

Resilient Communities:
**Torfaen Community Wellbeing
Strategy** (2023-2027)





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FOREWORD

Our recently adopted County Plan promises that we will do things differently in Torfaen. We want to think radically. We want 'communities', and 'wellbeing & prevention' to be genuine cornerstones of how we design our Council services.

There are good reasons that we need to be thinking differently about services. In 2022, residents living in some parts of the Gwent Valleys could expect to live for just 48 years in 'good' physical health. We already provide over 7000 hours of commissioned care for adults in Torfaen, and, with over 1300 extra residents over 65 projected by 2027, we can expect to see significantly greater demand for our services, and those of the NHS, if 'healthy' life expectancy does not increase.

Staying in good health begins far earlier than the front door of the NHS. It begins with our 'resilience': our ability to cope when we face a significant challenge, hit a crisis or during a transition in our life. Any Council service that interacts with our residents could and should be there to support residents to stay well, and to recover our resilience quickly. This proportional shift towards prevention will help us provide the right support at the right time so that resources can be focussed on those with the greatest need at a time when it is needed most.

The first line of prevention comes directly from our communities. Community assets can take many forms and are essential in helping us to stay resilient. Community leaders, including our Town & Community Councils, volunteers, community groups, charities, clubs and hubs, open spaces, churches, shops and cafes all offer invaluable help and support to keep us well. The consultation responses to the draft strategy showed just how well these 'community assets' already support their residents' wellbeing.

Our communities are at their most powerful when all organisations are connected and pulling in the same direction: a single 'system' made up of lots of different actors working in each local place. Our Town & Community Councils have a crucial role to play in leading the strategy for their community. And alongside them, the Council, along with our NHS, Police and Voluntary Sector partners, all have a role to play in creating the conditions for effective community planning so that together we can tackle early, and head on, the issues that make the biggest difference to wellbeing and resilience in communities across the Borough.



VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

Supporting our Wellbeing and Independence through Resilient Communities

***“By 2027, the Council will have radically changed the way that we operate, putting ‘communities’ and ‘wellbeing & prevention’ as genuine cornerstones in the way we design our services so that we can empower our communities to be healthier, better connected and more equal.*”**

***“Our communities are central to supporting the wellbeing and independence of residents. We will embrace the passion and knowledge that our communities and community organisations have about their local area and will work together to jointly design solutions with each local community at the centre. Together, we will tackle early, and head-on, the issues that make the biggest difference to wellbeing, resilience, and independence.”*”**

INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN KEEPING US 'WELL'

- In normal times, most of us will be best placed to take **personal responsibility** for staying well. We can usually access everything we need to stay 'well' from within our community or online.
- We call this ability to stay well our '**resilience**'. Lots of things can impact on our resilience including our work, our physical health and our mental health, our financial position, our relationships with family and friends, how we interact with our environment and how much we feel a part of the place we live.
- Many of us will access activities in our community to help us stay well day-to-day. This may be clubs, community groups, shops, 'friends of' groups, churches, schools and volunteers. Everything from Slimming World to a litter pick, or an over 80s lunch club to Zumba. We call these our **community assets** and its really important in helping us remain resilient.
- But most of us in our lives will experience several transitions, times of significant challenge, or crises. This might be having to go to hospital, losing a loved one, losing a job, transitioning into retirement or losing our home. What we consider to be a crisis is unique to each of us – we may not even identify as being in a state of crisis. It can be anything that challenges our normal day-to-day resilience. We all have different levels of resilience.
- For some of us even the most challenging crisis can be managed by leaning more heavily on our community. So it's important that we can quickly get hold of up-to-date **information** about what our community can offer at a time of crisis. A characteristic of resilient communities is a widespread awareness of and access to authoritative and trusted sources of information, advice, and guidance. Sometimes residents will come to the Council for that information; sometimes they will find it in the community itself or from a trusted local organisation.

- Sometimes during a crisis we will be nervous or feel discouraged or unable to access our community offer on our own. Sometimes other members of our community will support us the first few times we go to a new group, and give us the extra reassurance we need for a couple of weeks to settle in. The Council and the NHS often have teams who can help with this too. We call this **community connecting** and we aim to help people back to a position of resilience as quickly as we can.
- Sometimes a crisis can have a deeper impact on our wellbeing which could challenge our resilience for a longer period of time if we don't receive some support to help us recover. Support can range from light touch interventions if we have emerging concerns, to coordinated crisis support if we are facing many ongoing concerns. We call this support **targeted prevention** because it prevents a challenging crisis or transition becoming a complex crisis which can threaten our independence and may mean that we need long term care and support. A complex crisis has lots of ripples. It can feel like its spiralling out of control and impacting on lots of different parts of your life.
- Lots of different organisations provide targeted prevention to different groups in Torfaen, including several Council services, NHS primary care and public health services, Housing Associations and the structured 'Third Sector'. The structured **Third Sector** is the charities and social enterprises who operate in Torfaen from Age Connect to Llamau, and from Llantarnam Grange to Keep



Wales Tidy. We all have a common aim to provide support to individuals but have our own mandates, objectives and outcomes.

