

***Together* towards a healthier Bargoed area**



Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Gilfach, and Deri

CWTSH

**Integrated Wellbeing Network
Draft Outline Plan**



Contents

Section	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
OUTLINE PLAN REPORT STRUCTURE	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT DETAILS	5
1 AIMS AND BACKGROUND	6
2 HEALTH AND WELLBEING CHALLENGES IN THE AREA	9
3 WORK UNDERTAKEN FOR THIS OUTLINE PLAN	10
4 MOVING FORWARD: DESIRED HEALTH AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES	14
5 CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND NEXT STEPS	29
ANNEXES	31



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bargoed area, together with the Darran Valley, has some of the biggest health and wellbeing challenges in Wales and indeed the UK. These include heart and lung disease, obesity, and Type 2 diabetes, along with mental health and wellbeing issues.

These health inequalities severely impact the quality of life in our communities with people living healthy lives for far fewer years than those in more affluent areas. In addition, it places extra demands on already stretched health and social care services which exacerbates the situation. This needs to and must change.

No single organisation alone can successfully address these challenges and deliver the changes needed. Moreover, it requires working together with people, so they participate and are empowered. Within our communities, we have assets vital to achieving the change needed – people, places, and provision of services.

The **Integrated Wellbeing Networks (IWN) Outline Plan** based on IWN work done in the area to date highlights what people have said they want to see, including:

- The area is vibrant with community venues and groups working together effectively in providing and delivering wellbeing activities and services
- People get good quality, accessible local health and wellbeing information
- Town and village centres are vibrant, contributing actively to health and wellbeing.
- People better manage their own health and wellbeing supported by well-connected, accessible services and community activities
- The local environment is well-used and supports improved wellbeing and health
- Improved health and wellbeing for all ages through activities and support including intergenerational opportunities

This outline plan is aimed at contributing to achieving these outcomes. It is not a standalone plan and must complement other projects and initiatives. It is not intended to be prescriptive or definitive, but an outline plan that crucially requires wider community involvement and greater collective action with three main aims:

- To catalyse more and wider conversations and encourage greater involvement in enhancing wellbeing and health in our communities
- To stimulate further action *working together* based on what's good and strong in the area to improve wellbeing and health, building on progress to date
- To initiate new actions on the ground led by the community together with services to make real differences to the area's wellbeing and health supported in part by participatory budgeting

We warmly welcome everyone living and working in the area to be part of the change.

OUTLINE PLAN REPORT STRUCTURE

The first section sets out the aims of this outline plan, its background, and the underlying rationale. It is followed by a brief review of the health and wellbeing challenges in the area before describing the development work undertaken to produce the plan.

The main section provides more detail on the desired outcomes drawn from the development work, indicating what people felt was good, what could be developed or improved, and some indicative actions to achieve those outcomes.

Finally, there are some concluding comments with proposed next steps and actions indicating how the outline plan fits within the IWN principles work moving forward.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACT DETAILS

We thank all the people who have contributed to the work to date as part of the collaborative and outside that.

Any omissions or errors are totally my responsibility.

We warmly welcome feedback on this outline plan and encourage wider involvement in taking it forward.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read it – Diolch yn fawr iawn.

David Llewellyn (IWN Lead)
david.llewellyn@wales.nhs.uk

1. AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Aims of the outline plan

The **IWN Community Wellbeing Outline Plan** is based on what people, primarily in the local IWN wellbeing collaborative, have said they would like to happen to improve wellbeing and health in the Bargoed area.

It is neither a prescriptive nor definitive final plan. It is an outline plan which indicates what members of the community and some services to date feel might be done. Circumstances will potentially change, and it will and should evolve as more people have their say, get involved and provide more input and ideas. We need to include as many people as possible in our communities to continue the conversations, get more involved, and work together to make the changes happen.

As such, it has three main aims:

1. To catalyse more and wider conversations and encourage greater involvement in enhancing wellbeing and health in our communities.
2. To stimulate further action *working together* based on what's good and strong in the area to improve wellbeing and health, building on progress to date.
3. To initiate new actions on the ground led by the community to make real differences to the area's health and wellbeing.

The outline plan will support and be supported by the new **participatory budgeting** process in the area to help deliver some of its aims. Importantly, too, we fully recognise the impacts of the other wider determinants on health and wellbeing that must be and are being addressed. As such, it is not a standalone plan and should complement other projects and initiatives in the area.

We hope you will find this outline plan informative and use it as intended - to have or start conversations about making change happen, to remain or get involved going forward, and to shape and to help deliver collectively the health and wellbeing changes we want and need in our communities.

Background and rationale for the outline plan

Like other former heavy industrial areas in the valleys of south Wales, the upper Rhymney valley including Bargoed and the Darran valley struggle with health and wellbeing challenges, which are some of the biggest in Wales and the UK.

