

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and the HIA Regulations

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Uned Gymorth Asesu Effaith ar Iechyd Cymru
Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit

Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU)

- Created in 2004; world leaders in HIA
- Based in the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on 'Investment for Health and Well-being', Policy and International Health Directorate, Public Health Wales
- Provides an all-Wales service
- Provides guidance, training, resources and information in relation to the practice of HIA
- <https://phwwhocc.co.uk/whiasu>

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Animation – what is HIA?

Y Rheoliadau HIA

The Health Impact Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2025

What is a Health Impact Assessment?

Within the Regulations HIAs are defined as :

A Health Impact Assessment means an assessment of the likely effect, both in the short term and in the long term, of a proposed action or decision on the physical and mental health of the people of Wales or of some of the people of Wales.

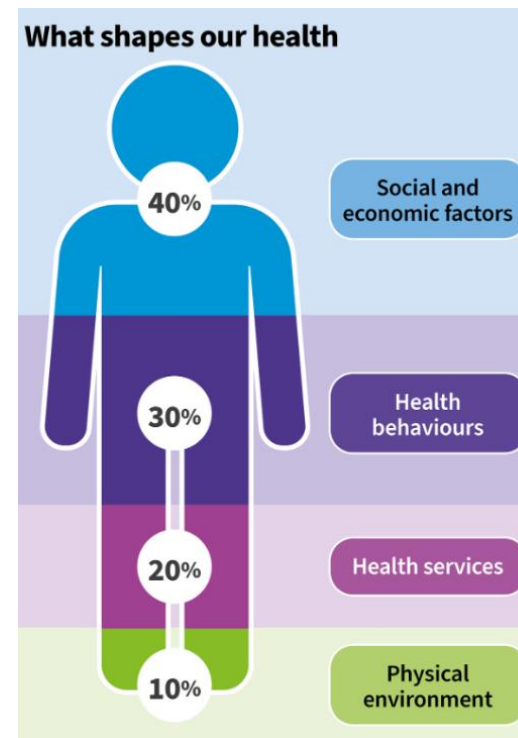
A HIA is a practical, flexible, evidence-based tool that helps organisations assess how their decisions may affect people's health, especially vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

The Heath Impact Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2025

- The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 enables regulations to mandate HIAs for specified public bodies, which have now been enacted.
- The Regulations ensure consistent and systematic consideration of health impacts in decision-making.
- They also help organisations demonstrate compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, particularly the goals of 'A Healthier Wales' and 'A More Equal Wales'.



Why do we need the regulations?



“medical services are not the main determinant of mortality or morbidity; these depend most upon standards of nutrition, housing, working environment, and education, and the presence or absence of war.” Julian Tudor Hart

The Public bodies subject to the Regulations

The public bodies subject to the Regulations mirrors those listed in section 6(1) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, totalling **56 organisations**.

- Welsh Ministers;
- Local authorities;
- Corporate joint committees;
- NHS Health Boards & Trusts;
- Special Health authorities The National Park Authorities
- The Welsh Fire and Rescue authorities;
- Qualifications Wales

When public bodies will need to undertake a statutory HIA

A public body subject to the regulations must carry out a HIA when it makes a **decision of a strategic nature about how it is to exercise its functions.**

The intention of the Regulations is to create a consistent approach rather than to mandate all the circumstances where a HIA should be used.

It will ultimately be for the public bodies to determine whether the decision qualifies as one of a strategic nature in line with the Regulations. However, the circumstances are in line with other existing duties such as the Socio-Economic Duty.

The **use of HIAs on a voluntary basis** will continue to be encouraged.

