



# HEALTHY LIVES, FAIRER FUTURES



The steps we should take so that everyone in Scotland can have an equal chance of a long and healthy life

A CALL TO ACTION FROM THE  
FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN SCOTLAND

# FOREWORD

*“Some hae meat and canna eat, And some wad eat that want it;  
But we hae meat, and we can eat, Sae let the Lord be thankit.”*

Selkirk Grace attributed to Robert Burns

When Robert Burns recited this grace to the Earl of Selkirk, the public health inequalities evident at that time, must have seemed inevitable and perhaps insurmountable. Today, people in Scotland still experience many health inequalities. But we now have evidence that such inequalities need not be inevitable. And although very challenging, the evidence shows ways in which we can work together in Scotland to ensure that all our people can enjoy equal access to opportunities for a healthy and happy life.

FPH has some 350 members living and working in Scotland, many of whom have supported the production of this call to action. *Healthy Lives, Fairer Futures* advises the people of Scotland and their government on where to focus their action on health inequalities for best effect in Scotland.

As the Faculty of Public Health in Scotland, we want to support action in all the areas we have identified in *Healthy Lives, Fairer Futures*. And to play our part, together with our local communities and our government, in the creation of a healthier and fairer Scotland for everyone.

**Doctor Julie Cavanagh**  
**Convenor of the FPH in Scotland**

# OUR PRIORITIES

## HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES

1. Include health in all policies for Scotland

## REDUCE HEALTH INEQUALITIES

2. Make taxation more progressive, including income tax, to reduce inequalities.
3. Mitigate the adverse impacts of welfare reform on our most vulnerable.
4. Introduce a minimum wage for healthy living.

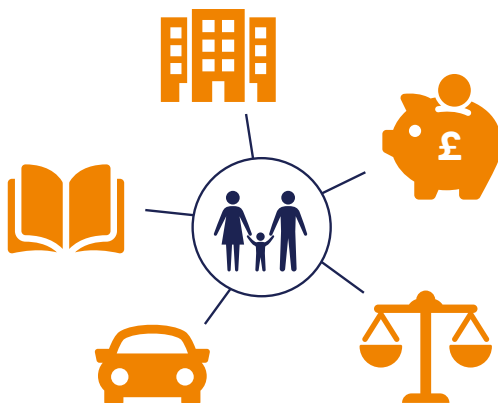
## IMPROVE HEALTH FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

5. Reduce child poverty and mitigate its adverse impacts.
6. Prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences.

## CREATE HEALTHY PLACES

7. Use the Community Empowerment Act to improve population mental health.
8. Increase investment in integrated public transport and active travel and prioritise walking and cycling in the built environment.

# INCLUDE HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES FOR SCOTLAND



Too many people in Scotland are not able to enjoy the same chance of a long and healthy life as their peers across the UK and Europe.<sup>1</sup> We know that people's health and wellbeing is powerfully determined by the environment - being able to make the most of opportunities for a long and healthy life - as well as by high quality health services.<sup>2</sup> We also know that people's health can be adversely affected by public policies where health is not the major focus.<sup>3</sup> In Scotland, we therefore need all our public policies to take health into account, so that *all* people in Scotland have an equal chance to enjoy a long and healthy life.<sup>4</sup>

A key way to ensure that the health of all people in Scotland is always a priority is to ensure that all public policies are specifically designed to impact positively on population health, and to address health inequalities by recognising health as a human right for everyone in Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

**To achieve a focus on health in all public policies in Scotland, we therefore call on:**

- ✓ **our government to make a strong commitment to this approach;**
- ✓ **our people to recognise health for everyone in Scotland as a basic human right.**

# 2

## MAKE TAXATION MORE PROGRESSIVE TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH

THE **LEAST** WEALTHY  
HALF OF HOUSEHOLDS OWNED



LESS THAN  
↓

# 2%

OF FINANCIAL  
WEALTH

The inequalities in health that people experience in Scotland result from a combination of inequalities in income, employment, education opportunities, and where we live.<sup>5</sup> Ensuring income levels are sufficient for people to live on is essential to health. Reducing the gap between the incomes of the richest and poorest in Scotland will powerfully help to reduce inequalities in health.

A more progressive tax system would help achieve greater equality in income and improve health for all people in Scotland. A progressive tax system could be achieved by reducing tax expenditures and removing other tax reliefs that currently mainly benefit high-income groups.<sup>6</sup> Introduction of a more progressive tax system in Scotland would require changes in the law, as well as better recognition of the positive impact that such a system would have on the health of people in Scotland.<sup>7</sup>

To reduce inequalities in Scotland, we call on:

- ✓ Our government to introduce policies to increase the progressivity of our tax systems, including income tax;
- ✓ Our people to recognise the benefits of a more progressive tax system for Scotland as a whole.

