

# Cwm Taf Population / Well-being Assessment

## Understanding Our Communities Engagement Report



March 2017

### 1. Purpose

This report is a summary of the engagement undertaken with communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil (Cwm Taf) to inform the [Cwm Taf Population Assessment](#) and the [Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment](#), required under Welsh Government legislation. The report also summarises the wider methodology used to produce the Assessments to illustrate how engagement fed into this process.

### 2. Introduction

In 2014, the Welsh Government published the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) (referred to in this document as 'the SSWB Act'). The Act brings together, for the first time, all parts of care and support services and the ways in which they are delivered. The Act puts a 'duty' on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cwm Taf University Health Board and their partners (including the voluntary sector) to think about the overall 'well-being' of people who use care and support services and the carers who help them. The Act sets out the particular ways in which these organisations must go about delivering change.

As part of the Act, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils and Cwm Taf University Health Board must jointly carry out a Population Assessment of the care and support needs of our population and the needs of carers, to be approved by the Cwm Taf Social Services Partnership Board.

The Assessment must consider:

- What level of care and support is needed;
- How services need to change to make sure that they are providing that level of care and support; and
- Where the gaps are and how to fill them.






In 2015, the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) (referred to in this document as 'the WCFG Act') was also introduced by Welsh Government. This Act

puts a legal duty on public services across Wales to work together, with the people of Wales, for our future well-being. This duty is set out in seven national well-being goals, which we all have to contribute to achieving.

Figure 1: Well-being Goals of Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act



In contributing to these goals, public services will need to make sure that everything they do is designed and delivered in a way that helps to improve the cultural, economic, environmental and social well-being of people and communities of Wales, now and in the future. They must also do this by working in five particular ways, following the principles of sustainable development:

-  Thinking about the long term;
-  Looking to prevent problems;
-  Looking to contribute towards the Act's seven Well-being Goals and the goals of their own and other organisations;
-  Working better with each other; and
-  Working better with people and communities.

As part of the Act, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils and Cwm Taf University Health Board must jointly carry out a Well-being Assessment in our area,

approved by the Cwm Taf Public Services Board. This Assessment will help us to understand what we have in Cwm Taf, what we do well and what needs to be improved. It is a different way of working, but it is a difference that needs to be embraced if we want to improve well-being and create a better Wales for future generations. The collaborative work undertaken in Cwm Taf has been referenced as a good example of public bodies working well together by the independent Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

### **3. How we worked**

The implications and requirements of both the SSWB Act and the WBFG Act were considered and addressed together as one work stream, and also in partnership, at a Cwm Taf level i.e. on a regional footprint that includes Cwm Taf University Health Board, Merthyr Tydfil CBC and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, together with other public sector partners which include; Public Health Wales, Natural Resources Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, our partners in the Third Sector and Service providers, with Cwm Taf being the first merged Public Services Board in Wales. It is essential that service users and carers, as well as the wider public, have a say in decisions that affect them at an individual level but also in the planning, design and implementation of services across the region.

In Cwm Taf, partners recognised the importance of having a consistent and joined up approach to these significant Assessments so that the work is done more effectively, making it robust and meaningful in order to better inform planning and commissioning decisions. There was also a consensus that we must put more time and effort into developing better understanding and analysis, creating the intelligence and ability to answer the “so what” questions i.e. moving from a 'situation analysis', where the situation is explained, to a 'response analysis', where we consider what could be done as a result.

There is a significant connection between the two Assessments, hence the decision to combine the work streams as one to produce the two Assessments. Welsh Government recognised the value of this approach, having highlighted that, given the timing of the two Assessments, the gathering of evidence could be done once and analysed for both purposes. Their factsheet on the opportunities and relationship between the two Acts states that “it would be counterproductive to gather this evidence twice and duplicate the process”. A combined approach also meant that we did not increase the volume of community engagement for its own sake to address two Assessments, undertaken in isolation, but rather we maximised the opportunities for involvement and made the best use of our capacity and skills to collect, analyse and use meaningful, good quality information.

This means focussing less on collecting and presenting lots of statistics and data and more on interpreting what it tells us. Understanding the story and what it means requires an emphasis on capturing the experiences of service users and a wider range of stakeholders, who were able to assist us in developing the picture but also our response that we need to deliver as a result.