- Sometimes because of the complexity of the challenge, crisis, or the nature of the transition, we may require more **longer term** and more structured support from a formal statutory service. These 'agency' responses will often have a legal **threshold** for access. Even at the point of accessing a threshold service, we are still likely to be meeting many of our needs through a wider plan that includes wellbeing information, community connecting and universal preventative services.

FIGURE 1: A Communities Approach to Prevention, Resilience and Wellbeing



A COMMUNITIES APPROACH: ENHANCING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

- There are many ‘threats’ around us in our everyday lives which make it harder for us to remain resilient when we face a crisis or transition. They might be relational (e.g. boredom or isolation), financial (e.g. debt, food or energy insecurity), environmental (e.g. crime or neighbourhood cleanliness) or health-related (e.g. addiction or obesity).
- But living in a community helps to protect us against some of these threats without us needing to access targeted preventative services or long-term support. We call these **“protective factors”**. They can include:
 - o Low levels of loneliness and social isolation
 - o Good access to essential services in a vibrant high street or neighbourhood centre
 - o Lots of affordable and stimulating activity to reduce childhood boredom
 - o Lots of affordable activity to reduce adult boredom
 - o Low levels of domestic violence, crime and anti-social behaviour
 - o Clean local places
 - o Access to good quality green space
 - o Access to affordable energy, food and housing
 - o Low levels of unemployment
 - o High aspirations and good access to skills training for adults

- o High aspirations and good attainment, attendance and behaviour for young people
- o Good mental wellbeing
- o Low levels of addiction
- o Low levels of obesity
- The more ‘protective factors’ that a community has, the more likely it is that our community will be able to help us maintain our wellbeing and independence without us requiring long-term support.
- Every community will have a different mix of protective factors because every community has a different mix of volunteers, clubs, groups and activities on offer to its residents: its **community assets**.

FIGURE 2: How can our community protective factors support my wellbeing during a time of crisis?	
Low levels of loneliness & social isolation	Wellbeing friends Peer-to-peer advice sessions Peer-to-peer campaigns: e.g. ‘Be More Us’ Community sports Social clubs Befriending groups Information & advice in community halls

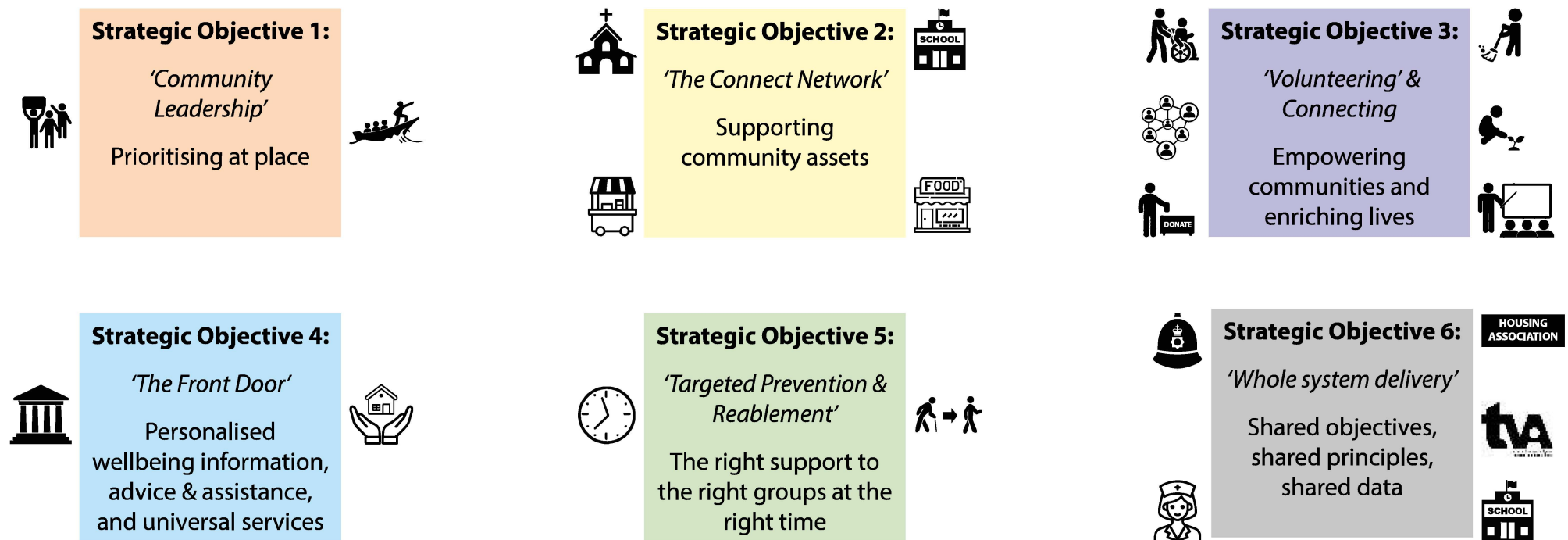
Access to essential services in vibrant neighbourhood centres	Befriending groups Volunteer and community transport Co-operative shops Cultural volunteer groups Environmental volunteer groups Community events groups Information & advice in community halls
Affordable and stimulating activity to reduce childhood boredom	Peer-to-peer role models Community sports Youth groups Volunteering Information & advice in community halls
Affordable activity to reduce adult boredom	Peer-to-peer role models Community sports Volunteering Information & advice in community halls
Crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence	Neighbourhood watch Community speed watch Peer-to-peer advice sessions
Clean local places	Environmental volunteer groups
Quality green space	Environmental volunteer groups
Access to affordable energy, food and housing	Re-use shops and cafes Community lending groups Re-fill services 'Grow your own' clubs Warm Banks Food banks, pantries, hubs and Co-ops Information & advice in community halls
Unemployment	Peer-to-peer training Volunteering Community and volunteer transport

