

# 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 21<sup>st</sup> 2019
- Very positively received – Health Minister referred to it in Senedd Brexit debate 22<sup>nd</sup> January.
- Disseminated nationally/internationally
- Monitoring and evaluation taking place – Rapid Review and Update published October 11<sup>th</sup> 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

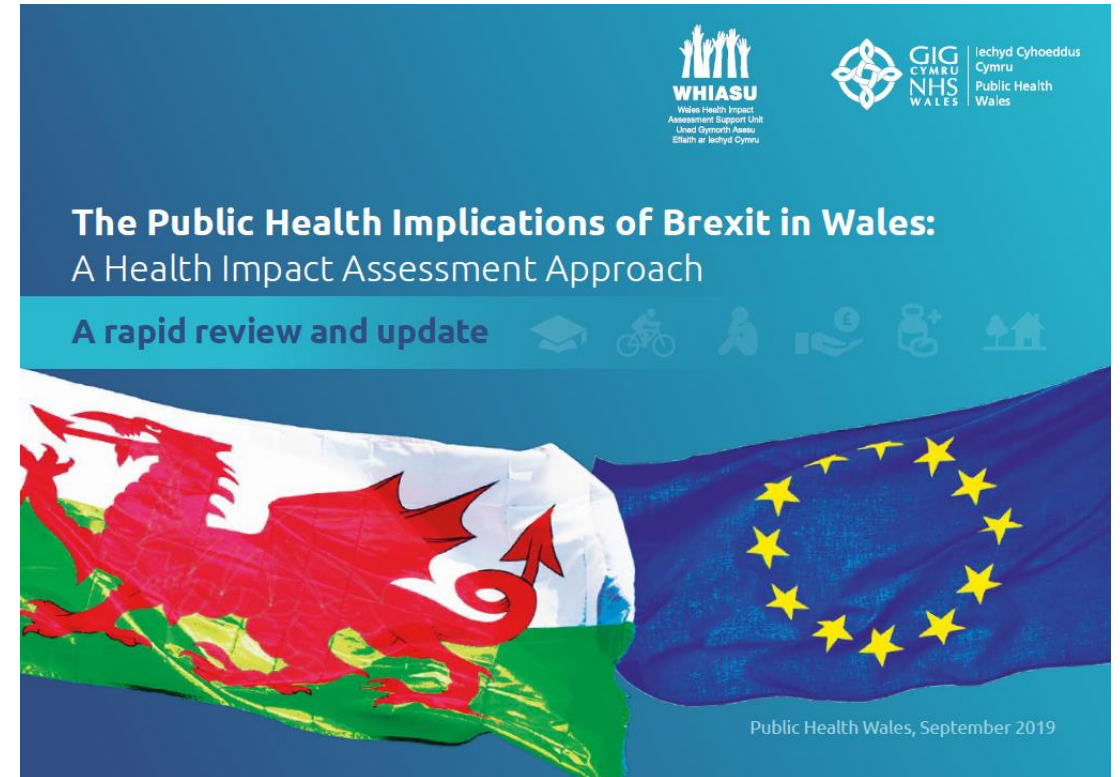
# Influencing long term policy and planning

- 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 21<sup>st</sup> to September 13<sup>th</sup> 2019

- Published on 11<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 and 13<sup>th</sup> 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