### **What we did**

In order to provide a better future for the people of Cwm Taf, public services must understand the population that live in the area now and the population likely to live here in the future. This helps us to understand the wider context of people's lives and the things impacting on their well-being, enabling us to plan and deliver services appropriately together, commission successful new initiatives and support people to live the best lives they possibly can.

Understanding our communities is not just about statistics; it involves all kinds of different information. This includes information that can be provided from those working in the public, independent and voluntary sectors. Only with their help, and with the help of people living in Cwm Taf, can we paint a more complete picture about the communities we all serve.

Engagement is a particularly important aspect of both Assessments, given the sustainable development principle/ways of working in the WCFG Act (which include collaboration and involvement) and the emphasis on voice and choice in the SSWB Act. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales has stressed the need for public bodies to embed meaningful involvement in all their work and has commended the positive approach to collaboration and engagement with communities in Cwm Taf during this process, whilst Welsh Government have feedback that we have “engaged meaningfully”.

### **4. The Assessments**

The SSWB Act required a Population Assessment (PNA) to be carried out, detailing the needs for care and support, and the support needs of carers. Whilst, the WCFG Act required a Well-being Assessment (WBA) to be carried out, detailing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in the area.

In undertaking these Assessments, we used both quantitative and qualitative information, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, service users, staff, service providers and the public to reflect community views. The benefit of using a combination of quantitative and qualitative information gave us a more rounded understanding of

the, and, as quoted by the Future Generations Commissioner, nuanced, local picture in Cwm Taf. The qualitative data can be especially helpful in explaining the reasons behind the quantitative data, answering the how and why questions. Welsh Government noted our progress in strengthening the use of this type of evidence. However, there are limitations with qualitative information, and caution should be applied when considering how robust and representative it is, it is therefore, important to consider both types of information and data together.

The Assessments analysed evidence by area, where possible, and for the PNA also by the following themes:

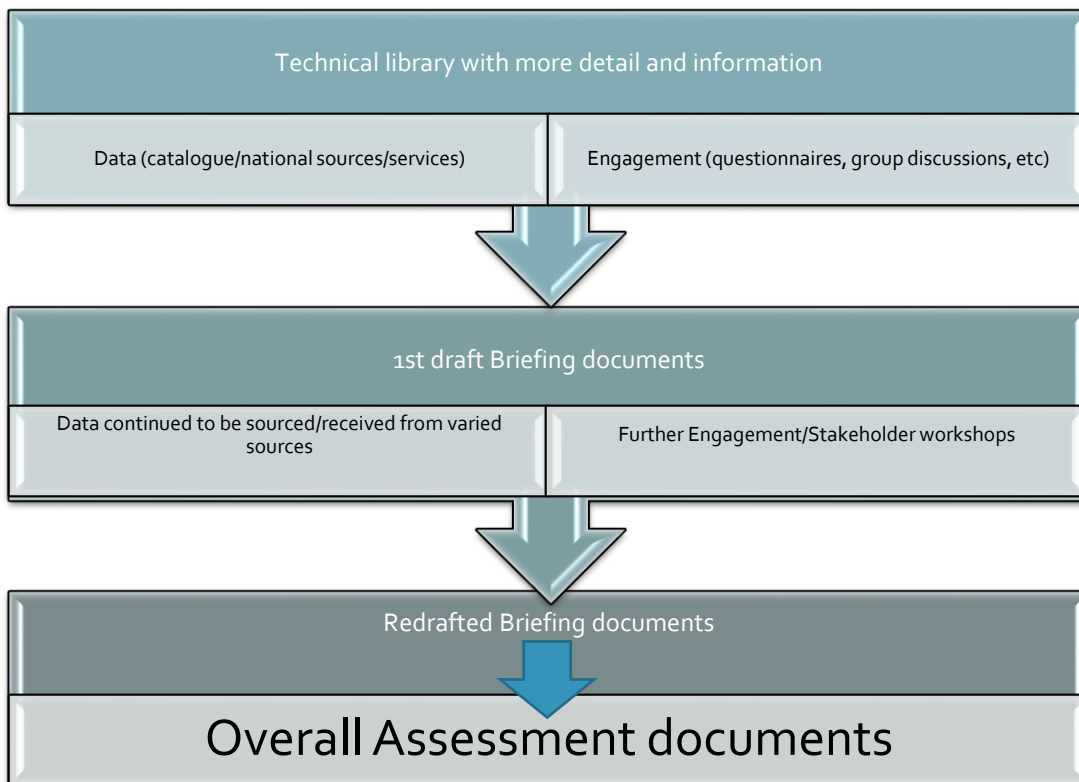
- carers,
- children and young people,
- learning disability,
- mental health,
- older people,
- physical disabilities including sensory impairment,
- and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV). Both Assessments took the opportunity to capture the strengths and assets of people and their communities.

