

***Together* towards a healthier New Tredegar**



CWTSH

Integrated Wellbeing Network Draft Outline Plan



November 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The upper Rhymney valley including the New Tredegar area 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 poor mental health and wellbeing.

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 one 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** is based on work done to date and what people in the New Tredegar area have said they want to see happen including:

- Health and wellbeing are enhanced by well-used, vibrant community centres and hubs that work well together
- People get good quality, accessible local health and wellbeing information
- The local environment is flourishing and helps to improve wellbeing and health
- All ages enjoy improved health and wellbeing through activities and support
- Local wellbeing is enhanced by volunteering, including training opportunities
- People better manage their own health and wellbeing, supported through well-connected, accessible services and community activities

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.

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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 New Tredegar 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 New Tredegar struggles with health and wellbeing challenges, which are unfortunately some of the worst in Wales and the UK.

Most importantly, unfortunately, these challenges 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 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 together *with* people helping to enable them to live healthy, fulfilled lives and addressing the

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/>

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 needs to 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 outline 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. However, whilst the pandemic as well as the subsequent and continuing Cost of Living crisis has undoubtedly exacerbated the health and wellbeing challenges faced, it is important to note that these 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 New Tredegar.

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: Bargoed area, Rhymney area, and the New Tredegar area.

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 New Tredegar area-specific meetings at the White Rose Resource Centre in early 2020, which were well attended.

At the first of these, we undertook a wellbeing-focused *Postcards from the Future* exercise.^{6,7} 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 New Tredegar. 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

This work also highlighted challenges people felt there were in accessing services,

⁶ <https://createthefuture.earth/postcards-from-the-future-for-communities/>

⁷ <https://www.reimaginary.com/methods/postcards-from-the-future>

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. The loss of The Living Room adjacent to the White Rose Medical Centre emphasises this point.

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. Five of these were in the New Tredegar area - the Speakeasy men's health initiative, the White Rose Dementia Group, RecRock music wellbeing sessions, Warm Arted sessions at Phillipstown Community House and the White Rose Singers.

In June 2022, we organised a successful three-day New Tredegar Cwtsh Wellbeing Festival at the White Rose Resource Centre, where we collected further input from people on what they felt would improve health and wellbeing in the area along with suggestions for new activities.

We held two IWN collaborative meetings in January and June 2023 where we returned to the Postcards from the Future outcomes in our earlier work and additional information, we had gathered following those. The first of these sought to combine New Tredegar with Rhymney since there was much in common upon initial analysis of the original material.

However, the meeting held at St David's Community Centre in Rhymney focused primarily on that area with most of the attendees from there. So for the June 2023 meeting, we reverted to a New Tredegar-specific meeting where we revisited those Postcards from the Future findings in 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.^{8,9}

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.

We have produced outline plans for the other IWN 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 plans. This is intended to be a place-based plan for the New Tredegar 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.

⁸ www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method

⁹ www.involve.org.uk/resource/world-cafe

4. MOVING FORWARD: DESIRED HEALTH & 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.¹⁰

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 New Tredegar area, we have drawn out the following interrelated outcomes based on the work to date. They 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. The outcomes are:

- Local health and wellbeing are enhanced by well-used, vibrant community centres and hubs that work well together
- Good quality health and wellbeing information is accessible and available to all in the area
- The local environment is flourishing and contributes positively to wellbeing and health
- Improved health and wellbeing for all ages through activities and support including intergenerational opportunities
- Local wellbeing is enhanced by volunteering, including training opportunities
- People better manage their own health and wellbeing supported through 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.

¹⁰ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/about-us/news/stress-anxiety-and-hopelessness-over-personal-finances-widespread-across-uk-new-mental-health-survey>

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.

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OUTCOME – Local health and wellbeing are enhanced by well-used, vibrant community centres and hubs that work well together

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.¹¹

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 New Tredegar area has excellent community venues and organisations. In Phillipstown, both the Community Centre and the Community House are central to community life with their activities and support events. The recently revitalised Tirphil Community Centre is an important local asset as is the Constitutional Club in Brithdir, whilst the White Rose Resource Centre, along with the library, continues to play a critical, central role in community life in the area.

The groups and organisations that run activities at these venues such as the Parent Network, RecRock, Warm Arted, the White Rose Dementia Group and Brithdir over-50s for example are vital to their vitality, whilst support form organisations such as Pobl, Plattform and the Rhymney Valley Foodbank are much valued.