Most importantly, these challenges unfortunately impact dramatically on people’s quality of life in our communities. The major aim of the Integrated Wellbeing Networks programme is that people enjoy a healthy life for as long as possible, increasing what has been termed their ‘**health span**’.¹

Healthy Life Expectancy (at birth) is the average number of years a person would expect to live in good health in a particular area. In Caerphilly County Borough as a whole, Healthy Life Expectancy for males is 56.7 years and 57 years for females. The respective figures for Monmouthshire, which are 68.7 years and 69.3 years, which indicates the challenges.

Moreover, the disparities in this health span between areas, such as the upper Rhymney valley and the more affluent areas of Monmouthshire for example are even bigger, as shown in the recent **Building a Fairer Gwent** report, which demonstrates the crucial impacts and influences of the wider determinants of health, such as poverty, employment, and housing.²

As well as the unacceptable personal impacts on people, their families, and friends, and indeed the wider community, these inequities produce additional stresses and strains on already stretched health and social care services, exacerbating the situation in our communities. This must change and this outline plan is aimed at contributing in that.



The socioeconomic gap in healthy life expectancy has remained largely unchanged at 13 years for men, but has widened to 20 years for women over the period 2011-13 to 2018-20. This means that on average, a man living in the most deprived communities in Gwent today lives just 53 years of life in good health and a woman lives just 48 years of life in good health

The aim of the **Integrated Wellbeing Networks (IWN)** programme is to enhance wellbeing and health in our communities by working *with* people and the services that serve them.

Despite the challenges, there are many positive assets in our communities all of which have important roles in addressing those challenges – people, places, and provision of services. The IWN programme uses a ‘*what’s strong, not wrong*’ assets-based approach focusing upon connecting, strengthening, and developing those assets to address the issues that impact upon community health and wellbeing.³ It is a preventative approach, working

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/healthspan>

² <https://abuhb.nhs.wales/healthcare-services/staying-well-and-healthy/building-a-fairer-gwent/>

³ <https://researchoutreach.org/articles/whats-wrong-whats-strong-guide-community-driven-development/>

together *with* people helping to enable them to live healthy, fulfilled lives and addressing the health inequalities faced by our communities. This is the major objective of the Building a Fairer Gwent initiative, and why Gwent is now a so-called Marmot region.⁴

A key part of the IWN approach is to bring people and services together in a locality and empower communities to find and lead solutions. In the areas of Caerphilly County Borough where the IWN programmes is focused upon localities, we call these our **Cwtsh Collaboratives**. These are open to *everyone* whether a service provider, a community group, or a resident in the area. Our community health and wellbeing are everybody's business, and everyone should be engaged and involved.

The Cwtsh Collaboratives work to understand the positive changes in health and wellbeing local people want to see and make happen in our communities, explore how we can best do this together, and help to deliver those changes collectively.

The basis of this plan has come primarily through the work with the local collaborative, but also importantly from work outside that. The work started just prior to the Covid pandemic which, unsurprisingly, severely interrupted its development. Moreover, the pandemic as well as the subsequent and continuing Cost of Living crisis has undoubtedly exacerbated the health and wellbeing challenges faced, but it should be remembered too that these health inequalities existed before and must be addressed.

⁴ <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/building-a-fairer-gwent-improving-health-equity-and-the-social-determinants>

2. HEALTH AND WELLBEING CHALLENGES IN THE AREA

Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness. It's a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction and could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life⁵. Feelings of wellbeing are fundamental to people's overall health whilst conversely your health can impact upon your wellbeing.

The aim and approach of the IWN programme is to actively help and encourage people and our communities to take control of their wellbeing, taking advantage of activities and support available, and becoming more confident and able to lead healthier and happier lives.

Evidence from a variety of sources indicates the continued health challenges faced by people in communities in the upper Rhymney valley, including the Bargoed area.

Major health challenges include:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Coronary heart disease
- Obesity
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Worsening mental health, depression, and anxiety

Dementia is also increasingly an issue within our communities.

These health data are backed up anecdotally in conversations in our collaboratives, from discussions at other meetings and events, and from general everyday chats with people in our communities.

Many are struggling with these conditions and with data showing an increasing ageing population, the challenges will intensify. We must address those factors that impact adversely upon our health and wellbeing through preventive approaches working with communities.

⁵ <https://www.wpa.org.uk/health-wellbeing/articles/importance-of-wellbeing>

3. WORK UNDERTAKEN FOR THIS OUTLINE PLAN

Integrated Wellbeing Networks (IWN) programme

Integrated Wellbeing Networks (IWNs) seek to improve and strengthen wellbeing by connecting and enhancing community assets for people to build relationships and find the things that matter to them.

They are not about creating more services or 'sticking plasters' that attempt to solve people's problems. Rather, the aim is to build on what is already available locally and bring in the unique strengths and assets that are within individuals and communities. These assets exist within all communities and contribute to good health and wellbeing.

There are four elements to the IWN programme:

1. Encouraging place-based collaboration and community-led action
2. Connecting and enhancing community-based hubs and activities
3. Supporting and connecting services and support in an area
4. Enabling easier, inclusive access to wellbeing information in communities

More details on the IWN programme and the underlying principles can be found at:

<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/staying-well-and-healthy/integrated-well-being-networks-in-gwent/>

Whilst the team supporting the delivery of the IWN programme is hosted by Aneurin Bevan Health Board, we realise fully that no single organisation or body can deliver the actions and changes needed. They require effective networking between relevant partners ranging from local authorities, health boards, other statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and most importantly groups and people in our communities.

