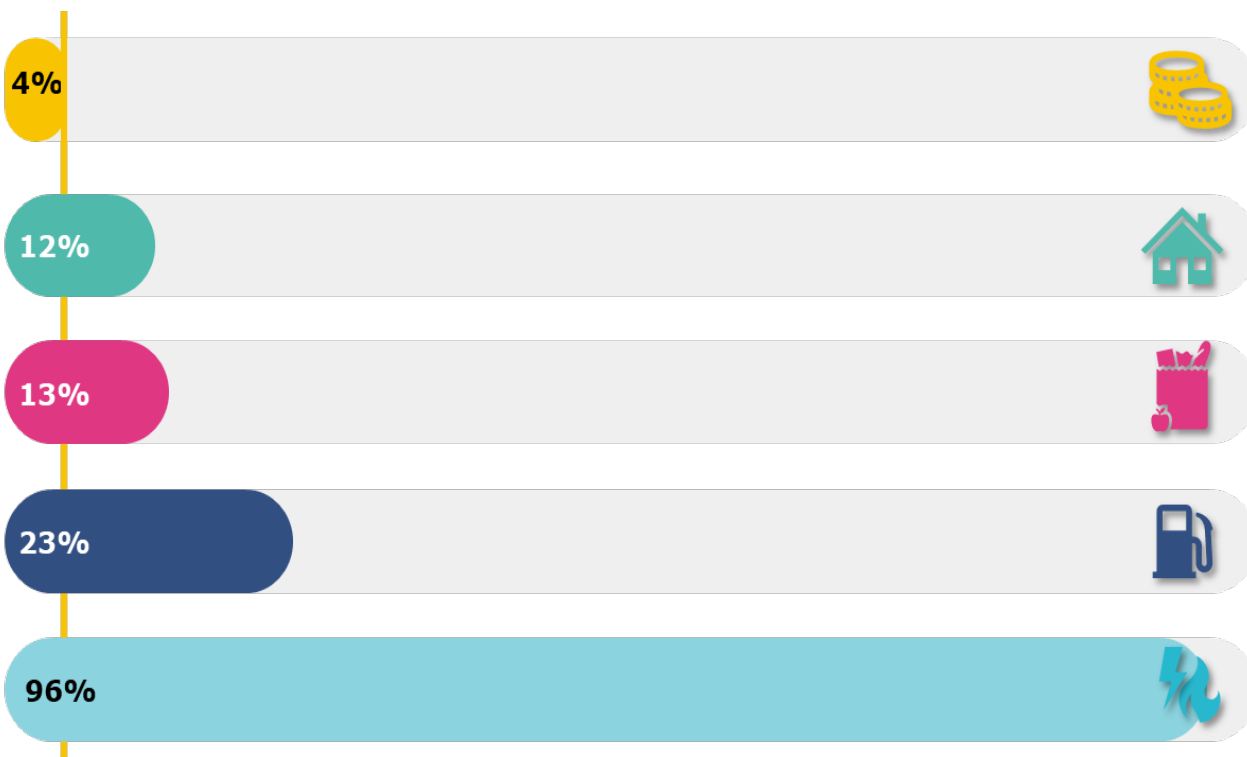# Cost of living: A public health issue