The Winding House with its museum, exhibition and café is a real jewel that attracts visitors as well as locals. Activities in churches, schools, clubs, and pubs also contribute significantly to the area's social life as does New Tredegar Rugby Club as an organisation and a venue. The Leisure Centre offers a major opportunity to support local wellbeing and health.

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 – these are considered in more detail in a specific section below.

¹¹ <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2018/02/28/health-matters-community-centred-approaches-for-health-and-wellbeing/>

Supporting these assets to thrive and be as vibrant as possible, working collectively and collaboratively, does and will bring huge benefits to local life and enhance community health and wellbeing.

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

Positive recent developments include new additional activities at the White Rose Resource Centre and recently at Tirphil Community Centre. The library is a major asset especially with its connection to the White Rose Resource Centre, as well as its closeness to White Rose Primary School.

The Cwtsh guide shows the existing breadth of activities and support in our communities.

Good working links between White Rose Resource Centre and Phillipstown Community House are good. Good links between Brithdir Residents Association and Tirphil Community Centre.

Wi-Fi has been supported through Cwtsh Wi-Fi fund at both White Rose Resource Centre Tirphil Community Centre to enhance activities and opportunities.

Arts provision at Phillipstown through Warm Arted as well as activities such as RecRock and White Rose Singers emphasise importance of arts and creativity at our centres. There could be more creative and culture opportunities - co-develop creative activities with the community in keeping with their needs, issues, and aspirations.

The Community Heritage group at Troedrhifwuch is a great example of heritage supporting community connections – a stories approach tied with intergenerational work could help community connections and cohesion.

There could be additional opportunities for advice and guidance sessions in Tirphil and maybe more in Phillipstown. Some felt there could be more activities within Phillipstown. Centres should complement not compete - signpost to others and promote each other as well as themselves.

We should ensure centres are well connected through sharing information better and complementing each other's activities. Better collaborative working within organisations is needed.

We should encourage opportunities to be taken up across all the local areas – “break down invisible white lines” – whilst recognising the strengths and need for the centres in different areas.

Transport needs addressing in general, but opportunities may exist for community-based transport solutions.

What could be done together going forward?

- Need increased membership on boards/committees – volunteers and meetings such as this Cwtsh meeting to get wider involvement to help
- More support services such as Pobl and Plattform
- More support from the community itself
- An event or events to bring different parts of the area together
- Explore better community-based transport between centres'

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OUTCOME – Good quality health and wellbeing information is accessible and available to all in the area

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.

To do this, the IWN team has worked with Dewis, GAVO and the Wellbeing (Community) Connectors to produce local Cwtsh guides each week. New Tredegar was the second area 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 - www.cwtsh.wales/en/events/new-tredegar.

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 all 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

The Cwtsh Guides and website are excellent in advertising and promoting what is on in the area. The Library and White Rose Resource Centre print and post Cwtsh guides each week.

¹² www.dewis.wales

¹³ www.gwelcol.co.uk

¹⁴ www.facebook.com/IWNcaerphillywellbeingfriends/

Regular sessions and drop-ins working well for advice and guidance for example at White Rose Resource centre and Philipstown community venues.

The local Wellbeing (Community) Connectors are knowledgeable and support people and events.

Wi-Fi has been supported through Cwtsh Wi-Fi fund at both White Rose Resource Centre Tirphil Community Centre to enhance activities and opportunities.

Tirphil Community Centre is promotes and markets itself well, sharing information across several other local Facebook sites. The White Rose Resource Centre Facebook site is very useful and its new notice boards and information in the atrium area are excellent.

More printed information is needed for people in the community who are not online and can often be those most in need of support. Social media can work, but posters and leaflets work well in Phillipstown as well.

Good information sessions at Philipstown. There needs to be more cross venue information sharing at centres so that people, especially those not online, are aware of all that's on in the area.

Encourage more people to get involved meetings like the Cwtsh Collaborative meetings so they know what is going on, what opportunities exist, and enable them to get involved.

What could be done together going forward?

- Make better offline information across the area – newsletters, flyers
- Enable community members to share information with those not online
- Improved community information at The White Rose Medical Centre
- Connectors and others pop-up sessions at The White Rose Medical Centre
- More local information on specific topics, for example growing food and healthy cooking and eating - devise a local recipes cookbook with community contributions?

