

# Wales: A Better Country

The Strategic Agenda of the  
Welsh Assembly Government

September 2003



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



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# Introduction

Welcome to *Wales: A Better Country* - the strategic agenda of the new Welsh Assembly Government.

Three years ago we published the first strategic plan for Wales - *Betterwales.com*. That plan guided partners and agencies to shape their own programmes so that we could all make the most positive impact on the issues that matter to Wales. With the 2003 - 2007 Assembly now underway, it is time for this new agenda to provide fresh direction for all of us who are working together for the benefit of Wales and its three million people.

*Wales: A Better Country* sets out:

- our guiding vision of a fairer, more prosperous, healthier and better educated country, rooted in our commitment to social justice and to putting health and wealth creation that is sustainable at the heart of policy-making;
- the radical agenda we have for public services in Wales, with our programme for delivering the manifesto commitments;
- the priority issues which are broader than any one section of government and where smarter working and working together can make a bigger and longer-lasting impact; and
- the way we want to deliver jointly with our partners in local government, business, the trade unions and the voluntary sector.

The resources available to us will continue to grow steadily over the next two years. We will ensure that these additional resources are put to best use and deliver the maximum possible for the people of Wales. Adjustments to our budgets, to ensure they match our evolving needs, will be made through the normal Assembly budgeting procedures and in agreeing targets with our sponsored bodies.

This agenda sets a challenge to all concerned with the future of Wales. With devolution, our destiny as regards health, wealth, education, the environment, and the domestic agenda more widely, is increasingly in our own hands. We need to work together to shape a positive destiny, reflecting our heritage but also confident, outward looking and enjoying the challenges that the twenty first century will set us. I look forward to working with you to deliver that better country we all want to live in. To live in that country we first have to create the conditions for it. We are ready for that responsibility.

*Rhodri Morgan AM*



Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM

# Vision

Wales is starting the 21st century with new potential as well as some old challenges.

Unemployment is currently at low levels - 4.6% on the international standard count - lower than the rest of the UK and much lower than most of our European partners. That reflects real progress in the on-going task of reinventing Wales' economic base. Our education system is producing record results and we have university departments, world class in teaching and research.

We have our own devolved government, the first Government for Wales ever, or at least since the Middle Ages, that is directly accountable to the people of Wales and with the job of framing policies tailored to Welsh needs.

We still have our strong sense of local community. Our creative industries and artists have world standing. We are moving towards becoming a truly bilingual nation, with the numbers recorded as able to speak Welsh on the rise in the last census. We are increasingly playing a role in Europe, and we are working with a wide range of international partners, for instance on Sustainable Development.

Our natural and man-made environment is exceptionally rich and diverse and provides great opportunities for tourism and active recreation. With planned reforms to the EU Common Agricultural Policy, the scope for the land-based economic sectors to benefit the natural environment and local communities is growing.

We need now to build on those strengths and on Wales' unique identity in order to establish a distinct sustainable future for Wales. This means establishing a competitive advantage for Wales based on a clear identity and real strengths. And through doing that we must help those communities that have been on the receiving end of the negative impacts of economic and social change in the twentieth century, and address our remaining big

challenges - the need to help more people into work; create better jobs and skills; improve health, and build strong and safe communities.

Our vision is therefore for a sustainable future for Wales where action for social, economic and environmental improvement work together to create positive change:

- promoting a diverse, competitive, high added-value economy, with high quality skills and education, that minimizes demands on the environment;
- action on social justice that tackles poverty and poor health, and provides people and their communities with the means to help themselves and break out of the poverty trap;
- action in our built and natural environment that enhances pride in the community, supports bio-diversity, promotes local employment and helps to minimize waste generation, energy and transport demands;
- strengthening Wales' cultural identity and helping to create a bilingual country;
- ensuring all our children and future generations enjoy better prospects in life, and are not landed with a legacy of problems bequeathed by us;
- supporting people to live healthy and independent lives;
- promoting openness, partnership and participation.



# Working together on the big issues

Achieving our vision means ensuring that our work and that of our partners and agents contributes to this big agenda, of creating a sustainable future for Wales. Our manifesto `top ten` commitments mark a new step on this agenda for change. Each of them is seeking to address fundamental and connected issues around health, communities, skills and jobs and to invest for the long term.