Initial IWN work, area collaboratives, and scoping exercises

The upper Rhymney valley from Bargoed northwards, along with the Darran Valley, was selected as the initial focus area for the IWN work in Caerphilly County Borough.

Whilst the health and other statistics were undeniably factors in deciding the focus area, crucially and equally importantly, we recognised the area's assets and opportunities, including the strong sense of community, people and organisations already doing excellent work, services operating on the ground, and an environment and landscape that should support community wellbeing and health.

We decided to breakdown the area into three distinct working areas in greater recognition of the geography and how communities largely relate to each other: the Bargoed area, the

Rhymney area, and the New Tredegar area. For the Bargoed area, we decided to include the lower Darran valley communities of Deri and Groesfaen owing to their proximity – when we state the Bargoed area in this outline plan, we are referring the area covering Bargoed, Aberbargoed, Gilfach and Deri.⁶

Initial work began in mid-2019, soon after the IWN programme started, holding discussions with services, organisations, and groups to get a greater understanding of the wellbeing challenges as well as the assets in the area and how well they connected and complemented each other. From this, we produced two initial wellbeing assets maps for the area as shown in Annex 1, which also shows two follow up maps indicating how these have changed since the pandemic.

After an inaugural general IWN meeting at St David's Community Centre, Rhymney in autumn 2019, we organised Bargoed area-specific meetings at the YMCA and St Gwladys Hall respectively in early 2020, which were well attended.

At the first of these, we undertook a wellbeing-focused *Postcards from the Future* exercise.^{7,8} This approach seeks to get participants to imagine positive changes that have happened in a community in the foreseeable future – we picked 5 years on since we felt this would give a meaningful timescale. This provided a basis for creating a collective plan to achieve those outcomes. The outcomes were explored further at the second meeting to gather collective ideas on how to achieve them. Annex 2 shows the outcomes of those meetings and exercises.

Further discussion sessions were planned and ideas to explore the developing material in more detail, but unfortunately the pandemic intervened which prevented them happening.

'Post-COVID' IWN collaborative conversations and events

In late 2020 and throughout 2021, we conducted a series of in-depth online discussions in our collaboratives, including Bargoed. The contributions across all the IWN areas highlighted some key common issues exacerbated by the pandemic and the measures taken. These included:

- Worsened mental health and resilience
- Social isolation affecting people's health and wellbeing
- Seeming increases in obesity and Type 2 diabetes through inactivity
- Impacts of Covid, exacerbating existing respiratory and other conditions and causing new ones including Long Covid

⁶ Note - we have recently included Pengam in our Cwtsh wellbeing guides for the Bargoed area

⁷ <https://createthefuture.earth/postcards-from-the-future-for-communities/>

⁸ <https://www.reimaginary.com/methods/postcards-from-the-future>

This work also highlighted challenges people felt there were in accessing services, including health services, and the impacts of digital exclusion, especially at a time when people were increasingly dependent on online activities and information.

It was also clear that wellbeing assets in our localities had been adversely impacted; community centres and venues were struggling to recover because volunteers needed to help run them were not well enough or decided not to continue in their roles.

Continued community intelligence and input since 2022

In early 2022, IWN collaborative meetings resumed, initially as hybrid meetings where people could attend in person or online via Zoom. These together with other 'post-COVID' discussions with communities and services e.g., at Cwtsh Cafes and community projects, and direct conversations with people in the area, have added more information and input. We have also conducted recent Community surveys on specific issues such as women's and men's health, again vitally adding context and evidence to this outline plan.

In the middle of 2022, we initiated our IWN Cwtsh Connections funding initiative through GAVO to support community projects and activities that would help reconnect people and address some of the post-Covid challenges identified. These again gave valuable insight into some of the issues and opportunities as perceived by community groups and organisations.

Over two funding rounds, 32 projects were supported in total across the IWN focus areas. Nine of these were in the Bargoed area ranging from wellbeing projects at St Gwladys Hall, a number of projects at Bargoed YMCA aimed at specific health and wellbeing challenges, an initiative linking Llamau with Tarragan Gardens, the green spaces improvement work of Bargoed Town Council, a luncheon club at Cartref, and support for Bargoed Community Choir. A specific fund also supported the installation of Wi-fi at Cartref Community Hall and Gilfach-Bargoed Community Centre.

We held two Bargoed-area IWN collaborative meetings in January and June 2023. In the latter we revisited the Postcards from the Future outcomes from the earlier work within the context of the further information gathered afterwards to get further refinement and input. This used a World Café-style approach to gain feedback on proposed objectives that emerged.^{9,10}

The information from all these events and activities, along with reference to relevant data, has informed and shaped this outline plan. It provides a basis for moving forward to contribute to achieving the outcomes indicated.