The Assessments are a rich source of information for everyone to use, and will help in understanding the communities within which we provide services. They should be used to drive change by informing various planning, investment and operational decisions to help develop services to meet the needs of our residents. They will also be used by the public services of the area, to inform the development of individual public bodies well-being objectives, as well as the local Well-being Plan (in response to the WBA), and a Local Area Plan (in response to the PNA) (both by April 2018), setting our key local objectives to be delivered together.

## **5. Process/structure of Assessment documents**

The overall Assessment documents are supported by a series of briefing documents. These individual briefing documents focus on the four themes of well-being (environmental, cultural, economic and social) for the Well-being Assessment and the seven themes (carers, children and young people, learning disabilities, mental health, older people, physical disabilities and sensory impairment and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence) for the Population Assessment. Behind the briefing documents is a further level of more detailed information, which has been used to inform the briefing documents. This is termed the [technical library](#).

The simplified process map below details the structure of the documents and also illustrates how the data and engagement information has fed into the Assessments at various points.



More detailed process maps are available for both Assessments.

## 6. Who was involved

A multi-agency Population and Well-being Assessment Core group was established to oversee and deliver the work needed to produce the two Assessments. This multi-agency approach improved integration. The Core group reported to the Social Services Well-being Cwm Taf Regional Partnership Board (SSPB), for the Population Assessment (PNA) and also to the Cwm Taf Public Services Board (PSB), for the Well-being Assessment (WBA).

There were two sub groups, one leading on the data required and a second group leading on engagement. The groups worked together to ensure the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the Assessments were combined, analysed and presented effectively to produce a balanced and rounded evidence base that will be used to inform planning and operational decisions.

The data group included individuals from the core group plus a number of partner organisations, many of whom are heavily involved in data in their “day jobs”. The responsibilities of the group included co-ordinating the allocation of briefing

documents, researching what information would need to be gathered for each briefing document, sharing data sources, reports etc. and co-ordinating the work with the Data Unit~Wales regarding the common data set supplied for the Population Assessment and the data catalogue for the Well-being Assessment. A number of members of the group were authors of individual briefing documents, so after the initial data capture and analysis stage, this group became the author sub group, whereby much of the work involved sharing drafts, identifying the cross-cutting themes and discussing the writing process.

The engagement group included individuals from core group and a number of partner organisations, many of whom are heavily involved in engagement in their “day jobs”. Their responsibilities included; identifying opportunities for engagement, running engagement sessions, gathering data from engagement activities and sharing this with the group and individual authors for inclusion in their briefing documents.

## **7. How we initially approached engagement**

We were well placed in Cwm Taf to build on the mechanisms and experience of all partners, together with accessing the resources available by working through the Cwm Taf Consultation Hub and Public Engagement Group. However, there was more to do at a “community” level in order to take an asset based approach instead of just focussing on needs and deficits. From the outset, our vision was to do something different, not a traditional Assessment. We endeavoured to ensure the Assessment was asset based and the basis of our engagement with communities very much reflects this.

As a starting point a detailed engagement plan was produced. The engagement plan detailed the proposals for engagement and was formally approved by the Social Services Partnership and Public Services Boards. In addition to this a Conversation/Resource pack was put together to assist the wide range of staff and community workers involved in engagement activities throughout the period of engagement.