Aspirations and access to skills training for adults	Volunteer tutoring Peer-to-peer advice sessions Men's Sheds Peer-to-peer parenting advice
Aspirations and school attainment, attendance & behaviour	Volunteer tutoring Peer-to-peer training Volunteer reading schemes
Mental wellbeing	Volunteer reading programmes Befriending groups Wellbeing friends Community sports Youth groups Community gardening Peer-to-peer exercise groups Social clubs Information & advice in community halls
Levels of addiction	Peer-to-peer advice sessions Community-led campaign Information & advice in community halls
Levels of obesity	Diabetes wellness advocates Wellness walking trails Community walking programmes Park run groups 'Grow your own' groups Community campaigns with food retailers Information & advice in community halls

- Community assets are not spread out evenly. Where we live can therefore have a big impact on our ability to remain resilient during different types of crisis.
- **Appendix 1** shows the distribution of some common protective factors by ward based on the views of community leaders and supported by statistical data.

SUPPORTING A COMMUNITIES APPROACH

- Resilient communities are **complex systems** involving several different players: residents, community leaders and local councillors, volunteers, community groups, charities, clubs and hubs, pubs, open spaces, shops and cafes, churches, council services, Police, NHS services and more.
- No matter which organisations are involved, a resilient community system needs to have 6 key things in place. These form our 6 strategic objectives:



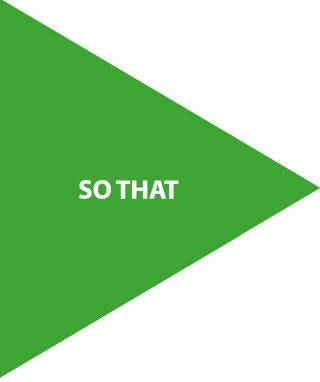
DELIVERING THE COMMUNITIES APPROACH: KEY ACTIONS

1: Community Leadership:

'Prioritising at place'

Communities rely on their community leaders. These local champions often run groups, charities, sports clubs and faith groups; they volunteer; they connect residents to activities; they run events; and they communicate with the Council, the Police and the NHS on behalf of the community. Many community leaders are also Councillors representing either Torfaen or a Town or Community Council. Community leaders can also be those individuals who are connected and rooted in their community who have respect, trust and influence within their community.

Community leaders know their local area well. The Council wants to work with community leaders to jointly plan how we best respond to the wellbeing challenges and opportunities in each of our communities.

TO DO THIS WE WILL :		
Get to know our community leaders, creating a supportive environment in which community leaders can grow, develop and flourish		BY 2027 WE HAVE INCREASED THE PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO FEEL THAT THEY CAN INFLUENCE LOCAL DECISIONS
In each community council area, bring together community leaders and professionals to design interventions that will improve local wellbeing and can be delivered by the local community		
Use our skills programmes to provide mentorship, training and support for community leaders		
Invest through the Shared Prosperity Fund in Community Coordinators to support community assets fill gaps in provision		
Run a campaign to inform & support people who may want to have an influence on local decisions but may not know how to get involved, with specific support for young people, and those groups identified in the Strategic Equalities Plan		

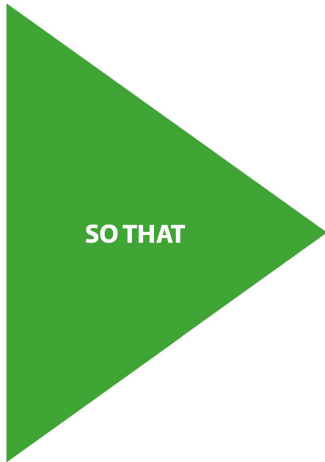
2: The 'Connect' Network:

'Supporting community assets'

Communities thrive and feel safe when they have hubs, clubs, groups, shops, parks, neighbourhood centres, schools and other facilities where people can meet and build relationships. Building relationships between all of these organisations also means that we make the best use of the resources we have in each of our communities and can effectively promote and raise awareness of what each organisation is offering. We are calling this grouping of community assets **"the Connect Network"**

We want to help our schools become hubs within their communities, making best use of the community networks, resources and support that their community can offer them, whilst also opening up to support their community.