How public bodies will be required to carry out a HIA

Requirements: Under the Regulations, public bodies must:

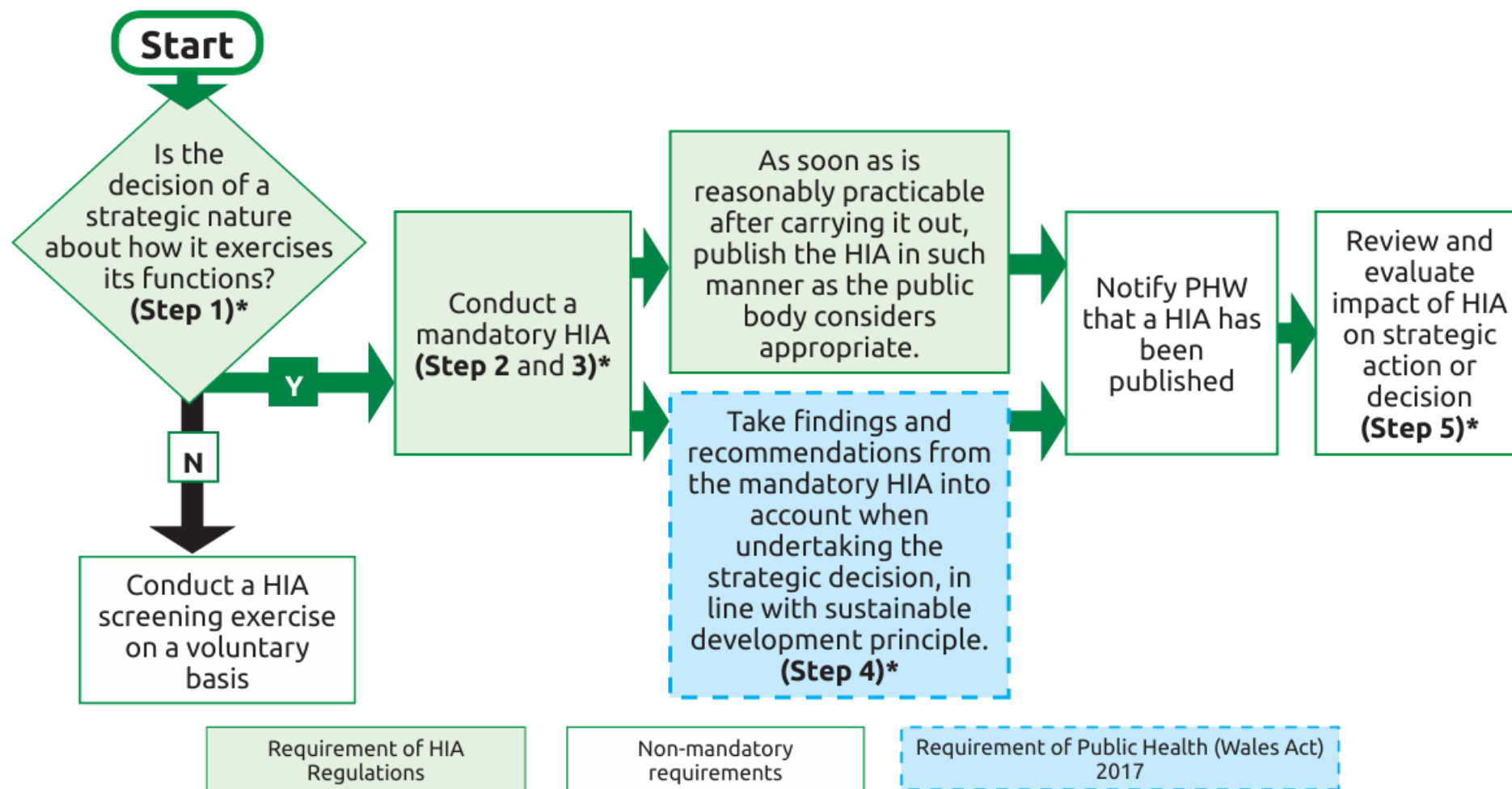
- Identify the decision to which the HIA relates.
- Identify any groups of the population whose physical or mental health the public body reasonably considers may be affected by the decision.
- Identify and assess any intended effects of the decision, and any unintended effects of the decision that the public body reasonably considers are likely, on the physical and mental health of any group of the population identified, having regard to the wider determinants of health and any health inequity factors.
- Identify and assess, in relation to any effects identified, any measures that the public body reasonably considers may prevent, reduce or mitigate any negative effects or increase any positive effects identified.
- Identify and assess anything else the public body considers to be relevant to the carrying out of the HIA.
- As soon as is reasonably practicable after carrying it out, publish the HIA in such a manner as the public body considers appropriate.

