their more advantaged peers. Most recently, Hiam et al. (2024) asserts that in order to avert a prolonged and serious health crisis in the UK, action must be taken on the determinants of health.

Building a Fairer Gwent

In 2021, the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) agreed that the Marmot principles should be the framework for action to reduce health inequalities across Gwent (Aitken, 2022). The decision to become a Marmot region was located within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015 which provides the legislative and policy landscape to give current and future generations a good quality of life by enabling action to tackle challenges including climate change, poverty, poor health and well-being, coronavirus, improving jobs and increasing economic activity (Welsh Government, 2022).

Additionally, the Marmot principle of 'proportionate universalism' is closely aligned to the 'progressive universalism' approach, supported in Wales by Mark Drakeford, the previous First Minister, where universal services are preferred, but with additional help for those who need it most (Aitken, 2022). More recently, the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales sets the objectives for contributing towards the eradication of child poverty and the worst effects of being in poverty in Wales. This is to be achieved by attempting to drive actions to be more focussed on the needs of children in poverty, support prioritisation and collaboration and encourage partners to work in different ways (Welsh Government, 2024).

In March 2022, The Gwent PSB became the first area in Wales to commit to become a Marmot region, signalling its strategic intent to work with the Institute of Health Equity to address inequity between communities in Gwent. This approach will be developed and delivered through the five-year Gwent well-being Plan 2023-2028 (Director of Public Health Annual Report, 2022). In becoming a Marmot region, Gwent has provided a statement of intent to improving health equity and a key benefit to taking a Marmot approach is being able to take an evidence-based approach to improving the social determinants of health within Gwent (Aitken, 2022).

This is summarised by a key stakeholder:

“Gwent Public Services Board took the ambitious step to become Wales’ first Marmot region in 2021. Working with the Institute of Health Equity, an examination of the extent and impact of the social determinants of health in Gwent was undertaken. This resulted in ‘Building a Fairer Gwent’, a report published in 2023 with a series of recommendations across each of the eight Marmot principles. This work is now being taken forward with a particular focus on the best start in life, safe places, economic chances and the environment and climate. Progress will be monitored and measured over the next five years as part of Gwent Public Services Board well-being plan.”
(Stuart Bourne, Consultant in Public Health, Aneurin Bevan Gwent Public Health Team)

In Gwent, three existing programmes were used as a foundation on which to build, to achieve a reduction in inequity of outcomes for children in their early years (Director of Public Health Annual Report, 2022). These were: (1) Adverse Childhood Experiences (the recognition of the importance of tackling ACEs to address inequalities and through the lens of positive and adverse childhood experiences focussed on prevention, positivity and protective factors); (2) The Healthy Child Wales Programme (which ensures that children and their families in the early years are supported by universal and specialist services across the NHS and its partners); (3) The Early Years Integration Transformation Programme (which allow early years services and programmes to meet the family’s needs at the right time).

Additionally, Gwent have identified the following as priority areas for action (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Gwent: Priority Areas for Action

GIVE EVERY CHILD THE BEST START IN LIFE

- Improve maternity and parental leave policies.
- Address staff shortages and employ more early years staff in areas of higher deprivation
- Increase childcare provision in areas of higher deprivation

ENABLE ALL CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS TO MAXIMISE THEIR CAPABILITIES AND HAVE CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES

- Reduce the inequality gap in educational attainment through enhanced focus of initiatives (grants, adult education & training, volunteering & skills building healthy schools scheme, share prosperity funding, school absences, careers guidance, etc.) on areas of higher deprivation
- Improve mental health support in schools
- Increase apprenticeship opportunities

CREATE FAIR EMPLOYMENT FOR GOOD WORK FOR ALL

- Public services use Job Centre Plus to recruit staff and reduce local unemployment
- Ensure the Cardiff Capital Region Deal focuses on apprenticeship in areas of deprivation
- Place employability staff in every DWP office

ENSURE A HEALTH STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ALL

- Ensure staff are trained to identify and offer support to address poverty
- Pay the real living wage for all roles and procurement contracts.
- Address causes of food poverty and eliminate the need for food banks
- Work with communities to assess need for social welfare, legal and debt advice.
- Improve financial management advice in schools and workplaces

CREATE AND DEVELOP HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES AND COMMUNITIES

- Make health equity assessments a part of all planning and regeneration initiatives
- Improve the quality of the private sector and develop social determinants approaches with social housing associations
- Facilitate active transport (target new walking and cycling infrastructures, improve use of green space and local heritage, assess free bus travel) focusing on areas of deprivation.