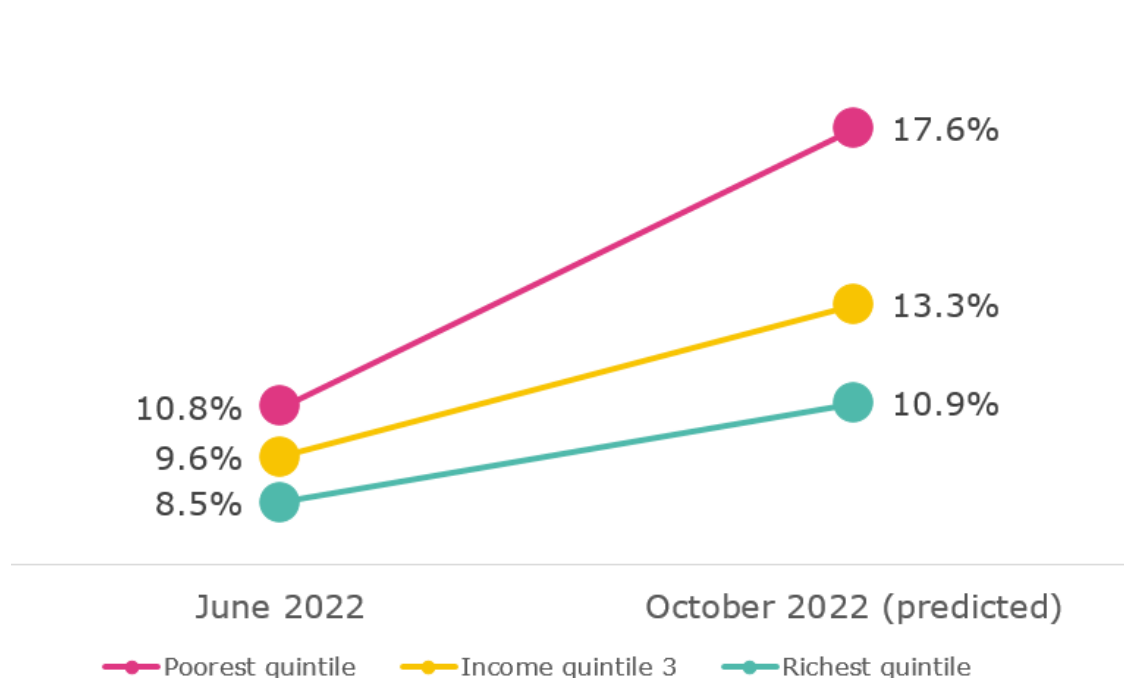
Public Health Wales Board

