

The public health implications of Brexit: A HIA Approach

Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit



Overview

- Carried out July – December 2018. Short timeframe.
- Scope - Wales only; comprehensive/complex; participatory; assesses potential impact; unique
- Methods: literature review guided by a detailed protocol, stakeholder workshop and 25 interviews, population health profile
- Publication - January 21st 2019
- Very positively received – Health Minister referred to it in Senedd Brexit debate 22nd January.
- Disseminated nationally/internationally
- Monitoring and evaluation taking place – Rapid Review and Update published October 11th 2019.

Key Findings – Overview

- A wide range of direct **potential** impacts across the *determinants of health* – many of which affect the whole population.
- A wide range of **potential population groups** affected
- Probable moderate-major **negative impacts** in the short/med term
- Some possible moderate-major **opportunities** identified in the long term – all contingent on policy direction and investment
- Indirect impact on **mental well-being possible** due to uncertainty, economic impacts, community/family relationships, loss of rights
- **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** (WFG Act) provides a *unique context* can maximise any positive impact
- **Trade and trade agreements** are a key determinant of health

Policy mechanisms through which Brexit directly impacts on health and well-being

- Changing regulatory standards and legal frameworks
- Terms of future trade policy and trade agreements
- End of freedom of movement, changes to immigration policies
- Rights of EU Nationals to live and work in the UK
- Regulatory divergence – customs and border impacts
- Loss of jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
- Reduced access to key coordinating public health systems
- Reduced access to data, intelligence and evidence sharing
- Reduced access to EU funding
- Leaving the single market and / or customs union

Mechanisms through which Brexit indirectly impacts on health and well-being

- Economic decline, inflation and linked reduction in funding for the public sector, infrastructure and key community assets
- Increased uncertainty over the future
- Increase in hate crime
- Increased political engagement and participation

Potential impacts on the determinants of health identified

Potential direct impacts

- Economic conditions
- Working conditions
- Environmental regulations
- Supply chains – e.g. food
- Immigration - recruitment, skills
- Access to healthcare supplies and networks
- Funding for R & D

Potential indirect impacts

- Mental wellbeing – increased anxiety, reduced sense of control
- Family life - uncertainty
- Racism, hate crime
- Local authority budgets / local infrastructure
- Alcohol / drug use

Potential impacts identified: population groups

- Whole population
- Those at potential risk of increased negative impact:
 - Families impacted by uncertain / new immigration regulations
 - EU citizens living in Wales
 - People who are living on low income
 - People who are unemployed / at risk of unemployment
 - People living in areas with poor economic and health indicators
 - People living in areas where large employers may move
 - Areas of Wales that have been significant beneficiaries of EU funding
 - People in need of health and social care services
 - Black and minority ethnic groups
 - Farmers / rural communities
 - Ports and Coastal areas
 - Men and Women

Recommendations

1. Public Bodies should ensure *coordinated actions* are in place to address future areas of action
2. Policies and actions should be prioritised in order to address the *impacts on population groups*
3. *Leadership* needs to continue across all Brexit issues in order to provide overall direction to Wales' response in the short to long term
4. Public Bodies should establish a *joint organisational framework* to develop, co-ordinate and implement their response to Brexit
5. *Data and intelligence* across agencies relating to the potential impacts of Brexit should be combined

Recommendations - continued

6. *WFG Act* should provide a framework for response to Brexit
7. *Further research* is needed on the impact of Brexit on a number of areas e.g. mental health and well-being, community resilience and cohesion
8. The public health system should consider how to build knowledge, skills and capacity to influence and contribute to *trade agreements*
9. *Monitor and evaluate* the utilisation of the HIA

Influencing long term policy and planning

- Welsh Government and PHW strategic workshop – August 2019. Commitment to continue to view policy and actions through the lens of the Brexit HIA
- PHW IMTP workshops – September / October 2019. Long term strategic planning to be underpinned by a consideration of the Brexit HIA findings
- HIA viewed as a beneficial process to mobilise HIAP and address major challenges and events
- BMJ Letter published – October 2019....wider dissemination and influence
- Case Study in WHO 'HIA Implementation in Andalusia' report
- Conference dissemination – Welsh PH Conference, FPH in Scotland, European PH Conference, The Lancet....

Brexit Health Impact Assessment – Rapid Review and Update

January 21st to September 13th 2019

- Published on 11th October 2019
- All the impacts identified in the HIA published in January remain valid
- Emerging evidence and policy has changed the likelihood and/or intensity of some impacts
- Some new areas of impact identified



Methodology

- Based on ongoing searches of academic and grey literature relevant to Brexit and public health. The findings are used to develop a “Brexit reading list”, which is shared with over 100 subscribers from Wales and beyond.
- This reading list has been used to identify key articles published between 1st January 2019 and 13th September 2019. These sources have been analysed to produce this rapid review and update.
- This assessment of openly available, published evidence has been carried out at pace and reflects a ‘snap-shot’ in time. It should not be viewed as exhaustive or final.

Key policy pathways linked to a 'no-deal' Brexit

- Negative impact on the economy
- Increased tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade
- Loss of EU collaboration and alignment
- Increased uncertainty for non UK EU nationals living in the UK, and UK nationals living in the EU
- Positive or negative impact on mental well-being

Determinants where likelihood/intensity of impact has changed

Little change in areas of potential positive impact

For potential negative impacts:

- **Food standards** – likelihood of a major negative impact has **increased** from possible to probable.
- **Food supply** – likelihood of a major negative impact has **increased** from possible to probable.
- **Environmental regulations e.g. air quality, bathing water quality** – likelihood of a major negative impact has **increased** from possible to probable.
- **Research & development funding for health related technologies and treatments** – a confirmed negative impact has **reduced** in intensity from major to moderate.
- **Reciprocal (cross-border) health care** – the likelihood and intensity of a negative impact has **reduced** from probable to possible and major to moderate, respectively.

New potential determinants and population groups impacted

Positive impacts

- Potential impact **related to house prices**, where Brexit-linked slowing/decline in house prices may be **good for low/middle income earners**. However, it could make it harder to sell or move out of poor quality housing or reduce the ability to subsidise the building of affordable homes.
- **Small business owners/employers** who import or export goods and services. Potential increased opportunities for export due to reduced value of Pound Sterling (GBP) but dependent on future policy and trade deals.

New potential determinants and population groups impacted

Negative impacts

- Public safety and law enforcement
- Waste management
- Economic impact due to changes in immigration
- Potential to attract skilled workers into key sectors in Wales from within the UK and non-EU nations
- Fishing policy/ funding
- Tackling illicit drugs
- NHS leadership and governance
- Mental health
- Community and third sector services
- Immigrants
- People with a range of disabilities
- UK citizens and families living in the EU

Key finding: vulnerable groups and cumulative impacts

- Whilst Brexit will affect the general population as a whole, there could be **population groups** who potentially will be **adversely affected** by Brexit in a **multi-faceted, cumulative way**.
- Needs of identified vulnerable groups (particularly those who are likely to experience cumulative impacts) should be prioritised, including through **active engagement and further research** to inform any possible mitigating actions