[Click here to play](#)



The HIA Process

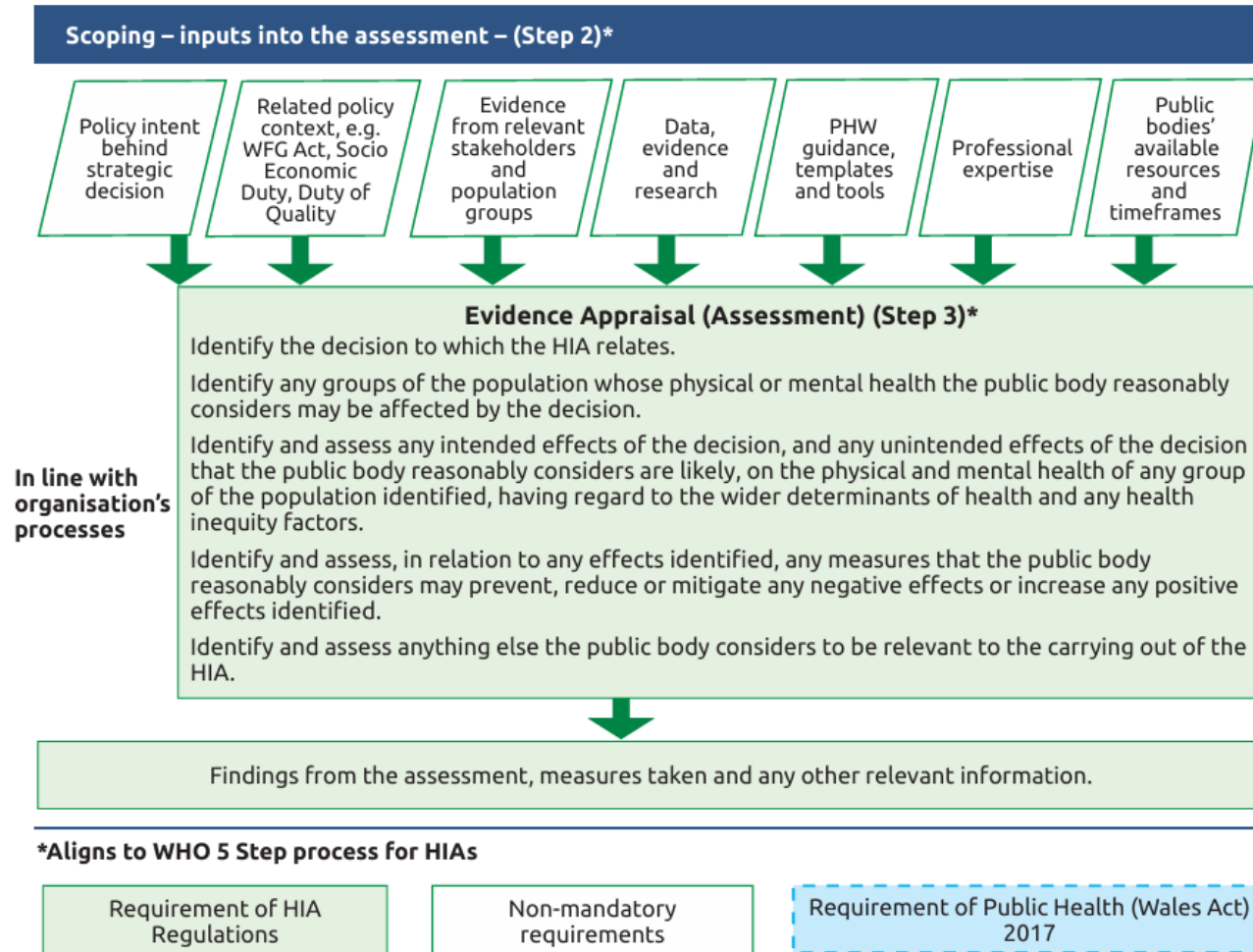
HIA Process Map for Public Bodies in Wales



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Scoping - inputs into the assessment – (Step 2)*



Five Steps of HIA:



*Quality Assurance – Is a core theme of any HIA and should be considered throughout the process – from the scoping stage to the end. It is usually incorporated into the reporting step, or post publication. It enables a review of the HIA to be carried out to ensure confidence in the content, findings and robustness of the process of the HIA. This is recommended good practice.