# MITIGATE THE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM ON OUR MOST VULNERABLE

Recent UK welfare reforms impact on the most vulnerable people in Scotland.<sup>8</sup> This exacerbates social inequality in Scotland, and harms people's health. The Scottish Parliament has the powers to mitigate the harms of the UK Government's welfare reforms.<sup>9</sup>

Actions to mitigate against the impact of the UK welfare reforms should ideally be applied with a scale and intensity proportionate to the level of disadvantage.<sup>2,10</sup>



**To minimise the potential harms of UK Welfare reforms on our most vulnerable people in Scotland, we call on our government in Scotland to:**

- ✓ **Continue using its powers through the Discretionary Housing Payment in Scotland to mitigate the effects of the under-occupancy charge (Bedroom Tax).**
- ✓ **Subsidise access to welfare advice so that it is accessible for all those who need it in Scotland.**
- ✓ **Develop strategies that reduce the stigma for those who receive benefits, dispelling popular myths about the current benefits system.**

# 4

## INTRODUCE A MINIMUM WAGE FOR HEALTHY LIVING



DON'T EARN THE LIVING WAGE

THAT'S

# 467,000

PEOPLE

Every person in Scotland needs a minimum level of personal income to have the best chance of a long and healthy life.<sup>11</sup> The Living Wage is the minimum pay rate recommended to support healthy living. While employers can choose to pay the Living Wage, they are only required by law to pay a lower wage known as the National Minimum Wage.<sup>12</sup> This means that many people in Scotland do not have the minimum level of personal income required. The situation is even worse for our most vulnerable people, because working tax credits have been frozen.<sup>13</sup>

**We therefore call on our government to:**

- ✓ **make the Living Wage the National Minimum Wage in Scotland.**
- ✓ **supplement the National Minimum Wage to take account of the income lost due to frozen tax credits.**

**We also call on employers in Scotland to:**

- ✓ **acknowledge their responsibility to their local community by ensuring that the people they employ have an income which enables the best chance of a long and healthy life.**

# REDUCE CHILD POVERTY AND MITIGATE ITS ADVERSE IMPACTS

5

# 182,000

**CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND  
LIVE IN POVERTY DESPITE HAVING**

Poverty profoundly affects children's physical, mental and social wellbeing and reduces their chances of a long and healthy life.<sup>14</sup> In Scotland, families on a low income are particularly vulnerable to recent tax and benefits changes. This particularly harms our children.<sup>15</sup> Worryingly, the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on 'Health in All Policies' recently found that the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015 impacted adversely on our children.<sup>17</sup>

We thus welcome the introduction of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill and support UNICEF's recommendation to our UK Government that "*The impact on children should be one of the first considerations of government before agreement on actions to reduce the deficit.*"<sup>16</sup>

# ONE

**PERSON IN THEIR  
HOUSEHOLD IN  
WORK**



**To reduce child poverty and mitigate the damage to our children, we therefore call on:**

- ✓ **our government to use all of the policy levers at its disposal to reduce child poverty in Scotland over the next decade.**
- ✓ **our people to recognise this priority and work in our communities to minimise poverty and maximise our children's opportunities to flourish.**



# PREVENT ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

6

Many of our children in Scotland are exposed to these types of adverse experiences, such as feeling unsafe, living in poverty, inadequate housing and difficult family situations. These Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) greatly increase our children's risk of poor health.<sup>18 20</sup>

Children's services in Scotland currently mainly focus on responding after ACEs have occurred. However, much more action is needed to prevent our children experiencing adverse circumstances in the first place.<sup>19</sup>

Action is required across all areas of government, as well as our communities, because of the wide range of adverse childhood experiences.<sup>21</sup>

50%



REPORT HAVING



**To prevent the impact of adverse childhood experiences and help the children of Scotland flourish we therefore call on our government to:**

- ✓ **Consider whole of society approaches and sector specific strategies to improve safe environments for children in families, communities and society.**
- ✓ **Ensure services and policies recognise ACEs risk factors at an early stage, build resilience and offer support for children, young people and adults who have experienced ACEs.**

14%



REPORT HAVING



## 7

# USE THE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACT TO IMPROVE POPULATION MENTAL HEALTH



One in four people in Scotland will experience a mental health problem at some point each year.<sup>25</sup> People with a mental illness may die up to 20 years earlier than otherwise.<sup>22 23 24</sup> The implementation of the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy: 2017-2027, will potentially yield significant improvements. A focus on mental wellbeing and function,<sup>26</sup> will result in greater resilience in individuals and communities.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act aims to empower and enable people to have greater ownership of land and buildings and work in partnership with communities to develop approaches which meet local needs, build on existing assets and increase involvement in decisions about local planning and delivery of services.<sup>27</sup>

**To use the Community Empowerment Act to improve population mental health, we therefore call on:**

- ✓ **Our government to foster participation and community ownership of local assets.**
- ✓ **Our people to grasp opportunities to become involved in local community decisions.**

# 8

## INCREASE INVESTMENT IN INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ACTIVE TRAVEL, AND PRIORITISE WALKING AND CYCLING IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

ONLY  
**1.9%**  
OF THE TRANSPORT  
BUDGET WENT  
TOWARDS BUILDING

WALKING



CYCLING



PATHS IN 2015

Active travel can improve our health by increasing our levels of physical activity, improving our air quality and tackling climate change. Current barriers include concerns about road safety and the long distances often involved in journeys throughout rural Scotland.

Although overall road traffic deaths in Scotland have fallen over recent years, more can be done.<sup>28</sup> Reducing traffic volume and speed in populated areas can help, as well as innovative design of road spaces.<sup>29</sup>

Active travel in Scotland has received considerable policy support. However, for the whole population to benefit, even greater integration of public transport with active travel is needed, including health impact assessments for all large scale developments.

**To increase active travel, we therefore call on our government to:**

- ✓ **Invest more in integrated public transport and active travel**
- ✓ **Prioritise health in the development and design of transport routes, and strengthen the requirements to prioritise walking and cycling when considering the design of the built environment and associated infrastructure.**

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The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) is a professional organisation that promotes, for public benefit, the advancement of knowledge in the field of public health. As a registered charity, FPH supports those working in public health to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards of personal professional competence. And through collaboration of its several thousand expert professional members, FPH offers the public facility of independent and authoritative public health guidance.

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## **#HealthyLivesFairerFutures**



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