⁹ www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method

¹⁰ www.involve.org.uk/resource/world-cafe

We have produced outline plans for the other IWN focus areas through similar work. These plans in different areas share quite a lot in common in terms of the desired outcomes, which is unsurprising because they have some comparable health and wellbeing challenges, which was a major basis for their selection in the first instance.

Nevertheless, there are important differences between the area plans. This is intended to be a place-based plan for the Bargoed area which has different assets and opportunities to the others. The next section details the outcomes and ideas to achieve those that have emerged from this work to date.

DRAFT

4. MOVING FORWARD: DESIRED WELLBEING OUTCOMES

Social inequalities such as poverty, employment, housing, and other important factors influence and affect our health and wellbeing. The current cost of living crisis has impacted upon people's mental health. For example, a recent UK-wide survey by the Mental Health Foundation showed many people are feeling anxious and stressed because of their current financial situation.¹¹

The work undertaken by local authorities, other public bodies such as the health board, and organisations in the voluntary sector is vital in addressing these and are key elements of the Building a Fairer Gwent initiative for example. The IWN programme seeks to involve all these and support them and their work.

To complement and augment that, the work here specifically set out to understand what communities and some of the services in them feel are amongst the major health and wellbeing challenges, what they understand to be the area's assets, and what outcomes they want to see. With the need to include and involve more people, the outcomes are not all encompassing and there will be challenges and opportunities not yet articulated or covered. Indeed, other opportunities clearly exist and need to be encouraged

In the Bargoed area, we have drawn out the following interrelated outcomes based on the work to date. The outcomes are not listed in any order of priority and have obvious overlaps and links between them, which could allow some to be combined going forward. A major task now is to continue and encourage more community conversations whilst moving from planning to delivering more actions to make change happen. We fully recognise that much of the focus in meetings and events has been on Bargoed (and Gilfach). We believe the thrust and scope of the outcomes relate to Deri and Aberbargoed too, but as the work continues, it may very well be increased involvement in those areas results in other outcomes too.

The outcomes here are:

- Good quality health and wellbeing information is shared and effectively used in the community
- Town and village centres are vibrant, contributing actively to community wellbeing, cohesion, and identity
- The area is vibrant with community venues and groups working together effectively in providing and delivering wellbeing activities and services
- The local environment is flourishing and contributes positively to community wellbeing and health

¹¹ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/about-us/news/stress-anxiety-and-hopelessness-over-personal-finances-widespread-across-uk-new-mental-health-survey>

- Improved health and wellbeing for all ages through activities and support including intergenerational opportunities
- People better manage their own health and wellbeing supported by well-connected, accessible services and community activities

Importantly, we provided the chance for people to propose other opportunities in the World-café session. We have sought to incorporate these in the outcomes above for now as appropriate.

We set out the outcomes in the following section set out as follows:

- **Background and context**
This includes some evidence from wider work that underpin the outcome.
- **What people said - what's good, what could be improved or developed**
This emanates from the World Café-type sessions where we encouraged people to say what is good now and what could be improved or provide additional opportunities.
- **What could be done together going forward?**
Again primarily emerging from the World Café-type sessions, these are some future actions put forward by people to achieve those outcomes. Together with existing and continued actions, and others yet identified, these provide a basis for more detailed delivery plans.

OUTCOME – Good quality health and wellbeing information is shared and effectively used in the community

Background and context

For people to get involved in activities and take advantage of support locally and more widely to support their wellbeing and health, it is important that information about what is available is accessible to all.

There are several useful digital sources such as Dewis¹² and Gwelcol¹³ that can be searched by people to find out what is on and available in an area. In all our Cwtsh Collaboratives, a clear message since early 2022 was that people wanted and needed regular up-to-date local information to complement Dewis, which is useful in providing wellbeing information in and outside the immediate area.

To do this, the IWN team has worked with Dewis, GAVO and the Wellbeing (Community) Connectors to produce local Cwtsh guides each week. Bargoed was one of the first areas to have a specific Cwtsh guide developed. The Cwtsh guide and the fully searchable Cwtsh website section dedicated to the activities in the area are updated each week - <http://www.cwtsh.wales/en/events/bargoed>.

Recently, the Cwtsh website has been expanded to include more information on support available for health conditions, access to health services, and information on issues that impact adversely on wellbeing and health.

Cwtsh guides are sent to some key partners as pdfs each Friday for the following week. A poster image link to the website with QR code and text links is posted on most local Facebook sites each week.

We have also developed the growing Caerphilly Cwtsh Community Facebook site which promotes wellbeing activities across the county borough.¹⁴

There are several community Facebook websites that also promote what is on in the area.

What people said - what's good, what could be improved or developed

We want local people to be well-connected and aware of where they can go themselves and signpost others for help and advice.

¹² www.dewis.wales

¹³ www.gwelcol.co.uk

¹⁴ www.facebook.com/IWNcaerphillywellbeingfriends/

Melo is an excellent resource to provide self-help resources for mental health and wellbeing. The Cwtsh guides and Dewis show the breadth and extent of excellent groups and activities in the area. The Cwtsh guides work well, services use them, and they are printed and displayed by some venues to provide information to visitors – this could be done at other venues but weekly Cwtsh guides are now very big; 11 pages currently in the Bargoed area which makes display difficult.