## Top Ten Commitments

Commitment	Aim	Implementation plans
Abolish all prescription charges	To ensure people are not barred from treatment through cost, and increase in work benefits to encourage economic activity	Phase out prescription charges over the next three years with an initial reduction in price in 2004
£100m crime fighting fund	To reduce fear of crime and address drug-related crime, including effective treatment for addicts	Bring together existing funds into a new focused package of programmes and actions.
Extend reduced and free bus travel	To enable access to facilities and jobs and to promote an active lifestyle	Already available to older people and disabled people. Will consult in 2004 with service providers on extension to young people and community transport

<p>Top up fees</p>	<p>To consider the implications of variable fees for higher education institutions and students</p>	<p>Variable fees ruled out for second Assembly with a second formal review to inform decisions thereafter.</p>
<p>School breakfasts</p>	<p>To improve health and concentration of pupils and to involve parents in school life</p>	<p>Introduce breakfasts in primary schools in Community First areas from September 2004.</p>
<p>Knowledge bank</p>	<p>To encourage new and expanded business in high-added value activities</p>	<p>Determine the delivery mechanism by December 2003 with a view to implementation from April 2005</p>
<p>Extend 20mph zones and safer routes to school</p>	<p>To make local roads safer for children, to encourage exercise and reduce environmental impact</p>	<p>Through annual local transport funding and in guidance to local authorities</p>
<p>Free access to local authority swimming pools for children in school holidays and older people</p>	<p>To encourage active lifestyles and promote better health</p>	<p>Pilot for children and young people Summer 2003. Programme for older people developed in light of evaluation of pilot, Autumn 2003</p>
<p>Scrap home care charges for disabled people</p>	<p>To ensure people can afford care in their own homes</p>	<p>Working group from autumn 2003 to develop implementation programme</p>
<p>Invest £560 m to improve school buildings and £550m modernising GP surgeries and hospitals</p>	<p>To equip schools for modern teaching and a wider role in the community; to promote primary care and outpatient services so that more cases are handled quickly and locally</p>	<p>An annual programme of funding for school buildings rising to £139m a year in 2005-06 and beyond so that all are fit for purpose by 2010. A forward annual programme for health buildings to 2006/7</p>

In taking forward our vision in this second Assembly term, there are four key areas which we will focus on as we continue to develop policy:

- helping more people into jobs;
- improving health;
- developing strong and safe communities; and
- creating better jobs and skills.

None of these areas is the responsibility of a single department or agency and each will need to be a priority for all the areas of government that have a role to play. These are not issues that have simple, ready answers and they are the subjects of current policy debate both in government, among our partners and in academia. We want to draw on all this experience and thinking to move the agenda forward.

### Helping more people into jobs

The Welsh work force has shown a high level of flexibility in adapting to profound changes and, sometimes big, shocks in our economy. Wales currently enjoys an unemployment rate on the standardised international measure of 4.6% compared to the UK average of 5.0%. The UK average is itself far better than that of most of our European partners. Behind those figures, there is the continuing challenge of raising the level of economic activity - the number of people participating in work. Despite significant recent improvements that remains lower in Wales than in most other parts of the UK. That gap appears to have halved over the past two years, but the bulk of the improvement has come about in female participation in the workforce. The number of working age people not in work is high in deprived urban communities, and among people with low levels of educational and vocational attainment. This is a major factor in poverty and the cycle of deprivation. Putting right the deficit in the proportion of working age people in work in Wales is also a critical factor in raising Wales' relative GDP per head.

A great deal is already being done by Jobcentre Plus to help people get jobs; and we will be working with them and others to remove barriers to participation in the economy. There is a demand side to this, in improving the spread of diverse jobs available in all parts of Wales to suit all, or most, people and there is a supply side too, in finding out what the barriers are to taking up jobs that are, or will be, available, and removing these barriers.

## Improving health

Reported levels of poor health are significantly higher in Wales than in the rest of the UK, and are heavily associated with patterns of deprivation. The recent Wanless report has underlined that improving levels of health means not just better services to treat ill-health, but a much greater emphasis on primary care and the promotion of healthy life-styles, to prevent ill-health arising. This is a key challenge that we are determined to address in a holistic way.