We want to support hubs to 'connect' and network with each other, as well as helping residents know what's available from what hub at what time.

TO DO THIS WE WILL :		
Develop and manage a 'Connect' Platform so that there is a simple online place to find out about support in our communities alongside our community venues for those who cannot access information online		BY 2027 WE HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF COMMUNITY GROUPS WHO ARE AN ACTIVE PART OF THE CONNECT NETWORK
Encourage community venues and groups to become a part of the 'Connect' network		
Work with Members to raise awareness of the connect network within each ward		
Support 'Connect' venues and groups to become wellbeing friends (informal community connectors), linking residents in need to locally relevant information, advice & assistance		
Clearly set out how we will support sports venues to become "more than a club"		
Clearly set out the support that our communities can provide to their local school; and the support that the school can provide to their community through the Community Focussed Schools programme		

3: Volunteering & Connecting:

‘Empowering communities and enriching lives’

Volunteers are the life and soul of communities. Without volunteers our community hubs, venues, and activities could not function.

Volunteering might involve being part of a committee that runs a club or a venue, or helping out on the door at your local community cinema. It doesn't have to be formal – it could include picking up litter or weeds in your local neighbourhood.

We want to grow the number of volunteers, make it much easier for people to volunteer, and make sure we have a good range of volunteering opportunities across the borough

TO DO THIS WE WILL :

- Support Torfaen Voluntary Alliance (TVA) to become the single place to go for all volunteering in the Borough
- In partnership with TVA, work with cultural venues to develop a specific volunteering campaign
- In partnership with TVA, work with community venues to develop a specific volunteer campaign aimed at succession planning
- Make it much easier for residents to help keep our towns and communities clean by reducing the permissions required for low risk activities like litter picking, sweeping, cleaning signs & gardening. We will share our procedures with partners to try and build a consistent approach across the borough
- Through the delivery of our **Economy & Skills strategy**, ensure that our employability programmes provide support for residents looking to access employment after developing skills volunteering
- Strengthen the role of formal and informal ‘Community Connectors’ and ‘Wellbeing Friends’
- Use the ‘Connect’ Platform as a hub for volunteering to underpin and strengthen what is available for people
- Work with TVA to develop a training and support offer for volunteers which is consistent and high quality
- Work with TVA to make volunteering more accessible for those who may traditionally be deterred from volunteering because of their background, including residents with disabilities and mobility challenges

SO THAT

**BY 2027 WE HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE
 VOLUNTEERING**

4: The Front Door:

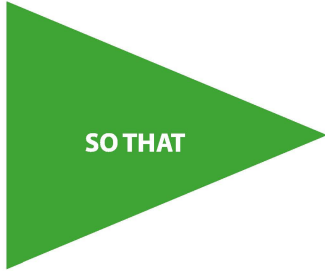
‘Personalised wellbeing information, advice & assistance, and universal services’

Communities are brilliant at helping us stay well and manage crises or transitions in our lives. As a Council we want to work with our communities to make it easy for them to give this support. This means we will invest in our community groups, venues and hubs. It also means that Council Officers will connect residents to activities, information, advice and support in their community more often.

To do this we need to think differently about the way we support residents who contact us. At our “front door” (our website, our offices, and our call centre) we want to be offering a more personalised and community-focussed **package** of support rather than simply making several referrals into Council services that may be inappropriate for your needs.

We will also change the way that our universal services are designed to put more emphasis on ‘community’ and ‘wellbeing’ as central **design principles**.

Similarly, we know that not all enquiries require a detailed package of support. Our **Digital First Customer Strategy** sets out more detail about how we will make it simpler and more efficient to contact the Council with general queries.

TO DO THIS WE WILL :		
Create a new front door for Adult Social Care staffed by people who have an excellent understanding of and expertise in the community wellbeing offer		BY 2027 WE HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE ENQUIRIES THAT RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM THEIR COMMUNITY
Redesign our website to make it much easier to interact with us		
Deliver our Digital First Customer Strategy		
Introduce new core design principles for all services including universal services. These will ensure that services consider ‘community first’, ‘wellbeing & prevention’, and ‘data monitoring’ in their design		BY 2027 WE HAVE INCREASED THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF PEOPLE ACCESSING WELLBEING INFORMATION ONLINE

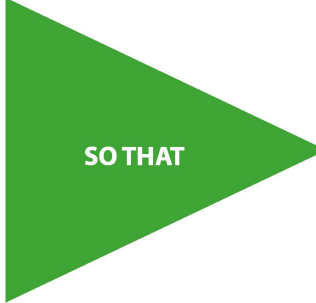
5: Targeted Prevention & Reablement:

‘The right support to the right groups at the right time’

Some of us will face crises that could undermine our resilience for a longer period of time if we don’t receive some early, targeted specialist support.

There are some excellent charities that provide targeted preventative and reablement support to address specific threats to resilience, or to stop a crisis becoming a complex crisis. We want to support those organisations through our commissioning. This might be commissioning in Housing Services, in Community Services, in Adult Social Care or in Children’s Services.