Step 1

Screening

- Using WHIASU screening checklist
- The screening step involves deciding if a HIA should be undertaken.
- This is usually done by conducting a screening workshop, where a small group of key stakeholders get together to discuss and decide whether a HIA is needed.

Step 2

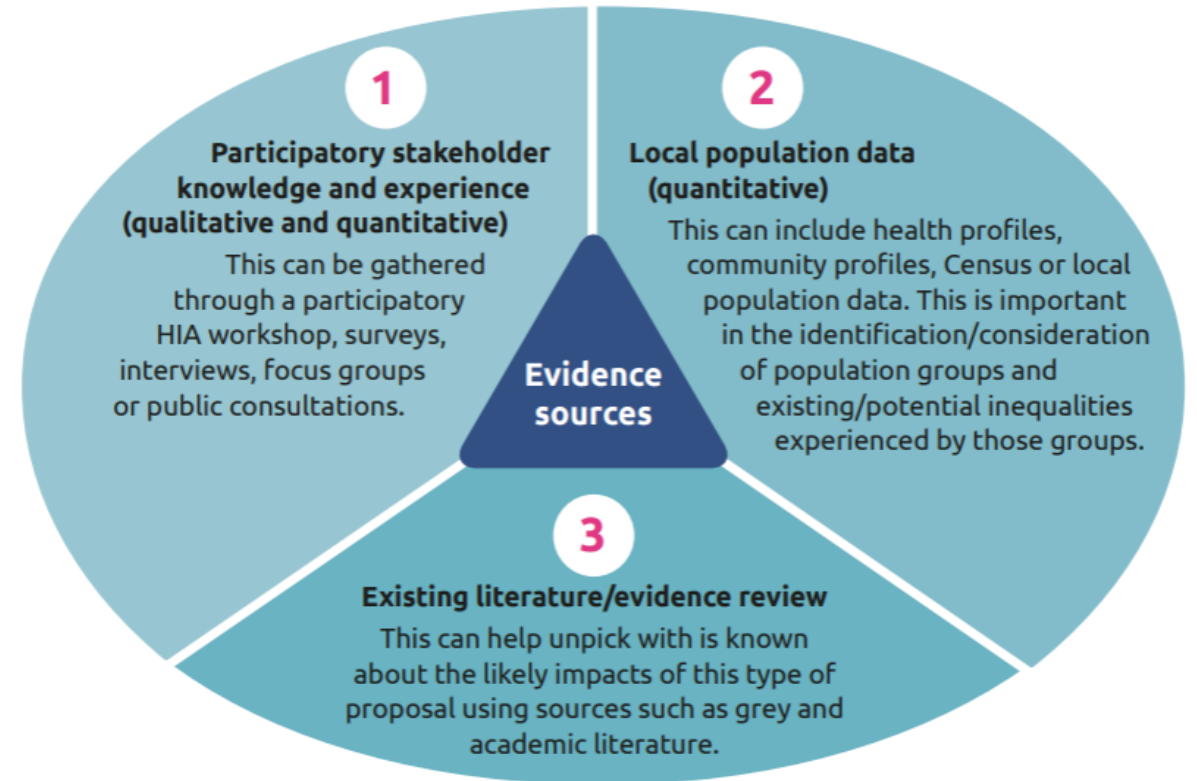
Scoping

- Using WHIASU scoping checklist
- The Scoping step determines the focus, methods and work plan for the HIA.
- Determines the project management, governance, process, objectives, focus and scale of the assessment to be undertaken.
- This can be done by establishing a steering group and identifying who will undertake which roles within the HIA