STRENGTHEN THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF ILL-HEALTH PREVENTION

- Deliver behavioural prevention programmes equitably
- Ensure place based working recognises needs in area of higher deprivation

TACKLE RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND THEIR OUTCOME

- Gather and utilise workforce data on ethnicity, pay and grade to reduce structural racism

PURSUE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH EQUITY TOGETHER

- Reduce inequalities in access to bus and rail transport to schools and further education
- Retrofit home to improve thermal efficiency and reduce fossil fuel reliance/energy costs

To support 'Giving every Child in Gwent the Best Start in life', a number of projects are being delivered by partners across the system (see Appendix 1). These provide parents/carers with support during the first critical thousand days of life since there is strong evidence that suggests the period during pregnancy and up to the child's second birthday offers the greatest potential for impact in both improving outcomes and reducing inequalities. The following section provides details of ongoing initiatives in more detail (Examples 1-3).

Example 1: For Dads, By Dads (Torfaen)

'For Dads, By Dads' is a ten-week support programme aimed at helping new and expectant dads with children up to the age of 18 months in a safe environment. The programme features weekly workshops and talks, covering a wide range of subjects to support dads on their parenting journey. Some of the workshops include: health and wellbeing; diet and nutrition; midwife and health visitor information; psychology; and gambling and gaming.



This group has been devised following research by a number of organisations including Fathers Outreach, Tidy Butt, Gwent Psychology, Recoveries 4 All and Newport County in the Community. They found men benefited from having a safe space where they can ask questions and learn about themselves and their children as they start their journey of being a dad. The support groups will help them prepare for the change in their life that a child will bring. After completing the programme, dads will be given an opportunity to engage with local community groups, clubs and forums suitable for their needs.

Example 2: Gwent Antenatal Programme

The Gwent Antenatal Programme provides information and support through pregnancy and after birth. The Solihull Antenatal course, is a 5-week programme, designed specifically for expectant parents and their families. It encompasses a wide range of topics that aim to enhance your understanding of pregnancy, labour, birth, and your baby. The course is facilitated by Family Support Workers, Health Visitors, and Midwives and offers a nurturing experience.



Example 3: Bright Beginnings (Caerphilly)

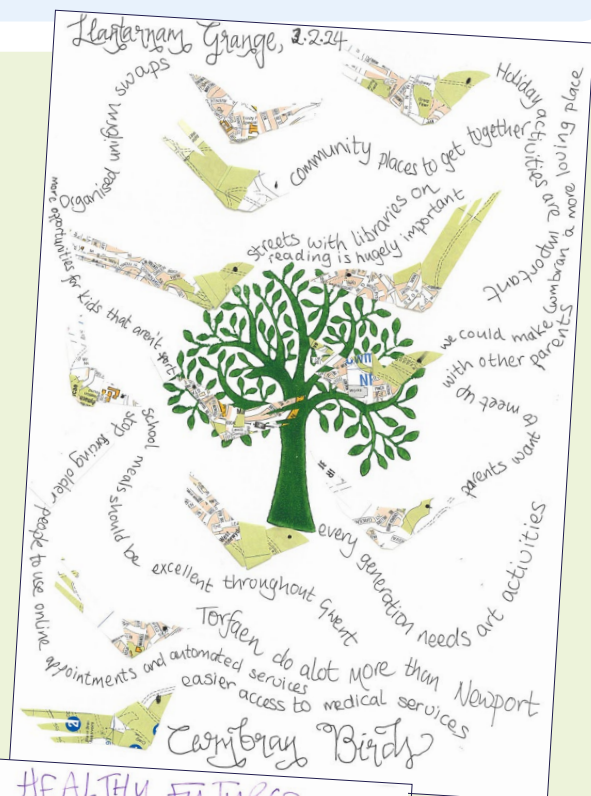
Bright Beginnings is a free 8-week programme that will support parents in the early months. Parents will receive support, information, and advice on a range of topics including feeding, developmental milestones, home safety, well-being and baby massage.



Co-Produced Artwork

Using the priorities of Building a Fairer Gwent, children and young people were engaged in a project to explore the role that creative arts can play in engaging communities in the co-creation of a vision for a healthy future. The project ran in early 2024 and involved around 318 participants (Figures 4-6).

