

Chartered Institute of
Environmental Health



Sefydliad Siartredig
Iechyd yr Amgylchedd

Wellness Wales:

Priorities in Environmental Health
for the next Welsh Government



Introduction

Environmental health is the foundation of a healthy society. It protects the air we breathe, the food we eat, the homes we live in, and the places in which we work and play. In short, environmental health supports wellness in Wales. As Wales prepares for the 2026 Senedd elections, we want to ensure that environmental health practitioners (EHPs) can fulfil their vital role to deliver public health, tackle inequalities, and build resilient communities.

Wales has a proud record in environmental health practice, but the profession is needed now more than ever if people are to be able to trust the world around them. The next Welsh Government must take steps to ensure that EHPs can fulfil their potential to support communities and deliver a healthier nation, both now and for future generations.

In this manifesto, we call for support for the environmental health workforce, reducing health inequalities, and stronger safeguards for consumers. We look forward to working with the next Government and the expanded Senedd in delivering wellness in Wales.



1. Securing the Environmental Health Workforce

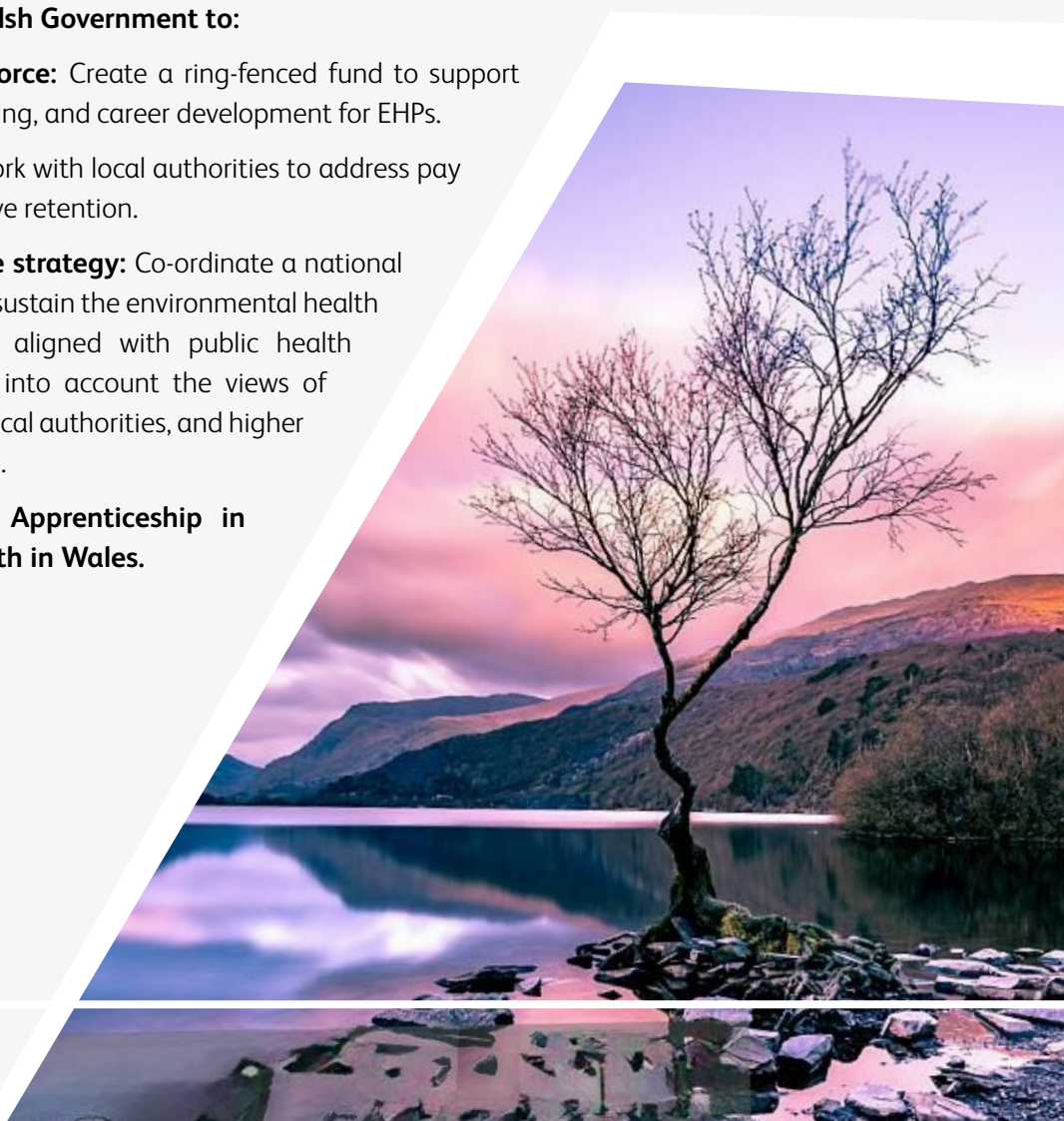
EHPs alleviate pressures on the NHS through the enforcement of high environmental health standards, reduce lost productivity by preventing avoidable illnesses and protect the public from harms in the environment.

But there is already a shortage of EHPs, and this position is expected to worsen further with not enough people pursuing qualifications. Meanwhile, local authorities tell us that staff retention is a problem with other employers offering better pay. While the shortages are felt most acutely within local authorities, the problem is real throughout the whole of Wales. The Welsh Government is best placed to take a lead to support local authorities in the development of the next generation of EHPs, and in becoming more competitive in retaining the employees they already have.