Bargoed library is a very good resource – lots of info available for people on local activities and supportive staff - as is Aberbargoed Library.

The Town Council has started to promote a lot more activities - there is perhaps an opportunity to use the notice boards more for information.

Online information is good, but we also need to reach people in other ways too especially those not online. Certain areas may be more suited to this, for example leaflet drops work well and people seem to respond better to these in the Park Estate area.

Make sure we circulate via the well-used social media groups

We should ensure that health and wellbeing information and advice is available at GP surgeries, pharmacies and through similar routes.

What could be done together going forward?

- Support dedicated volunteers/wellbeing friends? at local centres (and online) who are well informed about existing and new activities and groups and can share information in the community
- Local health and wellbeing information packs at community centres and venues – perhaps the weekly area Cwtsh guide could be printed at the venue, possibly not for display owing to their size, but a copy added to the pack
- Get more offline information available where needed
- Improve information at GP surgeries (screens) and pharmacies and other venues
- Work with the town council to get Cwtsh QR posters out on notice boards

OUTCOME – Town and village centres are vibrant, contributing actively to community wellbeing, cohesion, and identity

Background and context

There is increasing recognition that town and village centres can and must contribute positively to health and wellbeing - supporting and providing a better quality of life for communities. The Placemaking Charter Wales¹⁵ sets out six principles, all of which emphasise the need for safe, well-connected spaces. Good communal places and spaces can encourage social interaction and connection whilst poor neighbourhood environments have been linked to self-reported depression and anxiety.¹⁶

NHS and local government leaders along with community businesses and invited experts in England produced a report highlighting how putting health at the heart of places can attract more people into local high streets supporting economic and social recovery, address health inequalities, provide opportunities for health service delivery, and encourage healthier lifestyles.¹⁷

Local amenities such as shops, schools, healthcare, and social spaces such as libraries, parks, pubs, and restaurants can create opportunities for people to meet, and walk, cycle or use public transport to do so.

What people said - what's good, what could be improved or developed

Bargoed town centre has become a more vibrant area, visually with flower planting for example, and events like the Monthly Crafty Legs craft fair. Excellent local cafes in the centre provide great spaces for people to meet and socialise.

Festivals and cultural events can bring people together. The success of the Bargoed May Fair demonstrated how it is important to include the whole town, though it was commented that prices at some stalls and activities might have prohibitive for some people and families.

Support and input from CCBC events and Bargoed Town Council has been valuable helping to stage and promote these events.

There is a need to support or provide safe, accessible social spaces and places that combat isolation and loneliness and support good mental wellbeing, particularly for men. Bargoed library is a good example of such a space but could be more.

¹⁵ <https://dcfw.org/placemaking/placemaking-charter/>

¹⁶ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2167702619830640>

¹⁷ <https://www.nhsconfed.org/publications/health-high-street>

There is an opportunity to bring back unused and derelict buildings into community life with meanwhile use by creative groups and organisations – the arts and the environment contribute positively. Excellent combined effort between businesses and town council for crochet flower displays

There is a need to look at how Bargoed town centre supports activities for young people.

Perhaps more could be done to promote the heritage of the area in the centre of Bargoed for locals and visitors – again the library does some excellent work in this.

In keeping with the aims and aspirations of Dementia Friendly Bargoed, businesses could be supported to help them to meet those.

Perhaps more could be done to support active travel connections in and within Bargoed town centre.

What could be done together going forward?

- Ensure that community wellbeing is at the heart of the placemaking plans for Bargoed
- Bring unused buildings into use in the centre through arts, culture, and heritage – opportunities for social spaces and age-specific intergenerational activities
- Continue to promote regular activities and events that attract locals and visitors
- Support the town centre and businesses there and elsewhere to become dementia friendly
- Develop the green and open spaces to make centres more attractive
- Create a Bargoed heritage trail to attract more people into the town centre and
- Explore opportunities to enhance active travel within the town centre in Bargoed and elsewhere

OUTCOME – The area is vibrant with community venues and groups working together effectively in providing and delivering wellbeing activities and services

Background and context

A growing body of evidence shows that feeling and being part of a community is good for wellbeing and health. Community participation can empower people to be positive and more involved with greater influence in the places they live, provide important communal networks that support mental and physical wellbeing, help combat social isolation across all ages, and help 'buffer against disease and influence health-related behaviour and management of long-term conditions.¹⁸

Community venues and organisations provide important opportunities for people to come together. They also provide activities that improve wellbeing and health and offer opportunities to obtain support, advice, and even care in the community. In short, they are vital to community wellbeing.

The Bargoed area is fortunate to have excellent community hubs and organisations. The local Cwtsh guide lists over 180 weekly or monthly events that contribute richly to community life and wellbeing.