Figures 4-6: Co-produced Artwork



Timeline and Next Steps

October 2021:

Gwent PSB established; Marmot indicators incorporated into Gwent Well-being Assessment.

March 2022:

The PSB unanimously agreed to the recommendation that Gwent PSB agrees to become a Marmot Region and to work with the UCL Institute of Health Equity to inform development of the Gwent Well-being Plan.

July 2023:

Gwent wellbeing plan 2023-2028 agreed by the PSB. The plan set two wellbeing objectives and five steps to deliver them. The plan also embedded four overarching principles on the way the PSB will work to deliver its objectives.

February/March 2024:

Workshops were run which considered the regional outcomes for each area of focus.

April 2024:

Gwent PSB met to consider options on outcomes and proposed development of integrated delivery plans for its identified four at scale areas of focus to improve well-being in Gwent. The four areas are:

- That every child has the best start in life.
- That everyone lives in a place they feel safe.
- That everyone has the same economic chances.
- That everyone lives in a climate-ready community where their environment is valued and protected.

Next Steps

- Systematically assess the needs of children in Gwent.
- Support and take forward work that started as part of the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme.
- Provide a regional focus on child poverty, supporting delivery of the national Child Poverty strategy.

24/25

- Take forward agreed work from Gwent PSB.
- Undertake a children's joint strategic needs assessment.
- Publish a children's strategy for Gwent.
- Expand delivery of making every contact count training to wider workforce.

Summary

With the publication of the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework, Wales established a foundation on which an all-society approach can be built. This approach recognises the adverse and traumatic experiences that people of all ages can be exposed to and affected by. The five practice principles (Figure 7) are explicit about the importance of community-led approaches as part of a universal approach which does no harm. This approach also recognises the natural resilience of individuals, families and communities; finally, highlighting an inclusive approach recognises the impact of diversity, discrimination and racism as well as the cultural, historical and gender inequalities which exist in society (ACE Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales, 2022).

Figure 7: Practice Principles of the Trauma-informed Wales Framework



(ACE Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales, 2022).

For Gwent PSB becoming a Marmot region signifies a collective intent to work together to improve equity across Gwent and improve the lives of all communities as a result. As the first Marmot region in Wales, there is the opportunity to draw on the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework (ACE Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales, 2022). The Trauma-Informed Wales Framework acknowledges that structural inequality, discrimination and the social determinants of health may cause distress, as well as potentially presenting a barrier for marginalised communities to access support. Additionally, it is recognised that some communities in Wales will be impacted disproportionately by adversity and trauma and where organisations and systems are not trauma-informed, this may exacerbate the impact of adversity.

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Glossary

Health Inequalities	The systematic differences in health, the care that people receive, and the quality of care and the opportunities people have to lead healthy lives; one of the key measures of health inequality is inequality in life expectancy, whereby the people living in the poorest neighbourhoods die earlier than those in wealthier areas.
Health Life Expectancy	The time people spend in 'good' or 'very good' health, based on how people perceive their own general health.
Individual Health Behaviours and Prevention	Prevention programmes and initiatives often focus on individual health behaviours, such as smoking, physical exercise, diets/nutrition, alcohol and drug use. These factors affect health inequalities, but the programmes do not address the drivers of these behaviours—'the causes of the causes'. Addressing the causes of the causes requires partnerships with wider systems to provide good education and employment, fair pay and incomes, good quality homes and neighbourhoods.
Proportionate Universalism	The principle that describes how universal policies and interventions are needed in every area but should be developed more intensely where need is higher – to be proportionate to need. The aim of a proportionate universalist approach is to raise overall levels of health at the same time as flattening the gradient in health by improving the health and wellbeing at pace where the need is higher.
Social Determinants of Health	The social and environmental conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, which shape and drive health and wellbeing. Access to good quality health care is a determinant of health but most of the social determinants of health lie outside the health care system. The unequal distribution of power, income, goods and services and inequitable access to health care, schools and education, the conditions of work and leisure, the homes, communities, towns or cities where people live – these are the structural determinants and conditions of daily life and constitute the social determinants of health. Inequalities in the social determinants result from a toxic combination of poor social policies and programmes, unfair economic arrangements, and bad politics.