The Understanding Our Communities project took place across Cwm Taf during the summer and autumn of 2016 during two phases. Staff from partner organisations went out and about and talked to individuals, groups and communities about what matters to them, what they feel is important to their health and well-being and what are their ideas to make things better.

Information from engagement during stage 1 was used to inform the writing of the first briefing documents. The majority of engagement in stage 1 took place from July to September with a “mop up” in October. This “mop up” ran together with the

collaborative stakeholder workshops during stage 2 of engagement. Information from this second stage of engagement together with the output from the collaborative stakeholder workshops was designed to validate and/or supplement our findings.

The amount of time, energy and skills needed to ensure effective engagement cannot be underestimated. In addition to capturing views and feedback, this then needed to be analysed to be fed into both assessments.

Our aim was to undertake meaningful engagement with the public, service users and carers, parents, older people, children, and young people, so that they were able to influence the design and delivery of services and help partners transform the well-being of people living in the region.

In order to achieve this, a structured, committed approach to engagement was required with the principles embedded throughout the core business of the partner organisations. The “Joint Public Engagement Strategy for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Boards” and the Cwm Taf SSWB Partnership Board’s “Engagement Strategy for the public, the people who use our services and their carers” provided the overarching context and approach for our Engagement Plan. In particular, as the Joint Public Engagement Strategy states, we must aim to achieve the kind of involvement that values people and communities and makes a difference, where everyone of all ages, whoever they are, can say:

“My views are needed and considered in shaping services. I can easily get involved in services that affect my community and me if I choose to. My involvement is highly valued and it makes a difference.”

We began by undertaking stakeholder mapping across the various themes required, building on the extensive community groups and engagement mechanisms already in place across the region. This also helped to identify any particular gaps or groups that are more difficult to reach.

From there a calendar of activities, meetings and events was developed detailing opportunities for engagement. These were opportunities to build on existing mechanisms and work through “trusted intermediaries” as well as using staff across the range of partner organisations. In addition, we utilised information from relevant and recent engagement activities and projects.

Two workshops were held in May and June 2016 involving a broad range of partners to consider appropriate questions (relating to both Assessments) for use in a variety of settings and with different stakeholders. The second workshop was facilitated by



Participation Cymru to enable us to learn from best practice and experience of meaningful engagement. We used the findings from this workshop and a number of pilot sessions to draw conclusions. During the pilot sessions we tested out the questions; one in a group setting, at a local youth club in the Merthyr Tydfil area, where the questions were used to start a conversation, and the other with the general public using tablet technology. We concluded that verbally asking structured questions in a face-to-face setting was not natural and did not initiate a conversation, with a feeling that this was not productive in gathering information. Instead more relaxed conversational prompts were used to start discussions and this was far more productive and positive.

Despite producing a fairly structured engagement plan, as we progressed through the project, we took account of what worked well and what was less successful, and as a result delivery of the plan was flexible to reflect this, whilst still ensuring engagement was executed and outcomes were achieved. This was very much a positive, with the process of engagement primarily focussed on ensuring as many people and communities as possible were able to get involved and have their opportunity to have their say. This was achieved by ensuring people felt relaxed and comfortable to engage and to share their opinions and views.

## **8. Who we engaged with**

Being innovative in identifying local sources of information and evidence that could contribute to the Assessments, talking to people and understanding what impacts on their lives and well-being and enabling them to articulate what they perceive are the needs and assets in Cwm Taf will help us to plan and deliver effective and efficient services to meet the needs of local residents now and in the future.

Engagement took place with a wide range of people of all ages. This reflects the diversity of the community and their different levels of need for care and support. The views of those who could be otherwise hard to reach and marginalised was also considered. Staff within the Councils and University Health Board, as well as within partner agencies such as Police and other service providers including the Third and independent sectors, also have informed views and experience of the extent of needs and service provision. Elected Members in both Councils had a part to play in engagement with their communities. The contribution of a wide range of citizens, stakeholders and partners was therefore integral to the production of both the Population Assessment and the Well-being Assessment, to ensure the Assessments are meaningful and well informed.