Civic spaces such as the local libraries, Heolddu Leisure Centre and the Hanger in the area are extremely important. The YMCA hosts a good number of groups and activities that support community health and wellbeing and is home to the Parent Network and Caerphilly People First. St Gwladys Hall similarly has a range of excellent support, events, and activities whilst St Margaret's Church in Gilfach provides hosts dancing, quizzes and singing for example.

Community Centres in the area are also vital. Deri Community Centre is particularly active and plays a crucial role in community life there as do the Cartref and Gilfach-Bargoed centres which have just benefitted through the provision of Wi-Fi to support their activities.

The business sector from local pubs and clubs dance studios and plays an important have a wide range of activities that support community wellbeing and social connections. Excellent sporting and cultural organisations range from rugby and football clubs through to several choirs.

It is also important to recognise the role that open and green spaces can play in bringing people together and adding to an area's vibrancy with Tarragan Gardens being a great example of this in the area – these are considered in more detail in a specific section below.

¹⁸ <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2018/02/28/health-matters-community-centred-approaches-for-health-and-wellbeing/>

What people said - what's good, what could be improved or developed

It was recognised the area has a real wealth of activities and venues which are working hard with staff and volunteers. There are multiple centres are catering for different interests and groups There are links between centres in terms of staff.

Organisations could be supported to work together more through the IWN work and other routes. Better links might support these to complement each other and strengthen them all. Centres could perhaps work together on joint projects to address specific wellbeing challenges.

The local Cwtsh guide does an excellent job in highlighting the wellbeing activities on offer in the area.

Local people sometimes/often do not take up the opportunities available. This could be due to cost in some cases. Job centre does a great job in outreach with clients and video calls to combat cost of living and support people in getting involved in activities that support wellbeing.

Community connectors are supporting individuals who lack confidence or have anxiety issue for example to attend activities.

It was felt there is an opportunity for more organised activities in the leisure centre. Taster sessions, after school clubs, street-based activities were also suggested.

There is need to listen and understand more about young people want and need - need to listen and understand more about what they want and need and develop activities accordingly with them.

People working full-time miss out on lots of opportunities that are daytime and weekday only – “our centre is guilty of this”.

Service drop-ins are crucial – could there be more? Bargoed is fortunate in having the Citizens Advice Bureau.

What could be done together going forward?

- Continue to support the existing community venues and activities in the area
- Support community centre staff and volunteers with Connect 5 training
- More activities developed for young people - need to listen and understand more about what they want and need

- A printed Bargoed-specific guide might be produced to support Cwtsh guides and the Smart Town Business App
- A dedicated community centre/venue operational group to foster better collaborative working sharing each other's information and signposting people elsewhere
- Support local sporting cultural and organisations to be more involved in the wellbeing aims
- Encourage and support schools to be involved more as appropriate

DRAFT

OUTCOME – The local environment is flourishing and contributes positively to community wellbeing and health

Background and context

There is now a wealth of evidence which shows that connecting with nature and being active outdoors can improve people's health and wellbeing. The benefits include better weight management, helping to prevent chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and hypertension, and improving mental wellbeing and health by reducing stress and anxiety.

Communal outdoor activities also promote and create social connections with others, again supporting and enhancing wellbeing. Such activities can include walking, outdoor exercise activities, birdwatching, mindfulness in nature sessions, and gardening for example.

Community growing can also provide a good source of environmentally sound, healthy, locally-sourced food for people. Moreover, there are studies showing that good quality green spaces can lower levels of stress, reduce depression and anxiety, and improve general wellbeing. They can also improve air quality which is important especially with the incidence of respiratory conditions in our communities.

We are fortunate in the valleys to be surrounded by wonderful natural landscapes, and we should take advantage of these to benefit individual and communal health and wellbeing.

What people said - what's good, what could be improved or developed

Bargoed Woodland Park (Parc Coetir Bargod) and Parc Cwm Darran are valuable assets to local communities and encourage outdoor activity.

Bargoed Park is a valuable green space that could be utilised even more by communities – the new geocaching trail developed between Bargoed Town Council and Gwent Wildlife Trust in the park and the Woodland Park is a great way of getting more people active outdoors. There could be scope for a family wellbeing fun day in the park - this could draw residents from across the whole town and beyond as example of May Fair showed.

There is a need for vibrant local green spaces with activities and opportunities for local produce to tie with improved food availability and better nutrition.

We need to develop and connect green and open spaces. The town council has begun started and supporting this – these could be wildflower spaces or growing spaces in the streets like Incredible Edible Todmorden¹⁹ - and provided support for Bargoed in Bloom. Is

¹⁹ www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk

there an opportunity to develop local allotments up to the community and encourage their use? Tarragan Educational Gardens is and has been a shining example of this approach in support community cohesions and wellbeing.

Walking Groups in the area are excellent – weekly URV Wanderers at Parc Cwm Darran, Hengoed Happiness and wellbeing group (Thriving Communities) walk, Pengam Strollers and monthly Plattform/Big Dog Coffee.

Perhaps there is an opportunity for more and different outdoor activities – recent activities like ‘Move in Nature’ at the park has been a great development.

