



Your Voter Guide on Health: Welsh Elections 2026

Why this matters to you

This election will shape your health and your family's health for years to come. As public health professionals, we want to help you choose politicians who will genuinely improve health and wellbeing in Wales.

Understanding health: more than hospitals and doctors

We all need the important building blocks of health to stay well: safety and security, a good affordable home, enough money to live on, good food, family and friends, education, transport, healthcare when we need it, green spaces, and strong communities.

When people don't have these basics, they get sick more often and die younger.
This is unfair and it can be prevented.

Wales's health challenges right now

- **1 in 4 children** grow up in poverty
- **7.2 million days** lost through sickness each year
- **18% of homes** pose risks to health
- **50,000 more diabetes cases** expected in 10 years
- **3,845 deaths each year on average due to smoking** (three times higher in poorest communities)
- **1 in 4 children are overweight** by the end of first year of school
- **1 in 4 children of school year 1 have tooth decay** (over 1 in 3 in the most deprived areas)

We can do better. The next Welsh Government can make a real difference.



How to use this guide

1. Read party manifestos
2. Use the checklist below - tick as you go:
 - 3 - Strong commitment** (Clear policy with funding)
 - 2 - Weak commitment** (Mentioned but vague)
 - 1 - Not mentioned** (Not in manifesto)
3. Compare results - which party has most strong commitments?

Top 10 Priorities for Health

These policies make the biggest difference. Focus here first.

Policy	What this means	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4
1. Reduce child poverty	More children have enough to eat, warm homes, opportunities				
2. Real living wage	Wages that cover cost of living				
3. More affordable homes	Building more homes, bringing more properties into use, especially social housing				
4. Free healthy school meals	Continue free primary school meals and breakfasts, and nutritious meals for all children				
5. Shift NHS budget to prevention	More spending on keeping people healthy				
6. Better sustainable public transport	Easier, cheaper, convenient routes for those who most need it, free for young people				
7. Make healthy food affordable	Healthy options easy to buy, stop targeting children, phase out junk food advertising				
8. Stop tobacco and reduce alcohol harm	Policy and regulation to help those who smoke/vape/harmfully drink to quit and stop children from ever starting				



9. More GPs, NHS dentists and community health and social care	Care closer to home: preventive, co-ordinated continuity of care				
10. Green and blue spaces for all	Lots of parks, trees, playgrounds, seaside or waterways. Near where you live				

Full Policy Checklist

Children and families

Children's early years shape their whole lives. Good policies here prevent problems for decades.

Policy	What this means	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4
Reduce child poverty	Give every family enough to be healthy				
Support for parents	Help with childcare, flexible work				
Health visitors for families	Regular checks, extra support for those who need it most				
Reduce childhood trauma	Prevent abuse, support to prevent crises, support families in crisis, mental wellbeing support				
Support children with additional needs	Better resources for ALN (additional learning needs) and disabilities)				
Free healthy school meals	Continue free primary school meals and breakfasts, and nutritious meals for all children				



Work and income

Sufficient income and a meaningful role help you maintain your health. And support your family and community.

Policy	What this means	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4
Real living wage	Everyone has enough to be healthy				
Help people stay in work/get back to work	Support for long-term sickness				
Reduce cost of living	Lower bills, affordable essentials				
Workplace equality	Close pay gaps (gender, ethnicity, disability) and enable workforce diversity				
Value unpaid roles	Support carers and volunteering				

Housing and transport

Good quality housing and transport protects physical and mental health in the long term

Policy	What this means	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4
More affordable homes	Building more homes, bringing more properties into use, especially social housing				
Better private rentals	Safer, warmer rental homes with secure tenancies				
Safe walking and cycling	Well-maintained, protected footpaths and cycle lanes. Enforce no pavement parking,				
Better sustainable public transport	Easier, cheaper, convenient routes for those who most need it, free for young people				
Maintain the 20mph speed limit	Keep current policy in place to reduce deaths and injuries, and reduce vehicle insurance costs				



Health and Social Care

The NHS spends most money treating people after they're sick. We need more spent on preventing illness.

Policy	What this means	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4
Free NHS for everyone	Keep NHS publicly funded and free				
Accessible and good quality health and social care for everyone	Make access fair for everyone, and put the money where the needs are				
More GPs, NHS dentists and community health and social care	Care closer to home: preventive, co-ordinated continuity of care through more funding, staffing, and buildings				
Shift NHS budget to prevention	More spending on keeping people healthy				
Stop tobacco	Policy and regulation to help those who smoke/vape to quit and stop children from ever starting				
Reduce alcohol harm	Policy and regulation to help people reduce alcohol use and harm to others				
Make healthy food affordable	Healthy options easy to buy, stop targeting children, phase out junk food advertising				

Climate and environment

Climate change affects health through flooding, food shortages, and poor air quality.

Policy	What this means	Party 1	Party 2	Party 3	Party 4
Protect from climate harms	Flood defences, heatwave plans				
Food security	Everyone can access nutritious food				
Decarbonisation	Move to low carbon energy and transport				
Green and blue spaces for all	Lots of parks, trees, playgrounds, seaside. Near where you live				



Making your decision

Look at your completed checklist:

- Which party has the strongest **commitments**?
- Which areas matter most to you and your family?
- Do promises include clear plans and funding?

Remember: Good health policies save money long-term by keeping people out of hospital.

Questions to ask candidates

1. "How will you reduce child poverty in Wales?"
2. "What's your plan to shift NHS spending toward prevention?"
3. "How will you make sure everyone can afford a healthy home?"
4. "Where will the money come from?"

More information

- **How the Senedd Elections work** [Welsh elections 2026: Senedd Cymru \(Welsh parliament\) | Institute for Government](#)
- **Party manifestos:** Please find these on each party website
- **Evidence:**
 - Professional expertise of the members of the Faculty of Public Health in Wales
 - Public Health Wales [Working together for a healthier Wales: Five policy priorities](#)
- The introduction was written with the help of AI (co-pilot) but the content of the policies was not helped by AI and is entirely from the contributions of Faculty members



**FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**

Protecting and improving the health of the public
through the organised efforts of our members

**Your vote matters.
Use it to choose better health for Wales.**

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