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NHS Board Chief Executives  
Chief Officers HSCP

C.c Directors of Public Health,  
NHS Board Welfare Reform Leads

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Dear Colleague

## Healthcare Impact of Welfare Benefit Reforms

My predecessor as Chief Medical Officer wrote to you in December 2013 about the risks to health and wellbeing of the UK Government's continuing reforms to the welfare benefits system. There is growing evidence of negative impacts on those who lose out under the reforms being faced with reduced income at a time of rising food and fuel costs. In addition, a range of reputable organisations have issued warnings about the effect on wellbeing of fuel poverty, poor nutrition and increased stress.

The Outcome Focussed Plan that was shared with you at the time has now been reviewed in consultation with NHS Boards, local government colleagues and third sector representatives, taking on-board the lessons learned since it was issued. This revision provides a useful tool to identify the actions and measures that NHS Boards should be undertaking to mitigate the worst of the negative effects of welfare reform. I am pleased to note that most Boards are already taking steps to improve staff understanding of the consequences and the actions that can be taken, and all Boards have an identified lead for Welfare Reform.

The plan will sit on NHS Health Scotland's website, and will include links to resources and activities to support the outcomes. NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Public Health Network (ScotPHN) can provide support to boards and HSCPs to implement the plan.

I would ask you to ensure that your welfare reform leads are supported to implement the plan for your Board and that you ensure that appropriate collaboration occurs with local partners.

The Scottish Government will continue to work with colleagues across Scotland to continue to develop our understanding of the implications of welfare reform and the steps that can be taken to mitigate its effects. [Pulling in different directions?](#) was published by NHS Health Scotland in 2016, providing an update on developments in the social security system and

changing economic context and monitors relevant changes in population health and health inequalities in Scotland.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or the Outcome Focussed Plan please contact Roderick Duncan at [roderick.duncan@gov.scot](mailto:roderick.duncan@gov.scot) or tel. 0131 244 2818.

Yours faithfully,



Catherine Calderwood  
Chief Medical Officer