Step 3

Evidence Appraisal (Assessment)

- This involves gathering and analysing the evidence to identify the potential or actual health impacts.
- Proportionate and flexible dependent on the HIA
- Involves a triangulation of data – local population data, evidence review, stakeholder knowledge
- More information this step can be found in the WHIASU Guide



Step 4

Reporting and Recommendations

- This step involves developing a set of recommendations or suggested actions based upon the impacts identified.
- These should maximise any potential health and well-being benefits and opportunities and mitigate potential negative or unintended negative consequences
- Recommendations need to be: Clear and concise; realistic; achievable; manageable in number; impartial, reflective of all evidence and representatives' views; agreed by consensus

Step 5

Review and Reflection incl. Monitoring and Evaluation

- This step is the evaluation of the process; or any HIA outcomes
- It involves the HIA team reflecting on the HIA and their learning as well as assessing the usefulness of the HIA to the target audience and whether or not it influenced the decision-making process and actions taken.

HIA is flexible & Proportionate

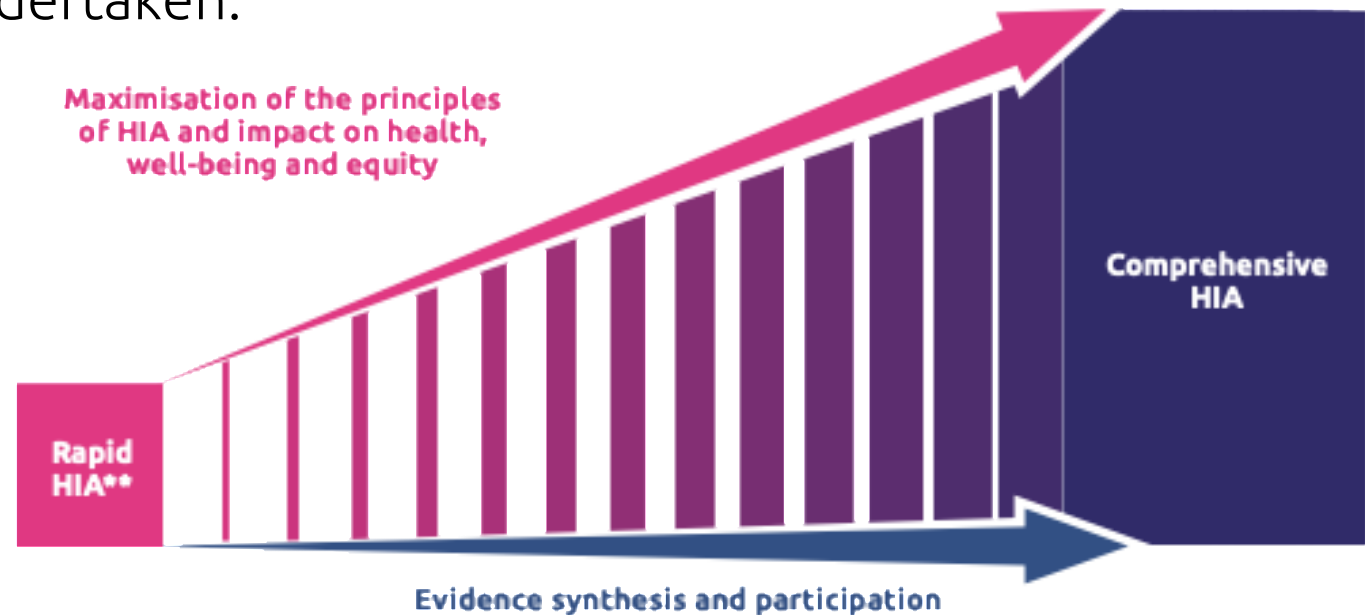
HIA can be undertaken on a **small scale (Rapid)** – Local Development Plans

Or a much **larger scale (Comprehensive)** – Climate Change in Wales

Or anywhere in between!

Under the regulations HIA is to be undertaken:

- **Prospectively**
- Concurrently
- Retrospectively



Why HIA?