Our consultation paper *Well-being in Wales* has stressed the importance of health being seen as a factor in all policy areas. We now propose to take this work forward so that we are able to make these connections more effectively at national level. At local level, planning for the improvement of health and social care services has been integrated in the production of local Health, Social Care and Well Being strategies. Our strategy for sport and active recreation will work to improve the low levels of physical activity in Wales.

## Developing strong and safe communities

Wales has a tradition of strong community identity and self-help - and people are as likely to express concern for the well being of others as for themselves. This provides a good basis for enabling communities to identify their own needs and future direction and address problems of day to day concern such as crime, drug-abuse, and the quality of the local environment.

The Communities First programme is enabling communities to identify what they each need to tackle their concerns. We will use this work and other evidence of impact to see how our programmes can work better together to make a real difference for communities.

## Creating better jobs and skills

Building the economy is a long-term task, but fundamental. In a modern global economy and with the eastward enlargement of the European Union, Wales cannot and should not try to compete on cheaper labour costs. Raising levels of educational attainment, skills and innovation, is critical if Wales is to compete on adding value.

Wales has some very successful modern industries and highly competitive companies in all sectors. We have potential to build on the competitive strength that we have evolved in areas such as aerospace and automotive, telecommunications and creative IT industries, renewable energy and tourism. Higher education in Wales has research departments of international standing.

What Wales has not had, or at least not since the 1920s, are enough companies with head offices, and research and development functions in Wales. We have had our traditional industries in sharp decline as employers and have attracted so-called 'branch factories', of companies or multi-nationals which have their highly paid head office, marketing and R&D functions elsewhere. This holds back the relative GDP in Wales because those jobs have higher average pay and indirectly as well, because it's the head office locations which buy in the professional services in banking, law and accounting etc., and it is the research and development department that frequently provides the 'ideas' people who spin off to start their own companies.

That is why Wales can have lower unemployment than England, but unfortunately a much lower GDP per head at the same time, and likewise a lower rate of company formation. That is why Wales can have such a good higher and further education system, but with the Welsh economy not yet seeing the full benefits of that because so many of the jobs attractive to the brightest graduates wanting to go into industry, will be outside Wales. This 'top-sliced' characteristic of the Welsh economy has been improving recently with many of the new companies now moving into Wales, bringing research and development and design departments with them. This improving trend has not happened for long enough or not strongly enough yet to improve on relative GDP figures or in company formation, but the future direction is clear.



# How we will work together

## Vision: promoting openness, partnership and participation

The Assembly Government attaches great importance to the way it works. Achieving our vision demands active participation from all parts of society and empowering people to make a difference. We value the views of the people affected by its policies and those working at grass routes to implement policies and programmes. In developing this agenda, we are committed to:

### Openness

We believe that openness is essential to good government. We will publish as a matter of course the facts behind individual ministerial decisions as well as continuing to publish our Cabinet papers and minutes. We will provide regular information on the performance of services and on indicators of progress against our vision.

### Partnership and participation

We cannot achieve anything working alone. We will work with all parts of Welsh society to help to deliver and refine our vision. We value the links we have forged with local government, business, trade unions and the voluntary sector and will continue to work with and through them in developing and implementing our policies. We will work together with local government not only to deliver national priorities and local solutions but also to embed these values in all levels of government in Wales.

### Public services

We want public services in Wales - whether shaped, funded and delivered by the Assembly, by other public bodies, by local government or by business and voluntary organisations - to focus on the needs of communities and

individuals. We will work across boundaries, communicate consistently and give responsibility to those who are best placed to take decisions. We will be clear about what we want to achieve and how we will measure success. We will continue to develop a distinctively Welsh approach to improving the delivery of public services. We will develop the skills and capacity of staff as the foundation for achieving excellence in the public sector in Wales, through the Public Sector Management Initiative. We will work with our partners to develop this approach together.

## Equality

We will promote gender equality, good race relations and race equality and tackle discrimination on grounds of age and disability. We want to see people in public life reflecting the diversity in the population as a whole. We will comply with our Welsh Language Scheme, thus ensuring that Welsh and English are treated on a basis of equality in the conduct of public business.