We also want to ensure that any early intervention & prevention services that we deliver ourselves are working together to meet the needs of an individual in crisis.

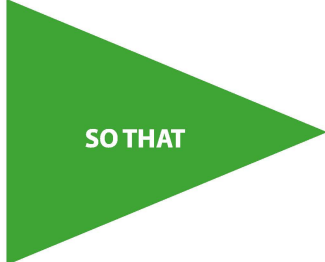
TO DO THIS WE WILL :		
Working with our local community resilience groups (led by Town & Community Councils), redesign our Third Sector Grant Programme to incentivise groups who are members of the Connect Network, and who are tackling the specific threats to resilience in their local area		<p>BY 2027 WE HAVE INCREASED THE PROPORTION OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE ENQUIRIES WHO RECEIVE REABLEMENT SUPPORT</p> <p>BY 2027 WE WILL HAVE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF LOCAL AREAS IN TORFAEN IN THE BOTTOM 10% IN THE WALES INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION</p>
Redesign our commissioned and in-house early intervention & prevention services to ensure that they are truly preventing premature long-term support or statutory interventions, are operating to a consistent set of outcomes, and are working together to meet the needs of an individual in crisis		
Integrate our health & social care reablement and direct care system so that they are well placed to deliver the principles of this strategy		

6. Whole System Delivery

'Shared objectives, shared principles, shared data'

There are many public bodies who operate within our communities. This includes the Police, GPs, other NHS services and Housing Associations. These organisations deliver services to residents themselves, but will also make referrals to each other.

We want to develop the Communities Approach with our public sector partners, so that we all explore the opportunities that come from working with communities before considering referrals.

TO DO THIS WE WILL :		
Develop a clear and consistent governance structure across all local partnerships including the Public Service Board, Regional Partnership Board (and Integrated Services Partnership Board), Strategic Housing Partnership and all sub-groups		BY 2027 WE WILL HAVE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF REFERRALS WHERE NO FURTHER ACTION IS TAKEN AND/OR WHERE A COMMUNITY RESPONSE SHOULD HAVE BEEN PROVIDED INSTEAD
Track and monitor key community data and referral numbers jointly		
Establish the formal Community Safety Partnership		
Agree with partners a shared set of Service Design principles which include the 'community first' and 'wellbeing'		

DELIVERING THE COMMUNITIES APPROACH: DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

An effective communities approach requires all partners to agree to a single vision, principles and strategic outcomes framework for the system.

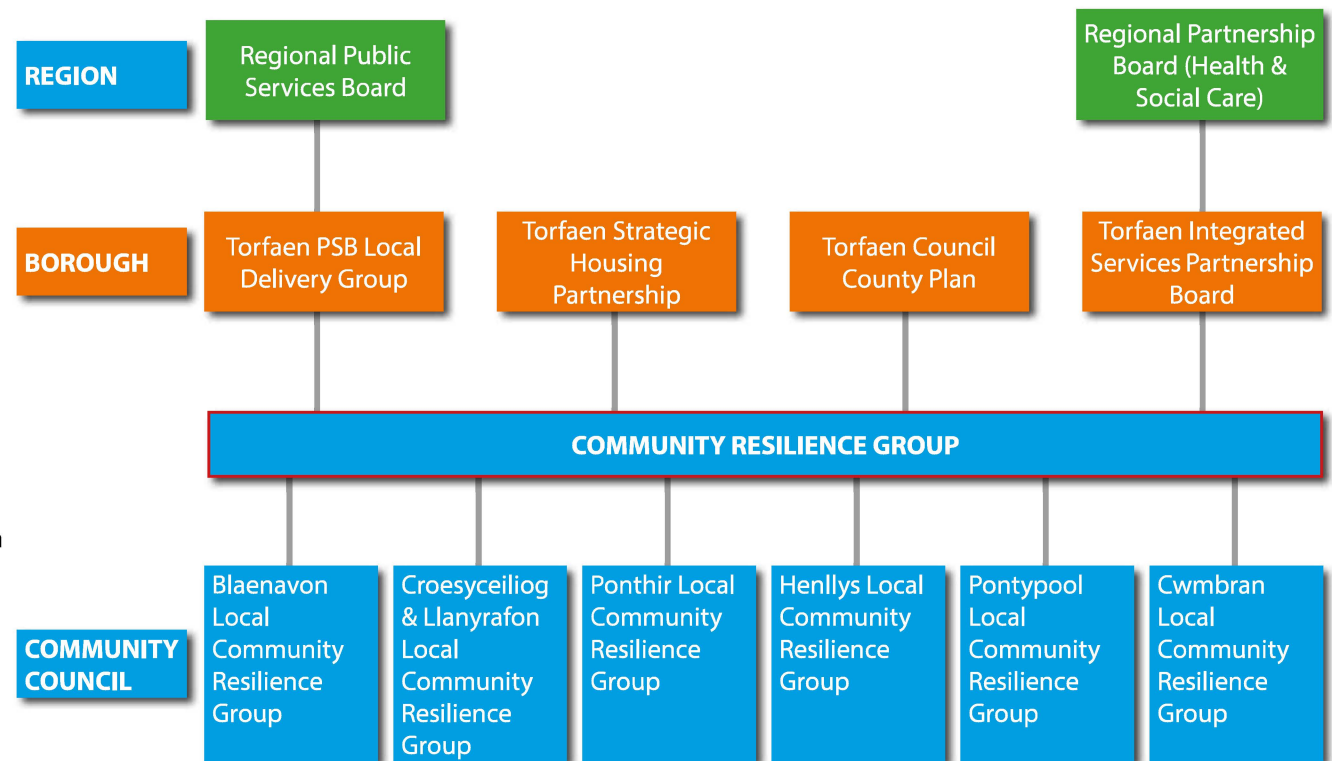
This means that a clear and consistent governance framework needs to be in place at the strategic (Borough), tactical (Community Council) and operational (Ward) level.