Greater support for local authorities to offer apprenticeships and other training opportunities would provide a strong foundation and should be part of a wider national strategy for the workforce that takes account of the role of the environmental health profession in delivering Wales' agenda of reducing health inequalities.

CIEH calls on the next Welsh Government to:

- **Invest in the workforce:** Create a ring-fenced fund to support apprenticeships, training, and career development for EHPs.
- **Support fair pay:** Work with local authorities to address pay disparities and improve retention.
- **Develop a workforce strategy:** Co-ordinate a national strategy to grow and sustain the environmental health profession in Wales, aligned with public health priorities and taking into account the views of professional bodies, local authorities, and higher and further education.
- **Support a level 6 Apprenticeship in Environmental Health in Wales.**



2. Reducing health inequalities

Environmental health is central to reducing health inequalities by addressing the social determinants of health – housing, environment, education, employment, and community safety – and by promoting healthy built and natural environments. For example, air pollution can cause heart and circulatory disease, and in Wales the burden of long-term air pollution exposure equates to 1,000-1,400 deaths each year¹.

The situation in Wales is stark:

- **Health inequalities persist:** 22.7% of deaths in Wales in 2022 were avoidable²; deprived communities face higher exposure to pollution, noise, and poor housing³.
- **Cold homes and damp:** 238,000 homes in Wales (18% of the stock) are poor-quality, costing the NHS £95 million a year⁴. Cold homes contribute to excess winter deaths and mental health issues⁵.

CIEH calls on the next Welsh Government to:

- **Improve housing standards:** Support enforcement of housing regulations and invest in energy efficiency to bring all homes to Band C by 2030.
- **Tackle environmental inequalities:** Prioritise action in communities most affected by pollution, noise, and poor housing. This means working directly with local authorities serving these communities and ensuring that they have their full complement of EHPs.

¹ Public Health Wales (2020), phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/environmental-public-health/air-quality/air-pollution-and-health-fact-sheet/ accessed 12 November 2025

² Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 18 June 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, Avoidable mortality in England and Wales: 2021 and 2022

³ Michael Marmot, Jessica Allen, Tammy Boyce, Peter Goldblatt, Joana Morrison (2020) Health equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 years on. London: Institute of Health Equity. Although this is an England-based study, it refers to similarities with the situation in Wales

⁴ Nicol S, Garrett H, Woodfine L, Watkins G, Woodham A. (2019). The full cost of poor housing in Wales, Building Research Establishment Ltd, Public Health Wales, Welsh Government. This is the most recent all-Wales research, but it is consistent with the StatsWales October 2023 update which indicated that 22.4% of social housing stock is not fully compliant with the WHQS. [Compliance with the overall Welsh Housing Quality Standard by provider and measure](#) accessed 13 October 2025.

⁵ Janssen H, Gascoyne B, Ford K, Hill R, Roberts M and Azam S (2022). Cold homes and their association with health and well-being: a systematic literature review. Wrexham: Public Health Wales NHS Trust

3. Stronger safeguards for consumers

We all expect to be able to trust the food we eat and the buildings we live or work in. Inspections by EHPs enable organisations to ensure that they are meeting safety standards. We help organisations to understand and comply voluntarily with the rules and frameworks that affect them, so that they can operate with as little friction and as cost-effectively as possible, while meeting their obligations.

The most recent data indicates that 96.9% of food businesses in Wales have a food hygiene rating of 3 or better⁶, which means that about **930 businesses of all sizes were not meeting minimum food hygiene standards**. However, an anomaly is that food businesses can start trading before being inspected and undergoing the necessary checks, posing risks to consumers. This is unfair to businesses that have been checked and verified as meeting the standards all citizens expect. We are therefore calling on the Welsh Government to develop a 'permit to trade' system or other replacement for the current registration process, so that businesses are compliant from their first day of trading, helping to support their success and sustainability, and delivering greater transparency for consumers and a level playing field for all businesses.

Similarly, the Building Safety Bill will provide an obligation to multi-disciplinary teams to oversee new regulations. We are calling on the next Welsh Government to ensure that those teams have the resources to access the professional expertise that is necessary to discharge their new duties.

CIEH calls on the next Welsh Government to:

- **Develop and introduce a 'permit to trade' system** so that all organisations selling food have had their standards checked before commencing trade.
- **Support multi-disciplinary teams in local authorities** to discharge their duties under the Building Safety Bill, once passed.

⁶ Food Standards Agency, Wales Annual Report 2023-2024

Conclusion

Environmental health is not a luxury – it is a necessity. As Wales looks to the future, we must invest in the people and systems that protect our health, reduce inequalities, and build resilient communities.

This manifesto calls on all parties contesting the 2026 Senedd elections to commit to:

- Securing the environmental health workforce
- Reducing health inequalities
- Stronger safeguards for consumers

Together, we can create Wellness Wales.



About us

Environmental Health brings together five core disciplines: environmental protection, food safety and integrity, workplace safety, housing standards and public health. EHPs are interested in any aspect of the environment that affects the health and wellbeing of humanity.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) has been the voice of environmental health since 1883. We support the public, environmental health professionals and policymakers by providing information, training, advocacy and professional standards. Our mission is to protect the public, support professionals and influence policy to improve health and wellbeing.

CIEH is a registered charity, incorporated by Royal Charter, and represents over 7,500 environmental health professionals in Wales, England and Northern Ireland. We operate nationally and internationally, offering professional development, campaigning on public health issues, and maintaining high standards in environmental health practice.

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