IS A PUBLIC HEALTH BILL NEEDED IN WALES?
THE BIG HEALTH DEBATE – HAVE YOUR SAY

Welsh Government, through a Green Paper, is consulting on the need for a Public Health Bill, asking whether or not new legislation can help us create a healthier population and reduce health inequalities.

In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan we have made good progress in improving the health of the population – people are living longer and enjoying better health. For example:

- The percentage of adults who smoke is decreasing
- Premature death rates from circulatory diseases are decreasing

However health is not improving fast enough and some people are being left behind. For example more than half of adults and a third of children are overweight or obese; and a child born in the most disadvantaged area of Cardiff can expect to live 10 years less than a child born in the most affluent area. This gap is getting worse.
Welsh Government highlights that:

- A Public Health Bill is an opportunity for Wales to make a step change in health and well-being
- Wales has the opportunity to be a world leader in safeguarding the interests of the Welsh people
- Legislation is arguably the most powerful tool available to governments to direct long-term policy goals

The consultation provides examples of how legislation has been used in other countries such as Scotland and Sweden to promote better health, and starts a discussion about whether or not introducing a new law could help to improve and protect health in Wales. The smoking ban in enclosed public spaces is an example of using legislation to improve the public’s health – it has been effective in reducing exposure to second hand smoke and even in numbers of hospital admissions due to heart attack. Other ideas include legislation to tackle obesity (for example regulating portion sizes) or restricting happy hours for the sale of alcohol.

The suggested purpose of a new Bill for Wales would be to place statutory duties on bodies to consider public health issues. Welsh Government wants our opinion on several suggested areas for action:

- A duty on Welsh Ministers (and other statutory bodies) to consider health issues in policy making (major or all policies)
- A duty on a range of bodies to consider health issues with a view to reducing health inequalities
- How could this work?
- Requiring appropriate bodies to consider health issues with a view to strengthening community involvement in decisions which affect their health and their health services

This is an important opportunity to have your say on whether Wales needs a Public Health Bill and what it might include. **Consultation closes on 20 February 2013.** Please consider providing a response:

1. Individually through returning a WG reply card or through this link
2. Through responding for your organisation
3. We will also prepare a Cardiff Partnership Board response (please send your comments to Deborah.Page2@wales.nhs.uk by 8th February 2013)