## **9. How we engaged with people**

We employed a range of methods to engage successfully within the timescales available and maximised the capacity and resources available across our partnership and in our communities. In particular, we used a strengths based approach, asking, listening to and understanding what matters to people and communities in order to improve their well-being, their needs for care and support and the outcomes they wanted to achieve. This approach builds on individual and community assets and supports people to help themselves and others rather than just focusing on a deficit/gap analysis, as a traditional needs Assessment might do. This approach is reflected in the questions and conversational prompts we used as part of the engagement.

## **10. Engagement Methods**

- **We captured existing information from a range of stakeholders**

We reviewed recent consultations and surveys of relevance which had been undertaken by partners across the region in the previous two years. We extracted appropriate information and evidence that helped to build a picture of stakeholder views and experiences including:

- Local consultations undertaken through the multi-agency Cwm Taf Consultation Hub;
- Published evaluations or research studies undertaken either locally or nationally which included qualitative evidence. Examples of these include a number of MAGNET projects run by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil focussing on a range of groups (including the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Community, Young People with an interest in media reporting and the local LGBT community), the Older People's Listening Project, "Get Involved" Forums with RCT's Communities First;
- Engagement information from national sources/organisations, e.g. the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Carers Trust Wales and RNIB;
- Information from the RCT Viewpoint Survey for people aged 11-25;
- Information obtained during the engagement work undertaken to produce the Cwm Taf Older Persons Joint Commissioning Strategy; and
- a wealth of engagement information from work with carers which was used to develop the Cwm Taf Carer's Strategy.

- **Using traditional methods of engagement (questionnaires/surveys)**

Individual questionnaires designed specifically for both Assessments were promoted using the "Have Your Say/Understanding our Communities" branding. These questionnaires were available in both hard copy and electronically. The online version was hosted on the Cwm Taf Consultation Hub [www.cwmtafhub.com](http://www.cwmtafhub.com) and was strongly promoted and signposted to via social media (Twitter @cwmtafconsult, and

Facebook), email signatures and the use of prominent web logo boxes on partner organisations intranet and internet home pages. The online Citizens' Panel in Cwm Taf, which comprising 600 citizens, was also utilised for online signposting. The surveys developed for these Assessments were available online for any of the Panel to respond to.

Despite exhaustive efforts paper-based and online returns were disappointing in terms of volume and quality. For future iterations of this work it will be important to carefully consider whether it is truly worthwhile investing such time and resource into this form of engagement, or perhaps efforts should be concentrated on ensuring the design of the questionnaires, and how they are promoted is more engaging.

- **Using existing mechanisms for stakeholder involvement**

Having mapped existing mechanisms, such as service user and community groups, the Community Health Council, University Health Board Public Fora, professional advisory groups, and Scrutiny committees, wherever possible we linked in with any planned meetings or regular activities. This made it easier for people to be involved in terms of days, times and venues as we attended where they usually were and/or worked through their trusted intermediaries to hold a discussion, focus group or complete questionnaires as appropriate. Often the purpose of these groups meeting is due to something they share, for example those attending; a 50+ forum would all be over that age; those attending "Cynon Valley Vision" would all have some level of visual impairment; and those attending a youth club would all be classed as young people. As a result of this, often the conversation during these meetings was quite specific to the common interests of the group, whether that be regarding their general well-being or more specifically about their particular care and support needs. Engaging with specific groups in this way ensured a wide cross-section of society were able to have their say, and guaranteed that those from the various themes relevant to the Population Assessment were represented. This included some groups of people who can sometimes be more difficult to make contact with and who may not routinely have an opportunity to have their say.

- **Participation in community events**

During our engagement period, there were a number of community events that we were able to participate in, "piggy backing" on arrangements that brought together larger numbers of people. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Big Bite (where approximately 15,000 visited the site of the event over the two-day period), the Global Village event in Merthyr Tydfil, Town Centre Roadshows, Carers Week, and school holiday activities for Children and Young People. These events involved an interactive approach and were particularly helpful for reaching out to the wider public and stimulating discussion on a broader range of topics. During these events our presence

was very informal with us wearing casual clothes and introducing ourselves simply as the “Understanding our Communities” team, rather than referring to the Council, University Health Board, or other partner organisations (ensuring we always referred to these in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person). This, together with the fact that people were generally already incidentally engaging with us at these events, lead to a natural conversation with those who contributed being more vocal, open relaxed and positive.