Benefits and Impacts



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Benefits:

- Is evidence-based, systematic, practical and flexible.
- Contributes to identifying and reducing **unintended consequences** and maximising **positive impacts/opportunities**.
- Contributes to both **understanding** and **addressing health inequalities**.
- Recognises the **importance of participation**, and involving those individuals who may be/will be particularly affected by a policy/plan/project.

What impact have HIAs had?

Comprehensive

HIA of Climate Change in Wales

- **Welsh Government adaptation**
- Climate Change Risk Assessment 4 in UK
- Public Health Wales **Strategic Priority**
- Wales Environment agency – recommending assessment at a local level
- **Replicated by other nations**



What impact have HIA's had?

Rapid

Lung Cancer Screening Programme for Wales

What: Proposed all Wales lung screening programme for identified high risk groups.

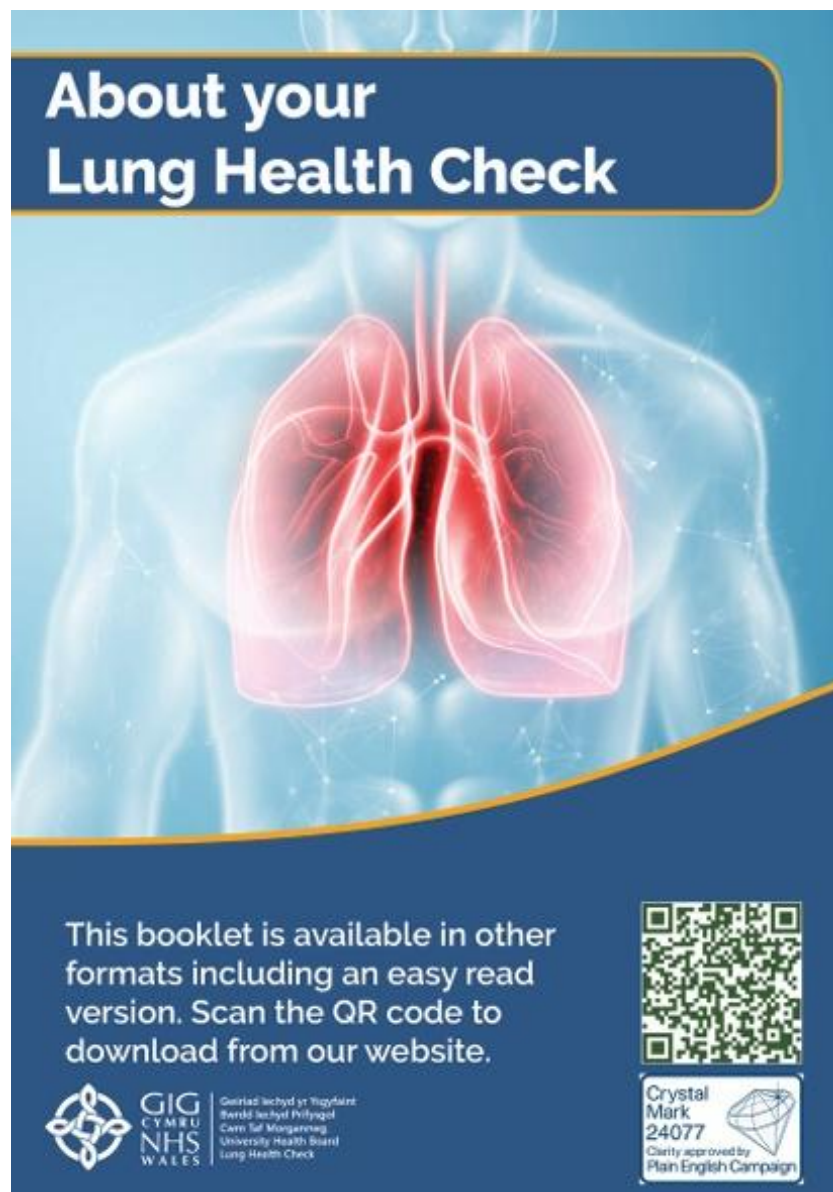
Where: All Wales / pilot in Cwm Taff Morgannwg.