The Governance structure for the Communities Approach seeks to avoid duplication with existing statutory partnerships operating in Torfaen all of which have objectives around wellbeing, resilience, prevention and community.

The Community Resilience Group has therefore been established as a single strategic group to coordinate and own the delivery of the strategy across the Borough. The Community Resilience Group will also monitor the impact of delivery against the strategic outcomes. Membership of the Community Resilience Group including sub-groups is set out in the group's Terms of Reference.

The Communities Approach relies on the identification and prioritisation of wellbeing outcomes at a local level. Each Town & Community Council has now adopted an approach for delivering the communities approach in their local area. Consistent Terms of Reference will be developed for each of these Local Community Resilience Groups.

FIGURE 3: Communities Approach Governance



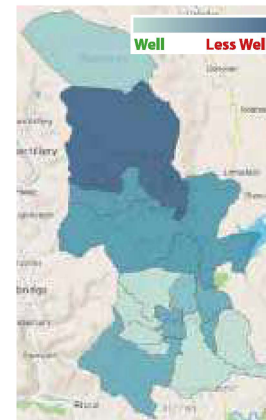
Appendix 1: Protective Factors at a Community Level

There are many ‘threats’ around us in our everyday lives which make it harder for us to remain resilient when we face a crisis or transition.

But living in a community helps to protect us against some of these threats. We call these “**protective factors**”. Every community will have a different mix of protective factors. They are not spread out evenly. Where we live can therefore have an influence on our ability to remain resilient during our unique crises.

Whether we **believe** our community is good at protecting our resilience is often as important as what the data shows. Discussions took place with local stakeholders to understand how well they believed their community prevented 18 common threats to an individual’s resilience. The following graphs summarise these perceptions. Where data is available at a ward level, a statistical picture is also presented.

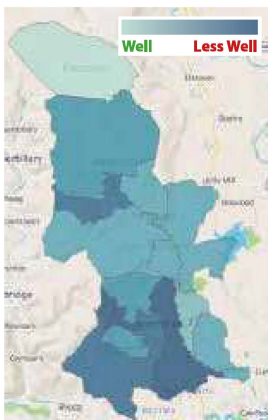
Perception: How well does the community prevent **poor access to facilities**



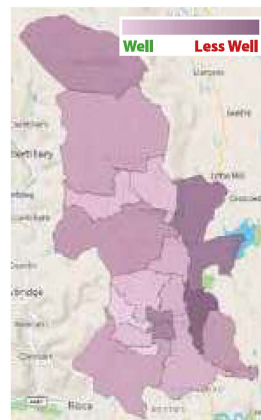
Data: How well does the community prevent **poor access to facilities**



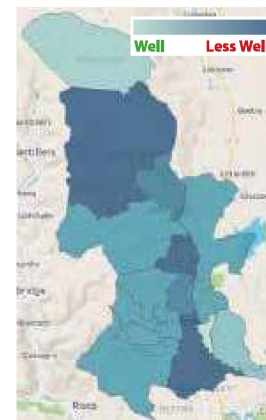
Perception: How well does the community prevent **loneliness & social isolation**



Data: How well does the community prevent **loneliness & social isolation**



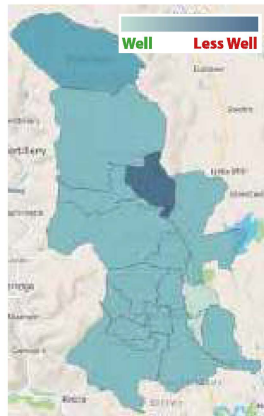
Perception: How well does the community prevent **childhood boredom**



Data: How well does the community prevent **childhood boredom**



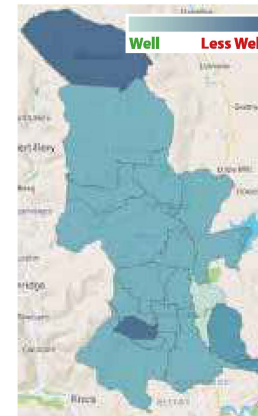
Perception: How well does the community prevent **adult boredom**