OUTCOME – The local environment is flourishing and contributes positively to 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

Some felt there is a lack of care for local green and open spaces which must be protected and looked after. In addition to activities such as community clean-ups and litter picks environmental projects The developments outside at Tirphil Community Centre shows what can be done on a small scale – could be replicated across different venues in the area. The White Rose Resource Centre has previously expressed strong interest in developing environmental projects around it.

There are some fantastic walking opportunities locally – for example along the riverside and between New Tredegar and Abertysswg. We should explore opportunities to promote and encourage more walking and cycling.

The newly-formed New Tredegar (Going for Gold) Social Strollers is now a regular weekly event that is making an impact. More walking opportunities to support physical and mental health and wellbeing could be developed together promotion of local walking routes. We need to support people's physical and mental health with promoting what is available in the area and encouraging more 'nature/green prescribing' with the White Rose Medical Centre and relevant agencies.

There are opportunities to develop more food growing spaces – develop existing and new allotments and community gardens/orchards with gardening groups for example which could involve families and promote intergenerational opportunities.

Local growing activities could support cooking and healthy food provision – cooking classes at the White Rose Resource Centre? Plot to Plate linking local food growing and high-quality produce for the community is a great example of what can be done. Opportunity to develop an inclusive local food network to support these activities and developments.

What can we do together going forward?

- Promote what is available and develop a green spaces plan – revisit the New Tredegar Landscape Masterplan produced in 1990 to rekindle interest and ideas
- Develop a local food network to support and link growing and cooking projects
- Involve the local primary schools in environmental projects and growing projects
- Guerilla gardening creating edible spaces and routes could improve environment and health and wellbeing.¹⁵
- Develop a Good Gym¹⁶ in the area.

¹⁵ www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk

¹⁶ <https://www.goodgym.org>

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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

There are excellent examples of activities for all ages such as the Brithdir over-50s group and Parent Network sessions at different centres.

There were drama groups over the summer for young people at White Rose Resource Centre and Tirphil Community Centre supported by CCBC Arts Development.

Community activities such as those through Parent Network and RecRock are excellent. Warm Arted provides creative sessions for young people in Phillipstown.

The Cwtsh Café at White Rose Resource Centre shows a need for young people's activities and provided a chance for intergenerational activity.

New groups at Tirphil Community Centre are helping to reduce isolation (Baby and Toddlers and over 50s).

Excellent sessions at the library for toddlers – more mam and baby groups needed.

¹⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9883078/>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.wales/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society-html>

Isolation remains an issue for many in our community. Trips and activities for young parents might break down isolation they sometimes feel.

Much more is required for youth and young people – more qualified youth workers to support them. We should increase the number and availability of sessions for families/parents with young and older children.

Before Covid, the Knit and Natter group was linked with the primary school.

Funded through Literature Wales, an intergenerational project was about to proceed with Glynsyfi housing and both primary schools but did not do so because of the pandemic.

There are opportunities to link better with schools and local care homes and connect these.

Ideas should be developed with developed with schools and parents.

More activities need to be available at evenings and weekends for people who are working or unable to attend during weekdays.

What could be done together going forward?

- Support the development of more community activities for people of different ages.
- More support for sole traders to provide sessions – encourage start-up of new innovative activity
- Need to engage more with young people through schools and youth clubs (use staff and networks that exist), but also outside those, to listen and understand better what they want and need - work together to enable greater provision accordingly
- More activities for younger children (up to 10 -12) in school holidays, outdoors and at venues
- Encourage and develop more intergenerational activities in community settings
- Explore how and ensure we make existing and new activities more sustainable
- Scheme where schoolchildren to cook meals with and for older generation
- Older generation to go into schools help with reading, classes etc
- Prepare youngsters on financial literacy (saving and budgeting) and information on issues, such as tenancy, utilities, housing/mortgages
- Homework clubs support for young people

OUTCOME – Local wellbeing is enhanced by volunteering, including training opportunities

Background and context

Volunteering can be key in helping to hold communities together and make them more vibrant - people connect to their communities and make them better places for families, friends, and neighbours. Moreover, research shows volunteering is rewarding and provides significant health benefits, physically and mentally, helping to offset the impacts of stress, isolation, and anxiety.¹⁹

Volunteering supports the **5 ways to wellbeing**.²⁰ It can involve physical activities getting people to **be active**. Volunteers can help people to develop and upskill (**learning**), which can in turn be used to help others (**connecting** and **giving**). Volunteering can help promote understanding and friendship between different groups within the community such as young people and older people. It can also help people get into employment developing their skills and confidence. Volunteering can lead to greater appreciation of the world around (**take notice**).