29 September 2022

What is the cost of living crisis?

Wage increases compared to increases in the price of food, housing, fuel and energy prices

- 4%
- 12%
- 13%
- 23%
- 96%

Inflation by household income in June 2022 and predicted rate in October 2022

- 17.6%
- 13.3%
- 10.9%
- 10.8%
- 9.6%
- 8.5%

June 2022   October 2022 (predicted)

— Poorest quintile   — Income quintile 3   — Richest quintile

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Polisi

What does the cost of living crisis mean for the Welsh population?
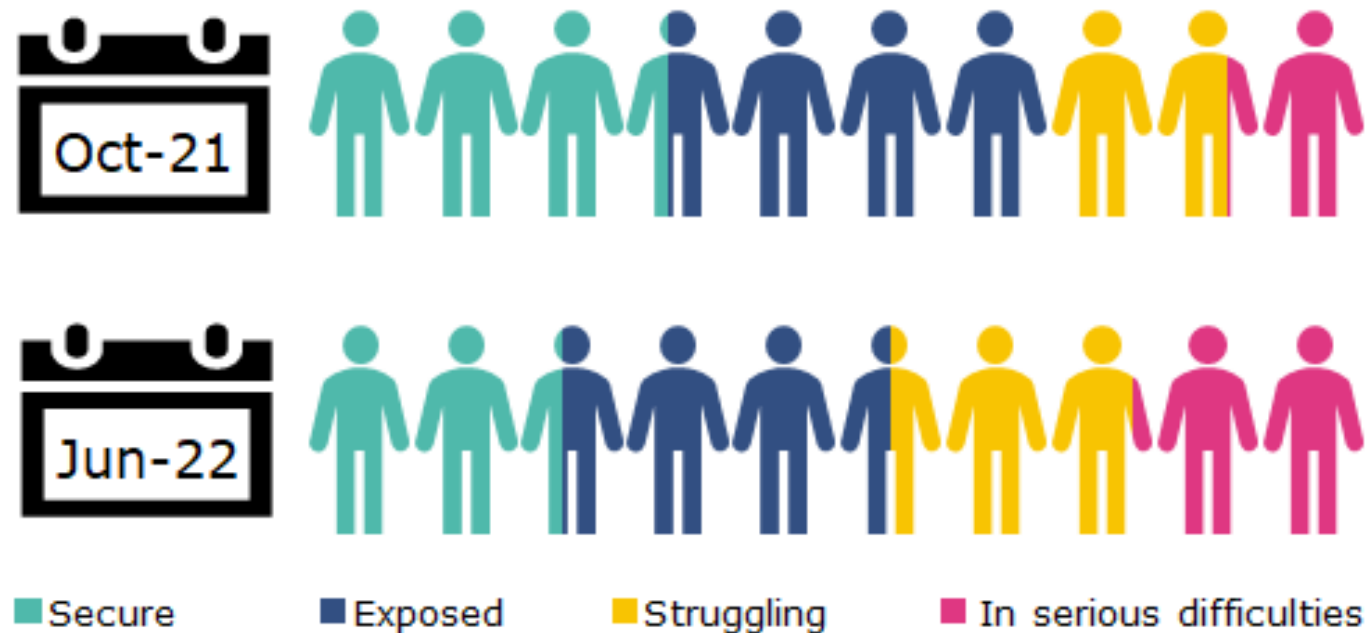
Proportion of households in four financial well-being categories in Wales (October 2021 vs June 2022)