Figure 2: Community Engagement at Big Bite Event in Pontypridd



Interestingly we found that people instinctively thought about their immediate surroundings when engaging, in a park setting they talked positively about the outdoors and were more likely to talk about factors associated with the environmental well-being theme. Whereas when engaging with members of the public in a town centre setting, people’s minds were generally on factors linked more closely to the economic well-being theme.

- **Bespoke and targeted activities**

In addition to utilising existing networks, where necessary we arranged specific engagement activities or workshops, for example, to address any gaps identified in our stakeholder mapping, to enable more in-depth, targeted discussions with particular groups or on certain themes and/or to drill down and validate what we found in other engagement activities. This included a bespoke event at Pontypridd Deaf Club, with interpreters present, where a wealth of valuable information was obtained on specific factors relating to the care and support needs of this group. This was particularly important as the event informed us of the difficulties this group can have with

communicating with public service organisations. Other events included a Merthyr Tydfil Social Enterprise event, work with residential care homes, and young carers.

- **Service user stories and case studies**

These rich sources of evidence and personal experiences were used to supplement quantitative data.

- **Use of Citizens' Panel**

As required under the SSWB Act, a new Social Services Citizens' Panel of service users and carers was established. A Panel meeting was held which focussed specifically on the Population Assessment and a report was produced.

## **11. Engagement Resources**

By working together across our organisations and sectors, we maximised the staff capacity we have between us to plan, undertake and analyse engagement activity.

We made use of the materials produced by Welsh Government to inform stakeholders about the Acts where appropriate, by, for example showing the animated videos as introductory context. We used information and key messages that had been drawn from the work of the Assessment Data Sub group as part of any facilitated sessions. We also prepared a resource pack for those involved in undertaking engagement including questions/surveys used, facilitator prompts for face to face discussions/focus groups, and suggested activities.

The facilitator prompts used reflected the well-being themes (Social, Economic, Cultural and Environmental) and for the Population Assessment the Social Services National Outcomes Framework, building on the national well-being outcomes and the national outcomes indicators, for example asking about living independently and managing money, etc. The prompts used were very much strength based, for example asking for good examples in the following way; "What's good about....?". Using prompts rather than set questions allowed for people to talk more openly and for further conversation and discussion to flow, it also encouraged people to talk more positively about assets rather than focussing on any negatives.

## 12. Examples

Below are some examples of the engagement activities we have undertaken. These examples serve to demonstrate the numbers and range of people involved in the conversation. Further detail in individual engagement reports from these examples and others are available in the [technical library](#).

- Information from RCT's Viewpoint Survey from 2015 was useful in identifying key issues of relevance to children and young people, with regards youth support services. A total of 5,567 young people aged 11 to 25 participated in the survey.
- Using active participation methods at Play schemes and Summer Events, observations were made and recorded on what is important to the children and young people who were present.
- At a Supporting People and Homelessness Forum, where 21 people attended, general prompts were used to initiate the conversation and observations were recorded.
- Targeted engagement sessions were undertaken with a variety of different groups, including service users with visual impairment or loss, carers, deaf club, young at heart group, among others. At these sessions general prompts and questions were used to initiate the conversation with observations recorded.
- 250 questionnaires were completed by young people aged 11-13 through the What We Say Project delivered by the People and Work Unit, detailing a range of issues of importance to them. They talked positively about their local area, making reference to the availability of local parks and green spaces.
- At an annual Social Enterprise event at Merthyr Tydfil Football Club engagement boards were used as prompts and to record opinions, which were expressed on a range of important issues for local residents, including local services.
- Similarly, at a Mayor's charity event, which was run jointly with South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, engagement boards were used as prompts and to record opinions, which again were expressed on a range of important issues for local residents, including local services.