Data: How well does the community prevent **adult boredom**

No data currently available at neighbourhood scale

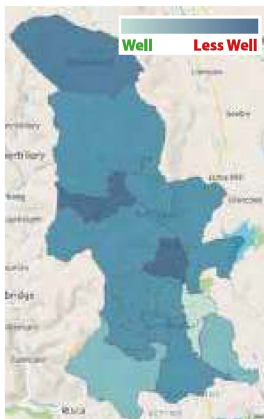
Perception: How well does the community prevent **high street decline**



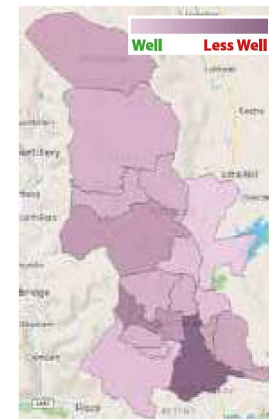
Data: How well does the community prevent **high street decline**

No data currently available at neighbourhood scale

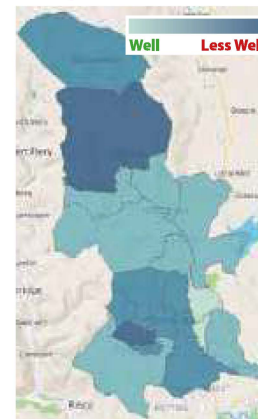
Perception: How well does the community prevent **crime**



Data: How well does the community prevent **crime**



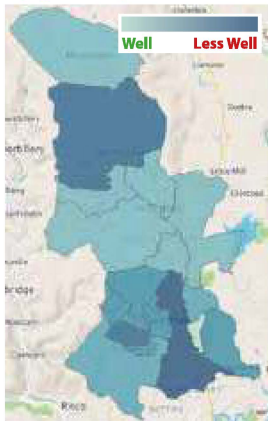
Perception: How well does the community prevent **litter & unclean spaces**



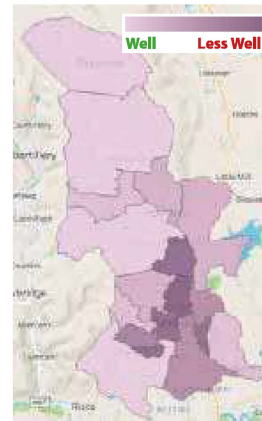
Data: How well does the community prevent **litter & unclean spaces**

No data currently available at neighbourhood scale

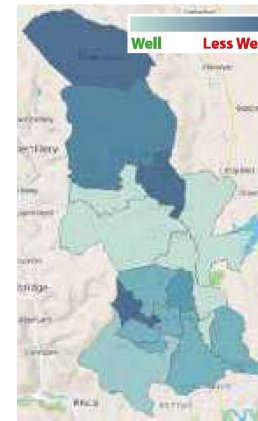
Perception: How well does the community prevent a lack of quality green space



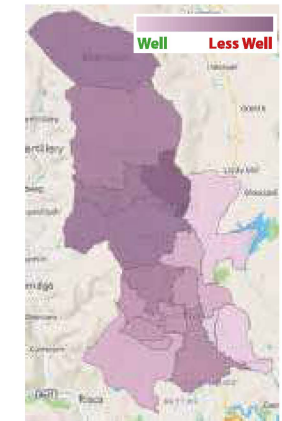
Data: How well does the community prevent a lack of quality green space



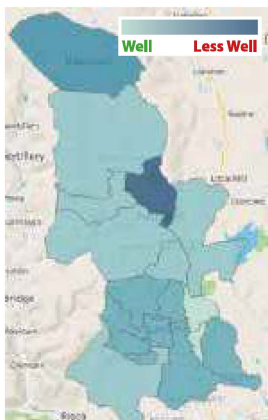
Perception: How well does the community prevent insecurity around debt



Data: How well does the community prevent insecurity around debt



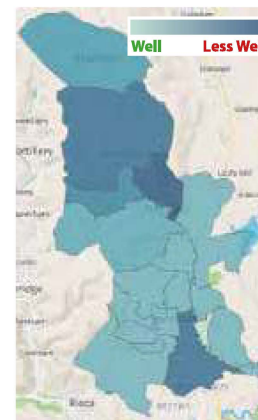
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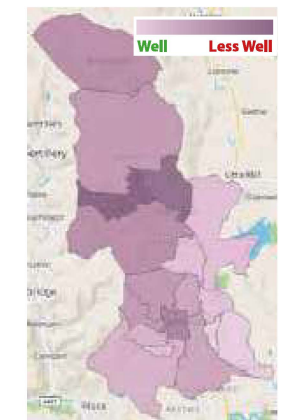
Data: How well does the community prevent insecurity around debt