## Putting results first

We believe that what matters is whether things change for the better in the real world. We want to challenge people to achieve longer-term 'outcomes' - the big changes that we want to see - and monitor whether we are getting there. Further specific priorities for action against the vision will be set out in a statement on our social justice agenda and in the action plan to the Assembly's revised Sustainable Development Scheme, following consultation.

## Listening to people

We want to ensure that the voices of children and young people, and of older people, are heard and valued in local decision-making. Our commitment to Funky Dragon, to Young People's and Older People's Forums, to Community Health Councils at local level, and to a real engagement with the voluntary sector in planning, delivering and evaluating services, are central to realizing this new approach.



## Reflecting difference across Wales

An important part of delivering our vision will be development of the Wales Spatial Plan. This will help to provide a context for deciding what our vision for a sustainable future means for the different parts of Wales and will help local authorities and strategic partnerships in their work on local community strategies.

## Testing our policies

We will assess the impacts of our proposed policies against our sustainable development principles and vision and use this in consulting on policy proposals so that everybody has the chance to comment on whether we are living up to our commitments. We will also expect other public bodies to do similarly in developing their programmes. We will work together with local government to share good practice in assessing whether strategies and actions will contribute to achieving this national vision as well as tackling local priorities. We will establish a clear performance management and evaluation framework for our programmes. We will strengthen our suite of sustainable development indicators, such as our ecological footprint, and use them to test our priorities against the vision.



# Our agenda - how it fits together

In the 1999-2003 term of the Assembly, virtually every policy inherited was reviewed and changed to reflect a 'made in Wales' agenda and to focus on our key issues. Entering the second term, we now have a radical agenda, set out in a series of landmark strategies.

**V**ision: ensuring all our children and future generations enjoy better prospects in life, and are not landed with a legacy of problems bequeathed by us.

In education and training, *'The Learning Country'* sets out our strategy for promoting life-long learning in Wales. Our aim is to ensure education and training contributes to personal fulfilment, wealth, creation, social cohesion and cultural enrichment. It is to ensure that everyone has the skills and qualifications to find work in the modern job market, so that no-one now outside the workforce is unequipped for work, and no-one inside the workforce is unequipped for the new challenges of the economy, and that our skills and abilities as a whole increase so that Wales is able to attract the kind of high value employment that is needed to fulfil our vision. That will be at the heart of our next Skills and Employment Action Plan, and of the ELWa corporate plan as it is rolled forward.

Our approach will overhaul all aspects of learning by the end of this term establishing new structures and frameworks for 3-7 year olds; better transition from primary to secondary schools; a new approach to 14-19 years which will allow for greater variation in what is taught (including the related Welsh Baccalaureate qualification). We shall maintain a genuine continuum of life-long learning - including Higher Education under our radical *Reaching Higher* strategy which seeks to widen participation.

Our policy for young people, *Extending Entitlement*, looks at the broader needs of young people between eleven and twenty-five, to ensure all young people have access to a network of support services and opportunities to help them access their entitlements.

Our commitments focus especially on the challenge of ensuring that everyone can benefit from learning throughout life and no one lacks basic employment and life skills.

Commitments	Aim	Implementation plans
Getting the worst performing schools to catch up with the ever improving performance of the best	To ensure that best practice found in schools in challenging circumstances is applied in all such schools	Disseminate findings of first phase of joint local government/ Estyn/ Assembly Government study of secondary schools; carry out study into primary schools; continue funding to LEAs to support low performing schools.
An Individual Learning Account for Wales	To provide a financial incentive for lifelong learning	From September 2003 and ongoing
Extend the Welsh bac to intermediate and foundation levels	To provide a broader-based qualification post 16 to suit a wider range of abilities	Piloting underway for advanced and intermediate stages. Foundation stage piloting from 2005/6.
Reform the 14-19 age range curriculum, extending education at school into life-long learning as an adult	To provide each learner with a learning pathway to give them the skills, experience and opportunities for successful life and work	Guidance developed 2003/4. Phased implementation from September 2004
By the end of the decade, no pupil in Wales to leave school without qualifications	To enable everybody to be equipped for the modern workplace and as citizens	Evidence base of what works established 2003/04. Phased implementation from September 2004
Schools to be community resources	To use schools as a base for a range of local services including lifelong learning, engaging their communities	Additional powers for schools to become community focussed in place 1 September 2003. Funding for pilot work in Community First areas from 2004/5
New 3-7 curriculum	To enhance and extend the learning experiences of our youngest children and provide them with a stronger basis for future attainment	Following wide consultation in 2003 to adopt a phased implementation programme until 2008