Figure 3: Community Engagement at Mayor's charity and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service held in Abercynon



- Coffee and cake sessions were held for those in receipt of mental health support for around 30 people in Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare. The basis of these events was again a relaxed conversation using general prompts to initiate the conversation. Details of important issues were observed and recorded.
- 54 people with learning difficulties were involved in forums with RCT People First. Again, the format of these events was a relaxed conversation using prompts to gather information on important issues for these people.
- The Older People's Listening Project, which involves 40 volunteer listeners including staff from 25 different organisations (from third sector, public health, and Councils) is a project where stories are collected on a one-to-one basis or as part of a group discussion. The broad question of: "Tell us what it is like for you, living in this community?" is used to initiate a discussion. The project is quoted as being "insightful in terms of broadening understanding of people's issues". A number of recurring messages emerged, these included feelings of loneliness and isolation, and concern regarding the sustainability of day centre services.
- A range of MAGNET projects were useful in obtaining information relevant to particular groups, for example: the Gypsy Roma Traveller community, young people, the LGBT community.

- A large group of disabled young people and young adults, from the Viva Project (third sector) in Rhondda Cynon Taf were engaged during the summer period.
- The Social Services and Well-being Cwm Taf Citizen's Panel was useful in gaining feedback from a range of service users and carers in terms of their experiences. These opinions included valuable information on living independently, home and community safety, preventative services, social opportunities, and the importance of being listened to and understood.
- Staff involved in the project attended the Well-being Zone at the Big Bite during the Summer and spoke with local residents using verbal prompts and engagement boards. Details of the opinions expressed by local residents on a range of issues and services were recorded.
- Likewise, four Town Centre Roadshows, across the Cwm Taf region, were also attended by staff again where staff had conversations with local residents and opinions were expressed and recorded on issues of importance to them.
- Similarly, staff attended the Global Village, in Merthyr Tydfil and spoke with local residents from a range of cultural groups and recorded the opinions expressed.

Below are some examples of engagement activities in further detail, this information serves to demonstrate some of the more innovative methods used:

- **Children and Young People**

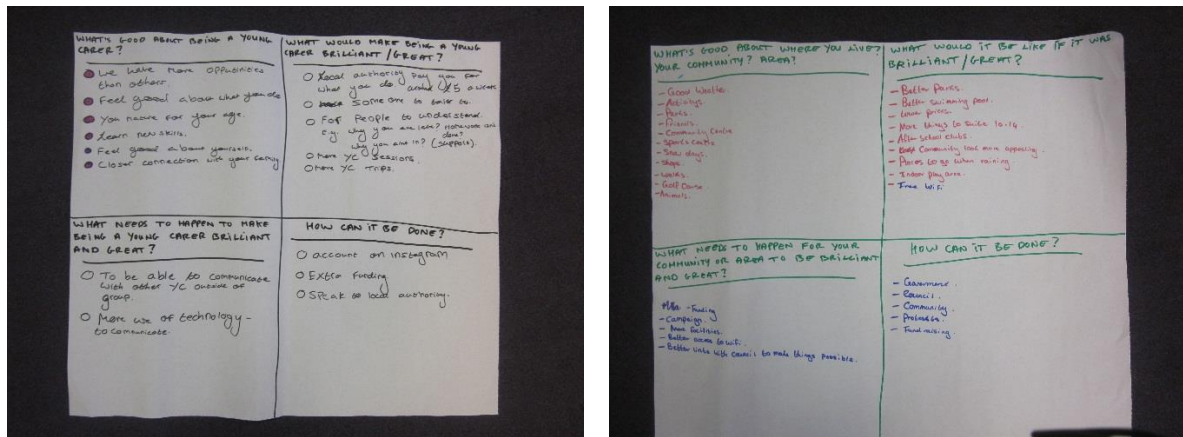
Meaningful engagement with children and young people is integral to fully understanding our communities. Although we did undertake some engagement with children and young people, we know there is more we can do in the future to build on this and to learn more about their views, opinions and needs.

We used innovative methods to engage with children and young people including active participation in existing informal settings, for example, holiday play schemes, ensuring integration with the children and young people in their play activities, enabling them to give information more freely in a relaxed manner.

Children and young people are no different to adults in their caution around new people. They are able to tell if someone is genuinely interested in what they have to say. By getting involved in the children's activities, with the occasional prompt word or verbal response to their discussions, the conversation was not forced and was more relaxed, with a comfortable easy rapport built. More dialogue was gently encouraged by the offering of empathetic examples to their experiences.



