# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the World Health Organization Europe** |
| **DATE**  | **01 February 2024** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Today, I am pleased to highlight the renewal of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh Government and the World Health Organisation, Europe.

The MOU covers areas of health equity and rights; investment for health and wellbeing and the essential underlying conditions of health; and sustainable development and prosperity for all. Our partnership has already enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of what drives health inequalities through the [Welsh Health Equity Status Report Initiative (WHESRi)](https://phwwhocc.co.uk/ih/our-work/welsh-health-equity-status-report-initiative-whesri/). Wales was one of the first in Europe to adopt this ground breaking WHO initiative.

Our work with the WHO highlighted the five essential conditions needed to ensure health equity, including the health and care system; income security and social protection; living conditions; social and human capital; and employment and working conditions. It shines a light on the significant gaps in self-reported health between those who are financially secure and those who are not.

Socioeconomic disadvantage, such as unemployment and lower income is associated with ill health and is more likely to trigger unhealthy behaviours such as smoking.

And people with ill health or disabilities (both physical and mental) are more likely to be unemployed or to have poor-quality jobs with fewer opportunities for advancement and this is likely to have an impact on their children.

Tackling inequalities which are so deeply ingrained by years of depleting funding from the UK Government and the subsequent years of austerity means that we must do more with less.

Going into 2024-25 we must recognise the limitations on Welsh Government funding, with our budget being worth around £1.3bn less in real terms than when it was set in 2021. This means we need to think differently. To repurpose, to reframe and to rethink.

This is a significant, but not impossible challenge.

Despite the financial pressures we face as a government, we are committed to tackling inequality in all its forms. This sits as a ‘golden thread’ that runs through our Programme for Government.

We are unique in Wales in that we have a legal framework in which to set this work through the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Through setting our ambitions against the seven well-being goals, we are more likely to see a Wales that is economically, socially, environmentally just, and a Wales we would want our children and grandchildren to inherit from us. Our world leading and much envied Act ensures a “Health in All Policies approach”.

But whilst we are proud of the framework that we work within, we recognise that we still have a long way to go and much to learn.

We are one of six governments which currently form the Wellbeing Economy Government Network. Our work with the WHO enables us, alongside other nations, to consider the health and care system’s role in delivering an economy designed to serve people and the planet.

Providing an opportunity for sharing experiences and learning from others will strengthen our resolve and impact, this is why it is my intention next month to share our experiences in Wales with our European colleagues.

The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding will help strengthen connections internationally and provide a strong lever to support us in achieving the goals of a healthier and more prosperous Wales.