It is important we recognise that volunteering should not result in displacement or replacement of paid roles – indeed it can provide opportunities for people to gain confidence, training, and experience to move into employment.

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

“Volunteers and their skills are amongst the community’s greatest assets” - volunteers already play vital role in the community in New Tredegar at venues and within organisations, for example in leading or helping to run activities, for example at Community Centres, Parent Network, Fareshare, Rhymney Valley Foodbank, White Rose Dementia group, and the Cwtsh Café at White Rose.

Too many things with very few volunteers to support - organisations and activities lack volunteers. Need volunteers to drive projects forward.

Are existing volunteer opportunities appropriate or suitable – could we create more opportunities for volunteers that appeal to people? A buddy scheme to support volunteering development?

There is a need to identify and develop existing and new opportunities with better local support/training available.

¹⁹ <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/3-health-benefits-of-volunteering>

²⁰ <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

Could we better coordinate local volunteers in New Tredegar with activities and need?

Develop schemes to encourage more community volunteering - Support aspirations of volunteers and develop skills with opportunities as a spin-off How can we reward them?

We need to recognise there are opportunities for volunteering such as Ffrind i mi and Caerphilly Cares schemes.

With regard to food schemes, White Rose Resource centre as the main hub with mini/satellite hubs at Tirphil, Pontlloyn, Phillipstown, and Brithdir and enlist more volunteers to sort and deliver?

What could be done together going forward?

- Create an enhanced culture of volunteering in the area
- Develop opportunities that fit with gaps in provision through a local volunteer scheme
- Get a scheme with incentives that encourages volunteering
- Publicise local opportunities more
- Link better with Job Centres to promote volunteering
- Create appropriate opportunities for volunteering in schools, youth clubs, and older persons accommodation settings
- Develop the opportunities for skill swaps in the community to support people and volunteering

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.”²¹

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

The community centres have some excellent outreach activities for employment, financial support (Credit Union), cost of living support (e.g. Caerphilly Cares), and specific support such as Platform, Cornerstone and Pobl. Foodbank and Fareshare activities are excellent.

There is health-specific support at White Rose Resource Centre, e.g. Community Health Programme, which has developed a dedicated wellbeing room.

Local drop-ins by services allows them to link with each other, partners together and benefits the people supported – allows us to share information and keep each other

²¹ www.communityhealth.uk

informed. Routine (regular) drop-ins are good as people know the times to come along for advice and guidance.

More drop-in support could be available in all areas - need to identify missing services or opportunities and signpost better to existing provision. Complementing Cwtsh information an interactive map showing where support groups and activities are held?

We can and should connect the medical services and support at the White Rose Medical Centre better to activities in our community. There is an opportunity to develop Social Prescribing activities at the centre – link to local opportunities. GPs to refer to community activities - e.g., more mental health support groups; could be male and female specific (?) as well as for teenagers and young adults to better understand and support their mental wellbeing (peer support). Groups need to be sustainable after funding

Speakeasy Men's Mental Health group at White Rose is good. There was an attempt to get a women's support group but was not successful?

White Rose Dementia Group - volunteers are nurses/trainee nurses/councillor - links to effects of long-term conditions and how they can reduce those - health promotion events

Wellness sessions with support once a month could help with long-term conditions and health protection – for example, stop smoking, weight management.

E-consult service is triaging instead of being able to book appointments - impacts upon people who work at those times and cannot take calls or leave to at short notice.

Training in wellbeing support for community venues (staff) and groups, and businesses (e.g., Barber Talk: mental health support offered to hairdressers).

Support condition-specific activities with a dedicated online/printed guide and enhanced or new activities if demand is needed. Greater promotion of common ailments scheme.

What could be done together going forward?

- Better link White Rose Medical Centre with community through information, in-house and outreach sessions, and through community connector(s)
- Regular community drop-in 'wellness' sessions with support services from public health and others
- More/better community health promotion events to highlight the effects of long-term conditions and how we can reduce those
- Support our community centres with Connect 5 training
- Link people to support groups for medical conditions

- Provide support to local businesses to support wellbeing of employees and/or clients.

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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.

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ANNEXES
To be added