Local support groups for COPD and Heart Failure are starting to work well with the Nature Wellbeing/Prescribing programme.²⁰

More volunteers are needed and should be encouraged to develop and sustain local green spaces. Community Litter Picks – a few individuals are doing it all themselves at the moment.

Involve schools more in community outdoor activities and opportunities.

What could be done together going forward?

- Continue to support and enhance existing activities
- Promote the local green spaces what is available and develop an area green space plan and deliver it
- Involve local schools more in environmental projects and growing projects
- Link local food growing and community cooking projects
- Create edible spaces and routes to improve environment and health and wellbeing
- Support and develop better links between GP surgeries with the Nature Wellbeing programme

²⁰ www.naturewellbeing.wales

OUTCOME – Improved health and wellbeing for all ages through activities and support including intergenerational opportunities

Background and context

Generally, nowadays, people can now expect to live far longer than before, although the rate of premature deaths (under-75) in the upper Rhymney valley is considerably higher than the average in Wales and the highest in the Caerphilly County Borough area.

However, we need to ensure extra years are spent in good health by addressing conditions that reduce people's independence and impact on their quality of life. These means supporting older sections of our community, but importantly it means ensuring that people of all ages can thrive and age well. People of ages contribute hugely to the economic and social wealth of our communities.

The health and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic upon people of all ages have been apparent. The disruptive effects on schooling were detrimental for example and young people of school age and beyond suffered with poorer mental health.²¹

Moreover, it is sometimes overlooked that young people can experience high levels of loneliness and social isolation, which affects their health. This is also true for older members of our communities, whose confidence too was severely impacted by the pandemic.²²

What people said - what's good, what could be improved or developed

Young people need to be valued, included, and supported. We should celebrate young people's contributions more - "some bad feeling from older generation towards younger people".

We must continue to support schools in the health and wellbeing of pupils and equip staff better to do this.

Organisations like Parent Network works very well in the area. Valleys Daffodils does sterling work in supporting children with disabilities and additional learning needs, and families.

Some good examples such as the Hanger and organisations like the Scouts etc. Young people not being catered for as well as they might be with activities – need to understand their needs more.

²¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9883078/>

²² <https://www.gov.wales/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society-html>

The tabletop games society and activities in schools and library has been a welcome development.

We should support local sports and cultural organisations such as choirs to involve more young people.

Older people need to be supported more. Warm/Welcome Spaces were useful in some places in supporting older people especially last winter. The work done by the town council in supporting community lunches for older people was good. The Darran Valley Over-55s club is good example of specific groups.

Excellent weekly dementia activities at Deri Community Centre St Gwladys (Croeso Café) – need more of these. Dementia work in local schools is good.

We need to involve people in sheltered accommodation and care homes more – some excellent work by Over-50s forum with VR as an example. They are part of the community.

Community Hubs and centres could be supported to provide more intergenerational activities - “we cannot do this on our own as a centre but would love to work across organisations”.

We should encourage working together to promote better understanding and integration between older generation and younger people – skills swap, cooking skills and meals together, and reading groups were amongst examples given.

What could be done together going forward?

- Explore opportunities and get more activities in care homes and sheltered accommodation
- Ensure that pupils and schools are well informed and supported with wellbeing
- Work with Age-friendly Caerphilly and Over 50s to get more intergenerational activities – again link with schools
- Continue to seek a dementia community activities coordinator – bid submitted
- Work with young people, schools Caerphilly Youth Service and appropriate local organisations to develop more activities for youth people

OUTCOME - People better manage their own health and wellbeing supported through well-connected, accessible services and community activities

Background and context

According to the World Health Organisation, community health is “the maintenance and improvement of health of all the people through collective or social actions” or “most simply the role of communities in keeping us healthy.”²³

In line with ‘Building a Fairer Gwent’, we must ensure parents can give their children the best start in life, ensure the best quality education and training, help people as appropriate into work, and provide good quality housing. All these things contribute significantly to our health and wellbeing and there is much excellent work seeking in these areas.

We must also support people to age well by keeping them healthy and connected to their communities. We should enable people to make wiser choices and manage their own health and wellbeing better, to improve quality of life and reduce health inequalities in our communities. In other words, empowering people to live well.

We have challenges and opportunities to connect people better with each other and services to improve mental wellbeing, to encourage and enable us all to be more active to reduce the risks and incidence of chronic conditions and diseases such as obesity, hypertension, and Type-2 diabetes, all of which cause premature deaths and reduce health span in our communities.

We have many of the assets in our communities to be able to do this: people, places, and provision of services and support. The aim is to make sure those are functioning the best they can, are connected and are available to all.

What people said - what’s good, what could be improved or developed

We need to continue support and enhance wellbeing and health services to address long-term conditions and connect primary care better with the community.

We should continue to develop Bargoed and upper Rhymney valley as a dementia friendly community based on the three focus areas (community venues, schools, and businesses) that emerged in previous work.

There are good online resources to inform people of what’s currently available such as Cwtsh, Melo, and Dewis.