Why:

- Identify potential health & wellbeing impacts.
- Identify unintended effects.
- Consider inequality implications.

How:

- Rapid participatory HIA, prospective.
- Followed WHIASU HIA guidance.
- Participatory workshop with 20 participants.



Impact of the Lung Cancer Screening HIA

- Informed engagement work: five focus groups including people with learning disability, veterans, and community groups, survey with 2,476 responses.
- Health Impact Assessment included in interim report to Welsh Government.
- Fed into announcement of lung screening in Wales, June 2025.
- Supported programme design: a reference point for decision making; the basis for other work e.g. Equalities Impact Assessment

WHIASU are here to help!

HIA resources:

- HIA Guide
- FAQs Document
- Population groups and wider determinants of health and well-being resource
- Screening record sheet
- Scoping template
- Workshop Templates

[Home - Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit](#)

Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Population Groups and Wider Determinants of Health and Well-being

This resource is for use during the Screening and Evidence Appraisal steps of a HIA to identify the wider determinants, and population groups who could be impacted by a policy/project/proposal. This resource is just a guide and is not exhaustive. It is acknowledged that terminology can change over time.

Population Groups:

Certain population groups are more vulnerable to health inequalities. In a HIA, sensitivity to impacts—positive or negative—depends on local population traits, context, and the proposal's nature. Focus may be needed on groups facing multiple disadvantages.

Sex/Gender related groups

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Other (please specify)

Age related groups (Could specify age range for special consideration)

- Early years (including pregnancy and babies up to age of 2)
- Children and young people
- Working age adult populations
- Older people

Employment / Income related groups

- Economically active/inactive
- Economically inactive
- People on low income
- People on temporary contracts or zero hours contracts
- People who are unable to work due to ill health
- Unemployed/workless
- Volunteers
- Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

Groups at higher risk of discrimination or other social disadvantage

- Carers
- Ethnic minorities (please specify)
- Ex-offenders
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller
- Homeless or no fixed abode
- Language/culture (please specify)
- Lone parent families
- Looked after children or those leaving care
- Offenders
- People with long term health conditions
- People with mental health conditions
- People with physical, sensory or learning disabilities/difficulties
- Refugee groups and asylum seekers
- Religious groups (please specify)
- Sex workers
- Sexual orientation groups
- Veterans/military personnel

Geographical groups and/or settings

- People in key settings: workplaces/schools/hospitals/care homes/prisons
- People living in areas which exhibit poor economic and/or health indicators
- People living in urban or rural areas
- People living in isolated or over-populated areas
- People unable to access services and facilities

Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Population Groups and Wider Determinants of Health and Well-being



Wider Determinants of Health and Well-being:

1. Behaviours affecting health

- Diet / Nutrition /, nutrition, infant feeding
- Physical activity
- Addictive/risk behaviours (gambling, substance use, vaping, smoking, alcohol)
- Use of non-prescribed medication, and abuse of prescription medications
- Sexual activity
- Sleeping patterns
- Social media use

Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Screening Record Sheet



Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Screening Record Sheet

This Screening record sheet can be used at the Screening step of the HIA process to help guide and record discussions. This is to be used alongside the Population Groups and Wider Determinants of Health and Well-being resource.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Scoping Template



Health Impact Assessment (HIA): Scoping Template

This resource can be used during the Scoping step of the HIA process. Guidance notes are provided at the end of this resource to support completion. Ideally, the scoping should be completed by more than one individual.

The scoping step determines the project management, governance, process, objectives, focus and scale of a HIA. It also contributes to fulfilling key values and principles that underpin the implementation of HIA including transparency, participation and robustness.



WHIASU are here to help!

- E-Learning Courses
- Online 'HIA and the Process' Training Sessions
- HIA Network of Practice
- whiasu.publichealthwales@wales.nhs.uk

Contact Details:

WHIASU.PublicHealthWales@wales.nhs.uk