<p>New integrated centres and nursery places for all 3 year olds whose parents want them</p>	<p>To provide a good start for all children</p>	<p>In conjunction with Early Years Development and Children's Partnerships to provide a free half time place for all 3 year olds by September 2004. Integrated centres, including early years places, to be progressively rolled out alongside the developing provisions.</p>
<p>Reform early years Welsh medium education</p>	<p>To ensure the standards of support available through the medium of Welsh match those through the English language</p>	<p>Implement new training and development package to strengthen and deepen Welsh medium early years teaching 2004/5 onwards</p>
<p>Invest to tackle the problems of small and rural schools</p>	<p>To support innovative approaches in small and rural schools in light of falling numbers of school age children</p>	<p>Legislate to allow for governing bodies to co-operate or federate from September 2004; continue special grant funding to support innovation</p>
<p>Cut junior school class sizes</p>	<p>To support the aim of ensuring all children can benefit fully from their time at school</p>	<p>Reduce all junior classes to 30 or less by 2004 with special grant funding support</p>
<p>Eliminating the basic skills gap</p>	<p>To ensure more people are equipped for the modern labour market and so increase economic activity</p>	<p>Funding through the Basic Skills Agency and its strategy for Wales to 2005, subject to evaluation.</p>
<p>Pilot free skills training for adults up to NVQ level 3</p>	<p>Increase take up of life long learning</p>	<p>From 2003</p>

**V**ision: promoting a diverse, competitive, high added-value economy, with high quality skills and education, that minimizes demands on the environment;

In **economic policy**, '*A Winning Wales*', with the accompanying Action Plans for Skills, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Business and the Environment and Trade, set out a ten year vision for building a Wales which will help to create and attract high added-value businesses, promote enterprise, create the conditions for sustainable development and support long-term jobs in all our communities.

Action taken to date was set out in the first annual report on *A Winning Wales* published in June 2003.

Structural Funds, in particular Objective One, have an important role in delivering a stronger and more sustainable economy in Wales. We will simplify the management and administration of structural funds, which will enable us to focus on helping project applicants and ensuring that projects are implemented effectively.

We are working for Wales to become a place where more people want to create and grow a business by putting in place the life long learning and skills support that modern business and society need, such as the successful modern apprenticeship scheme. We are committed to improving yet further our communication networks, both physical and electronic, to strengthen the links to our markets and increase access to work for all those who want to participate. We place considerable emphasis on building the success of the Cymru Ar Lein broadband strategy.

The focus in our commitments is to get more companies in Wales, including large scale companies with branch factories here, to innovate more and, in particular, to carry out their research and development and design work in Wales. We want to forge much closer links between research in our universities and colleges and commercial opportunities. We want to take opportunities in environmental goods and services and renewable energy to create new and lasting jobs based on our vision.

Commitments	Aim	Implementation plans
Further develop the knowledge economy through stronger links between FE and HE and businesses	To translate our educational strengths into business strengths	Further Techniums established using Obj 1 funding where appropriate. WDA take responsibility for delivering the Knowledge Exploitation Fund
Entrepreneurship scholarships for young people	To further develop indigenous talents	Review existing programmes by March 2004; launch improved arrangements by April 2005
£25m streamlined innovation grant	To promote innovation and research in business	New combined fund from September 2003
Deliver broadband access for 67,000 extra businesses	To overcome issues of geographical peripherality and to open up markets	Direct subsidy scheme and provision to business parks
Simplify business support	To provide a one stop shop for entry to business support	Live from September 2003
Invest in Transport infrastructure	Improving transport links to support a stronger economy and improve road safety and community environments	£175M of trunk road improvements by 2008. £300M of Transport grant schemes by 2006
Support for grass-roots business	To provide opportunities in local communities, including employment support	Funding for credit unions and through community loan fund for community business; implementation of draft Social Enterprises Action Plan

## Vision: strengthening Wales' cultural identity and helping to create a bilingual country

In **culture and sport**, Wales has a strong tradition, a positive international image and great potential economic strengths.