No data currently available at neighbourhood scale

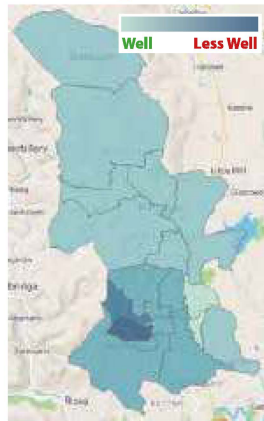
Perception: How well does the community prevent insecurity around food



Data: How well does the community prevent insecurity around food



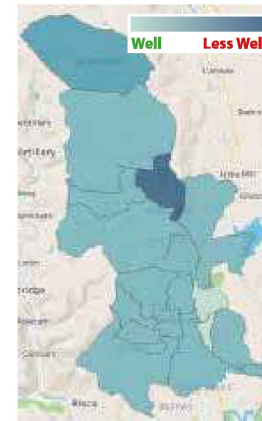
Perception: How well does the community prevent **insecurity around housing**



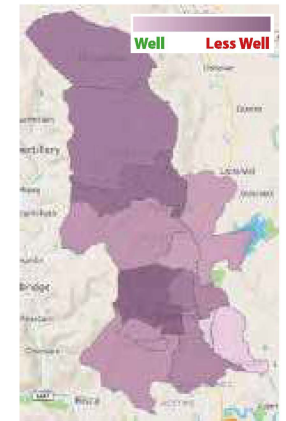
Data: How well does the community prevent **insecurity around housing**

No data currently available at neighbourhood scale

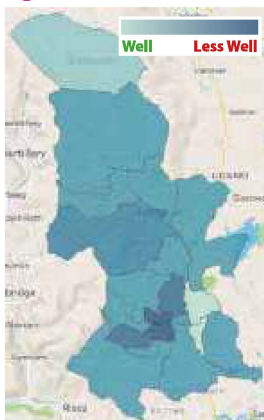
Perception: How well does the community prevent **unemployment & job insecurity**



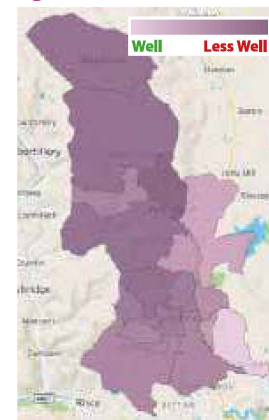
Data: How well does the community prevent **unemployment & job insecurity**



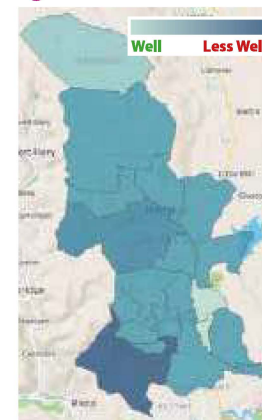
Perception: How well does the community prevent **low skills amongst adults**



Data: How well does the community prevent **low skills amongst adults**



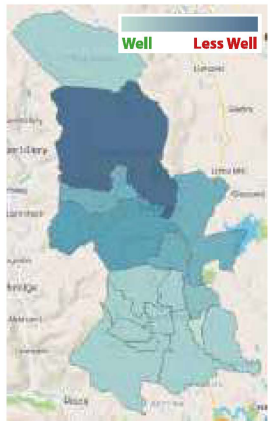
Perception: How well does the community prevent **low skills amongst children**



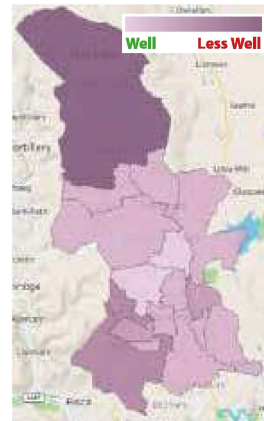
Data: How well does the community prevent **low skills amongst children**

No data currently available at neighbourhood scale

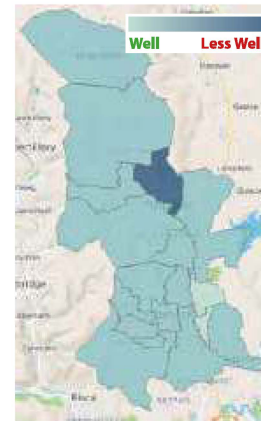
Perception: How well does the community prevent **poor mental health**



Data: How well does the community prevent **poor mental health**



Perception: How well does the community prevent **addiction**



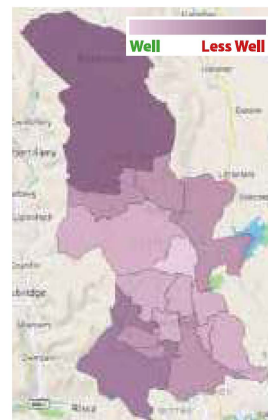
Data: How well does the community prevent **addiction**

No data currently
 available at
 neighbourhood
 scale

Perception: How well does the community prevent **obesity**

No data currently
 available at
 neighbourhood
 scale

Data: How well does the community prevent **obesity**





Resilient Communities:
**Torfaen Community Wellbeing
Strategy** (2023-2027)

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