Social Gradient	The social gradient shows health inequalities are experienced by all of society, not just those at the very bottom and top. Health outcomes, such as life expectancy, improve as deprivation falls.
Third Sector	Voluntary organisations, community organisations, self-help groups, charities, faith-based organisations, social enterprises, community businesses, housing associations, co-operatives and mutual organisations and partnership organisations that support the sector.
Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)	The most common measure in the UK of the socioeconomic circumstances in the places where people live. The WIMD summarises how 'deprived' an area is based on a set of factors that includes: levels of income, employment, education and crime. The WIMD is based on the Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOA), which, though small, may include areas of both high and low deprivation. The LSOAs are ranked from 'most deprived' to 'least deprived' and divided into five equal groups or quintiles. These range from the most deprived 20% (decile 1) of small areas nationally to the least deprived 20% (decile 5) of small areas nationally.
The Welsh Real Living Wage	Set by the Resolution Foundation, the Welsh real living wage was created to better estimate the wage rate needed "to ensure that households earn enough to reach a minimum acceptable living standard as defined by the public". In 2023 the Welsh real living wage was £10.90 per hour.

Appendix 1:

Marmot Principle

Action Taken in Gwent

Give every child the best start in life

Reducing inequities in early child development needs collective action by all public service organisations in Gwent to:

- Ensure a consistent, universal offer of high-quality support for all families throughout the early years.
- Provide enhanced support for families that is proportionate to need, to ensure that children don't get left behind.

Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives

Children, young people and adults in all communities need to be enabled to maximise their cognitive and non-cognitive capabilities and fulfil their potential.

- Opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development need to be created and promoted across Gwent, not only in formal educational settings, but also in the workplace and in communities.
- A starting point could be for organisations in Gwent to share good practice and align recruitment processes to make them as easy as possible for people in all communities.

Create fair employment and good work for all

Getting people into work is the first step to reducing inequity, but jobs also need to provide fair employment and good work that promotes wellbeing.

- Public Health Wales (PHW) has published a framework that local and regional organisations can use to inform action to create fair employment for all.

Ensure a healthy standard of living for all

Organisations in Gwent can play their part to break the cycle of the negative impacts of poverty being passed on to future generations by:

- Purchasing goods and services locally in Gwent to strengthen local supply.
- Opening buildings and spaces to support local communities and staff.
- Widening access to good, fair work.
- Ensuring that services across Gwent remain financially and physically accessible to all service-users.
- Providing brief intervention and signposting service-users to help on financial inclusion, mental health and well-being, plus having referral pathways in place for support with fuel and food poverty.
- Supporting staff visiting service-users' homes to recognise and take action on the signs of fuel and food poverty and assist with access to social support

Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities

The Integrated Well-being Network programme objectives are:

- To establish place-based co-ordination & development of well-being resources.
- To identify ways that hubs can be centres for well-being resources in the community.
- To develop the well-being workforce (people delivering services & support).
- To ensure easy access to well-being information & support.

Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

Organisations in Gwent can help to encourage healthy lifestyle behaviours and strengthen ill-health prevention by:

At an organisational level:

- Embedding a Make Every Contact Count approach across the organisation.
- Achieving and retain the Platinum Corporate Health Standard.
- Reviewing progress against the commitments in the Gwent Healthy Travel Charter At a team level.
- Enabling staff to make healthier choices whilst at work, through encouraging breaks, incorporating physical activity into the day, promoting healthy eating habits and access to the NHS stop smoking service, Help Me Quit.

At an individual level

- Taking all opportunities to make healthy lifestyle changes.

Tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes

To tackle racism and discrimination, organisations in Gwent can:

- Systematically gather ethnicity data by pay and grade, and to use this data to address wage gaps and inequalities in seniority.
- Ensure legal equality duties are met in recruitment and employment practices, including pay, progression and terms.
- Ensure equitable access to their services, informed by effective engagement with all ethnic minority populations in the development and delivery of services and interventions.
- Improve their workforce's cultural literacy and invest in the human and other resources required for their workforce to be fully culturally competent and inclusive in their communications.
- Ensure all significant policy and planning has equality built in from the start.
- Provide public engagement which ensures that services are appropriate, acceptable and accessible to individuals of all ethnicities.

Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

The draft Gwent Public Service Board Well-being Plan is proposing the following actions:

- Reduce the environmental impact of production and consumption. Declare a nature emergency in Gwent.
- Respond to the climate emergency and protect and prepare communities for the risk associated with climate change.
- Explore and promote community energy projects.
- Transform food transport and energy in Gwent.
- Recognise biodiversity as an asset, addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss and better managing the pressures on natural environments.

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