How does cost of living link to health?

INDIVIDUAL

INCREASES IN COST OF LIVING

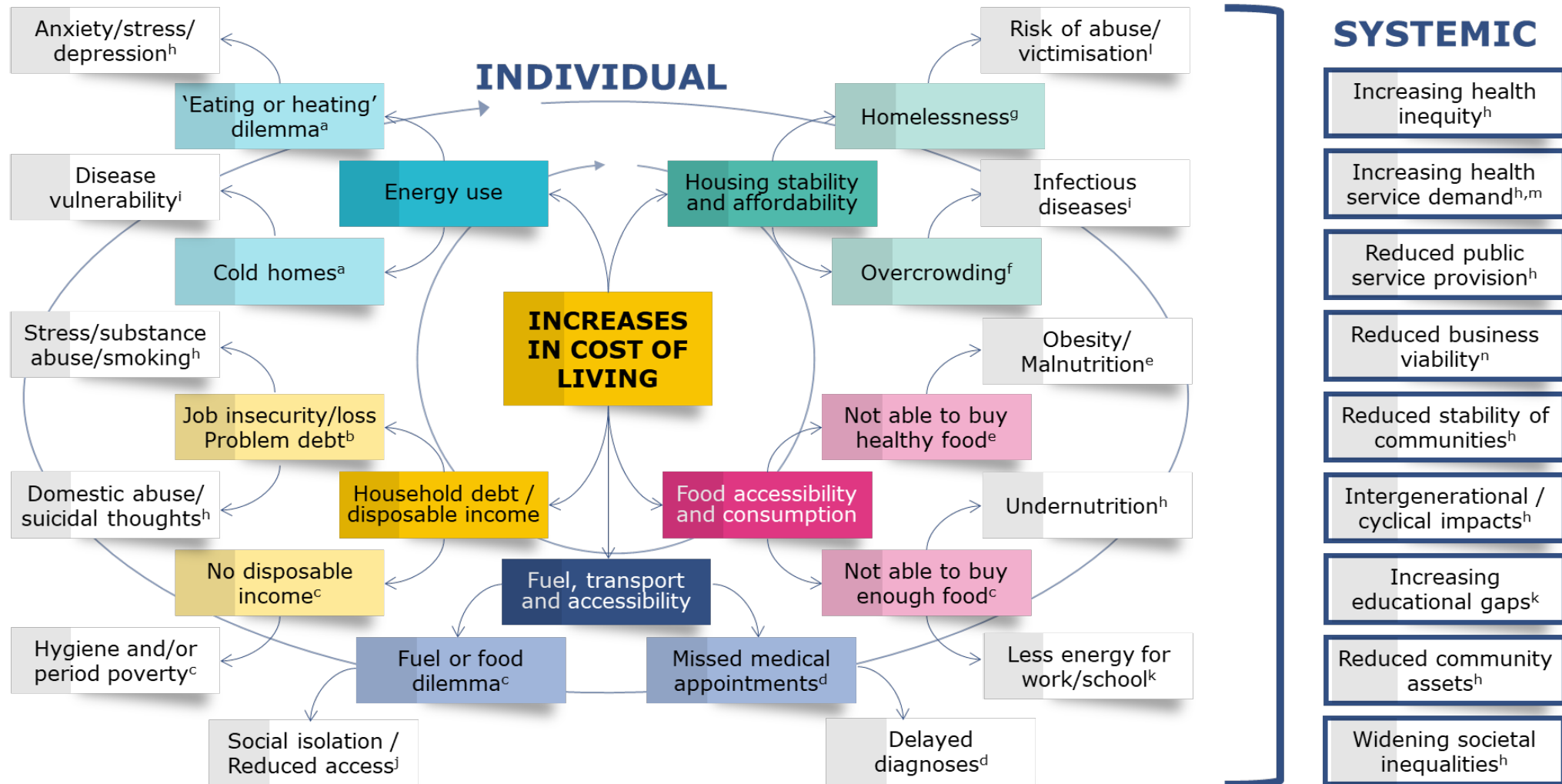- Anxiety/stress/depression[h]
- 'Eating or heating' dilemma[a]
- Energy use
- Disease vulnerability[i]
- Cold homes[a]
- Stress/substance abuse/smoking[h]
- Job insecurity/loss Problem debt[b]
- Domestic abuse/suicidal thoughts[h]
- Household debt / disposable income
- No disposable income[c]
- Hygiene and/or period poverty[c]
- Fuel, transport and accessibility
- Fuel or food dilemma[c]
- Missed medical appointments[d]
- Social isolation / Reduced access[j]
- Risk of abuse/victimisation[l]
- Homelessness[g]
- Housing stability and affordability
- Infectious diseases[i]
- Overcrowding[f]
- Obesity/Malnutrition[e]
- Not able to buy healthy food[e]
- Food accessibility and consumption
- Undernutrition[h]
- Not able to buy enough food[c]
- Less energy for work/school[k]
- Delayed diagnoses[d]