²³ www.communityhealth.uk

We should work with local businesses to help them support the health and wellbeing of their workforce and customers - there was a poor take up with the opportunity with local barbers and hairdressers on 'barber talk' training unfortunately.

Library indicates there is a demand for more health support activities for men - the First Steps was a good example of a mental health support approach for some.

Improving women's health and wellbeing is vital, lots of issues with menopause and issues like endometriosis – community support for menopause could reduce strain on services. Men's and women's health and wellbeing events at the library have been good.

Excellent support services by Mind and Platform for example in the area. CAB is an asset in supporting people around financial and other issues that impact on health. A lot of informal, non-referral condition peer support specific groups are now online and not accessible for everyone. EPP is an excellent programme, but sessions are exclusively online.

It seems a lot of support activities have moved to Blackwood. There are some excellent support activities at community venues in the area such as pulmonary and cardiac health at the YMCA - these are linking well with the Nature Wellbeing programme. Dementia support at St Gwladys and Deri Community Centre. Blackwood Stroke Support group is now based at Tir-y-Berth Community Centre.

It is fully recognised that local GP and primary care staff and services are under immense stresses and pressures. There is a need to support with community support activities by creating better links and working to help GPs understand better the value of the activities and services available in community – we need to support enhanced responses from GPs and others regarding the activities our groups offer that could support patients.”

Ensuring better community connections with the Bryntirion and South Street surgeries would be mutually beneficial. Excellent work by Dr Kaur at Pengam Health Centre in working with community groups to address health and wellbeing issues. Ensure that Cwtsh guides encourage a conversation so support can be provided to attend groups if needed. Wellbeing Connectors in the surgeries to work along GPs and PHPs would help.

DWP at Bargoed already does some excellent work – would be beneficial to link employment support services into GP/Primary care settings to promote health benefits of working - meeting with GPs and DWPs, Communities 4 work staff.

What could be done together going forward?

- Ensure full range of support services and activities available from public health and others in community settings as well as at more formal settings such as surgeries - smoking cessation, healthy weight, community health programme etc.

- Link better with health visitors and others to get messages out and better understanding of community support available
- Need to continue to promote and support condition specific groups session at community venues and online
- Continue to link in Cardiac and Pulmonary Support groups and others with opportunities in the community such as through nature Wellbeing programme
- Promote local support activities services at surgeries and elsewhere and work with GPs and staff to develop better connections and signposting
- Work to promote better links between GPs, DWP and C4W to support people as regarding long-term sickness and employment
- Support local businesses with practical measures to support health and wellbeing
- Ensure we continue to have conversations and work *with* communities to understand need and opportunities and to empower people to manage their wellbeing and health better

5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

This outline plan is based on community input to date; from individuals, groups, and some of the services that work in those communities. It is not all encompassing or perfect. Indeed, we fully recognise the need to engage more people to provide their views and input and to involve and enable for people to take action, whether personally or at community level.

We expect some will disagree with some or perhaps even much in this plan. That is warmly welcomed because continued constructive challenge and dialogue is needed to make progress in addressing our wellbeing and health issues together.

No one organisation can address or solve the challenges in our communities – it must be a collective approach and effort. The scope of this outline plan does not *directly* address some major factors that impact health and wellbeing. There is ongoing work being undertaken across sectors to address those wider determinants like housing, education, and employment.

This outline plan must be viewed in that context and complement that work. Effective community voices and informed, empowered communities are absolute necessities. The participatory budgeting process about to commence will provide a chance for local people to get more involved and devise and decide upon ideas and initiatives to address some of the challenges and opportunities.

Next steps and actions

We propose the next steps to take this forward

- Disseminate the outline plan through our channels and through those of the Cwtsh Collaborative to **get wider community and service input and involvement**.
- Use the outline plan as a basis to support and deliver **participatory budgeting** in the area to enable and empower community-led action.
- Create **action areas with measurable delivery plans** based on the indicative outcomes. We propose **locally-led** action groups for each area (these could be combined considering the overlaps). We will encourage and invite people and organisations to be part of these. This will ensure delivery and demonstrable progress in each area and monitor the impact in making a difference.

Alongside this, we will continue seek to improve what happens in the IWN programme through its four work areas.

1. Encouraging place-based collaboration and community-led action

IWN meetings will continue - we will ensure these are more regular on a quarterly basis, but we will support the action area groups outside these.

2. Connecting and enhancing community-based hubs and activities

We will continue to support the development of activities at hubs and encourage enhanced collaborative working between them.

3. Supporting and connecting services and support in an area

We will continue to work within and outside meetings to help connect services and groups. We will work to support local primary care services to link better with the communities and support initiatives such as Nature Prescribing. We will work with colleagues in Public Health on prevention, protection and promotion measures and initiatives to improve people's health in our communities.

4. Enabling easier, inclusive access to wellbeing information in communities

We will continue to provide and develop the Cwtsh website and guides as well as working to provide better offline information, support information portals including Dewis and disseminate local information through the Caerphilly Cwtsh Community Facebook site and other social media channels. We will continue with partners to support initiatives such as men's and women's health and wellbeing events.

DRAFT

ANNEXES

To be added