Our new sport and active recreation strategy *Climbing Higher* stresses the importance of active lifestyles to our health and well being, as well as committing to systematic and sustainable success in the sports that matter most to us.

*Iaith Pawb*, the language strategy, sets out our vision of a truly bilingual Wales and our commitment to supporting the Welsh language as a vital part of our international and local identity.

Our Culture Strategy *Cymru Greadigol - Creative Future*, sets out a wide-ranging agenda for promoting our cultural strengths, a commitment to access to excellence, celebrating cultural diversity and expanding our international reach, as well as making culture a springboard for the development of the economy and strong communities.

In addition to the major focus on health and the proposal for free swimming set out in the TOP TEN commitments, the focus is on strengthening our existing cultural assets:

Commitments	Aim	Implementation plans
Biggest ever investment in the Welsh language	To strengthen the Welsh language to move to the vision of a truly bilingual Wales	Additional £28m funding from 2003-06 through <i>Iaith Pawb</i> strategy, with annual progress reports on implementation
Develop library services	To provide modern community services which support	Underpinned by public library standards and



<p>Examine potential for a New National Gallery for Welsh Art and National Digital Gallery for visual arts</p> <p>Attracting major sporting and cultural events</p>	<p>lifelong learning and are accessible to everyone</p> <p>To make visual arts more accessible and promote them at home and abroad</p> <p>To promote Wales to the world and to generate lasting benefits</p>	<p>supported by CyMAL from April 2004, the new strategic and advisory unit for museums, archives and libraries</p> <p>In partnership with the National Museums and Galleries of Wales</p> <p>On going support and publicity</p>
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**V**ision: action in our built and natural environment that enhances pride in the community, supports bio-diversity, promotes local employment and helps to minimize waste generation, energy and transport demands;

In countryside, planning and the environment, we seek to value and improve the bio-diversity and quality of our environment not only for its own sake, but also as an essential part of delivering a sustainable future for local economies and communities.

The development of a new environment strategy will set our future direction and inform our agenda for implementing the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. *Planning Policy Wales* has already sought to embed sustainable development in all our planning policies and *Wise About Waste* has set a course of radical change towards recycling and reducing the amount of waste for land-filling. We are consulting on ways to simplify and improve flood defence arrangements.

*Planning: delivering for Wales* is a major change programme based upon partnership working with key stakeholders, to ensure we make significant improvements in the quality of the planning service, and that communities including business are involved in plan-making and decision-making.

*Farming for the Future* has set out our vision for a sustainable future for the land-based industries in Wales and action to help as many family farms as possible to adapt and survive, based on adding value to products, concern for the environment, and synergy with tourism. We are also working to broaden the economic base of rural areas. Widening access to the countryside supports this. CAP reform provides opportunities for Wales and we are already consulting on new agri-environmental schemes to realise these benefits.

This focus is reflected in our commitments in this area:

Commitments	Aim	Implementation plans
Recycling increased to 25%	To use materials more efficiently, reducing the need to dispose of waste via landfill	Wales Waste Strategy programme delivered with partners, including specific grant funding for local authorities
Further extend open access to coastal areas after the initial access to open country is established	To promote the rural economy and active lifestyles	Subject to mapping and legislation. Likely implementation from 2008/9
Help the Welsh agri-food industry gain a bigger share of the quality food market	To add value to Welsh produce and make it competitive in the changing market	Continued help for the industry through the Agri-Food Strategy
Develop skills training suitable for rural settings	To help rural areas to adapt	Through Farming Connect and related initiatives
Encourage schools and hospitals to purchase more Welsh produce	To promote local production and quality foods and support health and environmental goals	Guidance to the public sector from 2004

Tougher public health assessments for new developments

To ensure new developments do not undermine our goals for improved public health

Statutory guidance and possible legislation by 2005

**V**ision: action on social justice that tackles poverty and poor health, and provides people and their communities with the means to help themselves and break out of the poverty trap;

In our **communities**, we will continue to promote social inclusion by focusing all of our policies - economic, health, education, transport, housing, the Welsh language and culture and the environment - on building stronger and more sustainable communities across Wales.

