Our healthy future
What good health means to me

I was born in Wales in 1949. My older brother would later joke that I had grown taller than him because of NHS orange juice and free school milk. I suppose this might have been true.

My mother had been the youngest of eight children. One of her sisters, and a brother, died when they were babies. Visit any old churchyard and you will see how many children’s graves there are dating back to the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and earlier.

My grandfather had died before Dad was born, which meant a lifetime of struggle for my grandmother.

My mother’s family house - for ten people - had a kitchen, two bedrooms and a toilet at the bottom of the yard.
Our first family home was a flat near a river. When it rained, rats from the river came into the flat for shelter.

I realise now I was lucky - my family moved into a council house in 1953 and I grew up during the better years of the 1950s and 1960s.

But why was life so much better for me than for earlier generations of my family?

The answer wasn't difficult. It was because people started to organise themselves to make things better. There was better hygiene, better housing, better food. And, of course, there was a National Health Service.

If people then were willing to do all that to make things better for future generations, what are we going to do today?

For all our knowledge and technology, people still die before they should.

While I was thinking this, I picked up this booklet about Our Healthy Future...
**Play your part**

Everyone in Wales deserves to have a long, healthy life and have support to ensure they have the best possible health and well-being wherever they live. That’s why the Welsh Assembly Government is launching *Our Healthy Future*, a new approach that aims to improve health in Wales by 2020.

*Our Healthy Future* has two main aims:

- To improve quality and length of life
- To promote good health on equal terms for everyone in Wales

We know that some areas of Wales have poorer health than others and we want to take steps to improve this. The Welsh Assembly Government has been working with the NHS, local government, education and the voluntary sector to develop *Our Healthy Future*.

But it is your views that will make the biggest impact on any of the plans that we make. That’s why we are asking you for your opinions. We want to know what you think about the approach suggested and the improvements that need to be made.
A healthier Wales

Health in Wales has improved over the years, and people are living longer than ever before. But there is still much to be done. There are unacceptable differences in health within and between our communities and evidence suggests that this “health gap” is getting worse.

Our Healthy Future wants to find ways to improve the health of all our communities in Wales, both at a national and local level.

Everything we do impacts on individual and community health now and for future generations. Many factors influence health including housing, income, employment, education and the environment. All of these will need to be considered if we are to improve the health of our population and create a self-confident and prosperous Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government and its partners have identified four main ambitions for 2020:

- Across society we will take care of, and have responsibility for, our own and others’ health and well-being
- Organisations and individuals will work together to improve and protect the health of the people of Wales
- The gap between communities with poor health and those with good health will be reduced
- Healthy public policy will support and enable people to lead healthy lives.
We are looking at seven key areas through which we can achieve these main ambitions. These are:

**One:** We will promote factors which support good health and well-being and reduce those which don’t. We will promote opportunities for good health on equal terms across our communities.

**Two:** We will improve the health of future generations by ensuring our children are given a good start in life.

**Three:** We will ensure everyone has access to and understands the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise.

**Four:** We will encourage and support people to avoid actions, such as smoking and drinking too much alcohol, which can damage health.

**Five:** We will ensure that older people, people with chronic conditions, and those who are frail have the knowledge, skills and support to make informed choices to enable them to live independent and fulfilled lives.

**Six:** We will promote positive mental health and well-being throughout life, and strive to reduce the risk factors that contribute to poor mental health and prevent recovery.

**Seven:** We will all share a common goal to deliver improved health and well-being and prevent ill-health.

We are currently developing specific ambitions for each of these areas, too.

Setting the main ambitions and key areas is an important first step on the road to *Our Healthy Future*. They are the starting point for deciding what action we need to take to make Wales a healthier nation by 2020.
What do you think?

Now you have read about *Our Healthy Future*, what do you think?
We want to hear your views on the following:

- What do you think about the four main ambitions?
- Are they too ambitious - or not ambitious enough?
- Do you agree with the seven key health areas?

Your opinion is very important to us, so please write to us at:

**Our Healthy Future,**  
Department for Public Health and Health Professions,  
FREEPOST NAT8910  
Welsh Assembly Government,  
Cathays Park, Cardiff,  
CF10 3BR

It would be helpful to receive your comments by 31st March 2009

Or e-mail us at: **Ourhealthyfuture@wales.gsi.gov.uk**