SYSTEMIC

- Increasing health inequity[h]
- Increasing health service demand[h,m]
- Reduced public service provision[h]
- Reduced business viability[n]
- Reduced stability of communities[h]
- Intergenerational / cyclical impacts[h]
- Increasing educational gaps[k]
- Reduced community assets[h]
- Widening societal inequalities[h]

Infographic developed by Manon Roberts & Louisa Petchey, PHW

Cost of living: A public health issue

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World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being

Iechyd Rhyngwladol International Health

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What does this mean for public health in Wales?

Affects all the essential conditions for healthy life

- Income security and social protection
- Social and human capital
- Employment and working conditions
- Living conditions
- Health services

Widening health inequalities

Widening geographic inequalities e.g. rural v urban areas
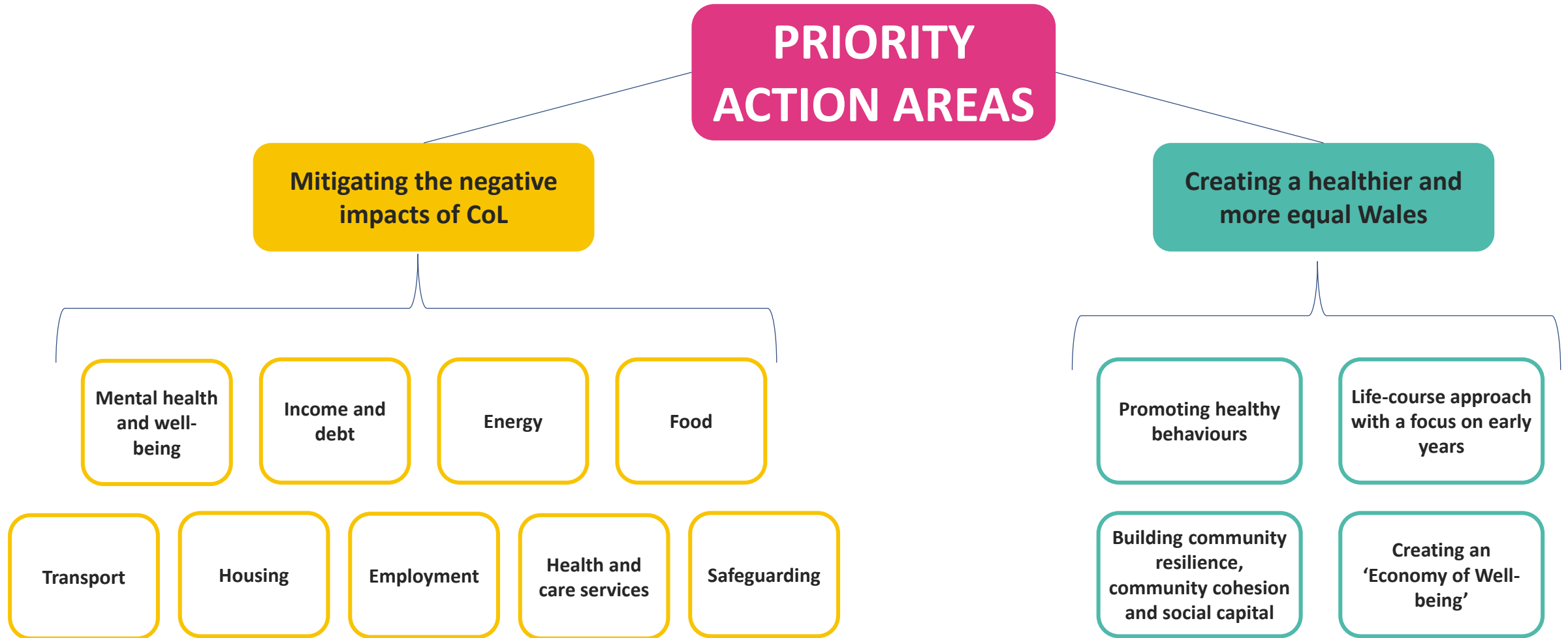
Intergenerational impacts

Worsening health outcomes

Impact on demand, quality and cost of NHS services

Worse response to existing health needs

Cyclical impact of increasing health inequality on population health and health services

How should we respond?

Consideration of the role of the social determinants of health

Underlying causes

Prevention

Acting before the problem can occur (*primary*), before it can develop (*secondary*), or to reduce negative impacts and stop it getting worse (*tertiary*)

Intervention at a population level or targeted to specific groups

Whole population

Partnership working

Data & evidence

Guided by an understanding of the problem and of what works to design and deliver effective interventions

Collaborating with the community and wider system to make a difference

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Policy action areas

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

Mitigating the negative impacts of CoL
- Mental health and well-being
- Income and debt
- Energy
- Food
- Transport
- Housing
- Employment
- Health and care services
- Safeguarding

Creating a healthier and more equal Wales
- Promoting healthy behaviours
- Life-course approach with a focus on early years
- Building community resilience, community cohesion and social capital
- Creating an 'Economy of Well-being'

Public Health Wales response

Partnership working
- Voluntary sector collaboration
- Working with health and care system e.g. Foundational Economy
- Supporting winter preparedness

Data, research and intelligence
- International horizon scanning
- Report to Welsh Government
- Rapid monitoring through dashboard

Supporting our staff and service users
- Signposting service users on support for attending appointments
- Supporting staff financial, and mental well-being

Guided by an **enabling environment of 'health in all policies'**
- WFG Act; Socio-economic Duty; Social Services and Well-being Act; Public Health Act