Our commitment to tackling poverty and supporting communities has been set out in a series of annual reports on social inclusion in Wales and in our work on the Communities First programme, operating in over a hundred communities throughout Wales and which has social inclusion as its main aim.

The new index of deprivation shows that problems are concentrated in poorer inner city areas and the upper valleys but are also apparent in many coastal towns and ports. There are also growing pressures on housing in some rural areas.

The aim is to support both individuals and communities to address the barriers to things getting better. Our commitments focus on tackling the issues that can most damage day to day life for people and on supporting work in local communities:

Commitments	Aim	Implementation plans
Tough action on anti-social behaviour	To improve quality of life in local communities	New legislation in 2004 to increase fines and set standards
Roll out Communities First	To enable areas to benefit from this programme which helps communities to shape a new future for their areas	Progressive roll-out on the basis of experience
Support better quality public services in Wales' hardest hit areas	To ensure less well-off areas do not suffer from lower quality services	Funding through Deprivation Grant
New licensing scheme for rented accommodation	To ensure standards for rented accommodation and promote more take up of private renting	Legislation from 2004
Look to designate new areas of housing pressure where the right to buy can be suspended	To ensure local people are not priced out of rural housing markets	Subject to Westminster legislation

## Vision: supporting people to live healthy and independent lives

In **health and social care services**, we are completing a radical programme of reform for the NHS in Wales. Health Authorities have been replaced by new Local Health Boards which will plan and commission services to meet most health needs, while an all-Wales body will commission specialist hospital services for Wales as a whole.

This should mean services are more closely tailored to local needs and through joint responsibilities with the local authorities, focus on promoting better health, and better health and care services in Wales.

The Wanless Report into health and social care in Wales has made clear recommendations for action to improve the way health and social care services work. It points to a reform in the way health and social care might be redirected towards improving access to care within communities, supported by primary care and home care, and improving access to secondary care when this is needed.

The aim throughout is to shift the balance from the acute sector towards preventing ill health in the first place and then to addressing problems at an early stage. Our *Inequalities in Health Fund* is supporting new local action to tackle coronary heart disease in communities throughout Wales and the *Targeting Poor Health* Townsend formula is shifting resources to the areas of greatest health need.

With an ageing population, our Strategy for Older People aims to promote active lifestyles for those who are able and to ensure affordable care for those in need. For Children and Young People, local Partnerships are ensuring that services are targeted to help youngsters reach their potential, and contribute to their communities. We are developing a strategy to tackle child poverty in Wales, and will continue to invest in services for families and children such as childcare and Surestart. We will continue to develop our work to help people with mental health problems, and to help those who care for them.

In addition to the major TOP TEN commitments on prescription charges and home care, the focus is on supporting the NHS and local government to work closely together to deliver integrated health, social care services and to promote well being and an effective anti-poverty agenda:

Commitments	Aim	Implementation plans
3,000 extra nurses	To ensure effective and timely treatment	Increased training of new nurses and recruitment and retention policies - should be delivered by 2006
400 extra doctors	To ensure effective and timely treatment	Increased training and recruitment and retention strategy. In place by 2006
Access to a GP or primary care team within 24hrs	To remove barriers to early treatment	Subject to GP contract terms, could be in place from April 2005
Older People's commissioner	To ensure the needs of older people are reflected in services and policy	Dependent on Westminster legislation, in place by 2005/6
A secure future for district general hospitals	To provide the most routine services quickly and easily locally while ensuring major operations are carried out with suitable professional support	Part of the action plan to implement the Wanless report
An expanded Health Inequalities Fund	To promote innovative solutions to addressing health inequalities	On going specific grant funding
A new health funding formula	To ensure funds follow the underlying needs for action to address health inequalities	Through phased changes to the existing funding arrangements.