Figure 4: Engagement outputs from sessions with Children and Young People



Appreciative Inquiry sessions were run initially with a group of young carers in Rhondda Cynon Taf, who then went on to facilitate several groups of their own, using the same method. In essence, Appreciative Inquiry focusses on what is working well, exploring why that is and then thinking about improvements. The young people were keen to work with this process to help them identify potential ideas for what would need to happen to make positive changes. Words used were positive and encouraging for example; using “I’m ok and...”, rather than, “I’m ok because...”, likewise, “I can’t yet”, rather than, “I can’t.” By focusing on what works well, the young carers were able to consider how that could be built on and improved. Positively some of the young carers involved, then went on to develop a young people’s version of the Cwm Taf Carers Strategy.


A similar session was run at the Merthyr Tydfil borough wide Youth Forum, where a “wall” was created with individual responses to a series of open questions asked of the young people present. The output from this innovative and useful engagement session is presented below.

Figure 5: Engagement output from Merthyr Tydfil borough wide Youth Forum

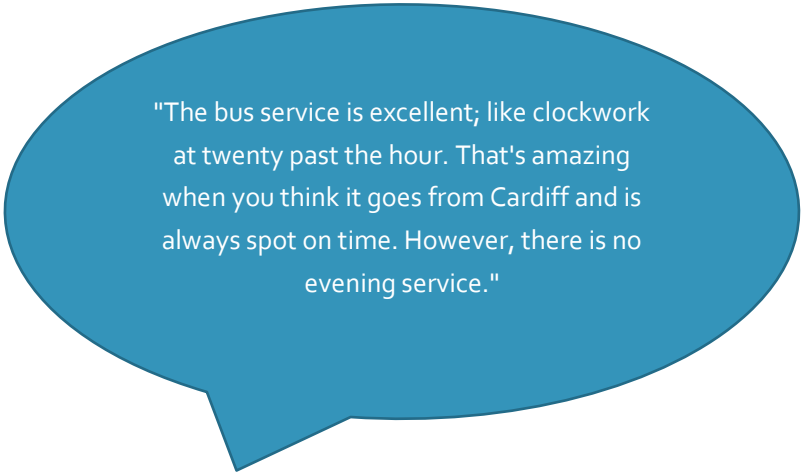
<b>Question: Do you think people listen to you and understand what you want?</b>				
<b>Question: How do you know they understand what you want?</b>				
<b>Question: Who listens and understands what you want?</b>				
"I think that people listen to me"	<b>"I think people but they don't yet understand why I want what I want because the actions don't follow through"</b>	"I think people listen to me and when I say what I want"	"Depends on the situation"	
"It depends on who you ask"	"I think that people listen to me"	"It depends on what you want"	"When they can relate to what I say!"	
"They act on what I say"	"I think people listen to my ideas because they use my ideas at youth club and school"	<b>"No because I am young and I am small – people don't see me and I am not popular"</b>	"When they can relate and act and what I say"	<b>"They just do"</b>
"Kelly – youth worker"	"My family, friends, teachers will always understand me whatever the situation"	"My family, youth workers, Youth Cabinet, friends and teachers"	<b>"My friends, everyone I know"</b>	
"My mum and my friend"	"Youth, school and family"	<b>"My parents, family and friends"</b>	"Work, friends, staff from Drive, staff from GFG"	"Those who respect me"

- **The Deaf Community**

Using an interpreter, we visited a local deaf club and held an engagement session to explain the purposes of our work, giving this community an opportunity to have their say. Using the interpreter, general prompts were used to initiate the conversation and a range of information relating to the specific needs of this group was acquired. This session really highlighted the importance members placed on the support provided by the deaf club and gave us valuable insight into some of the challenges faced by this specific part of the community. With the provision of some ideas of how public services can make things better for them, particularly with regards communication and the availability of information in different formats, for example the use of British Sign Language, etc. Despite this targeted engagement session, there is still a great deal more we can do to engage with this part of the community, including, for example with hard of hearing groups. We need to use the now established local links, and continue to build on these in the future.



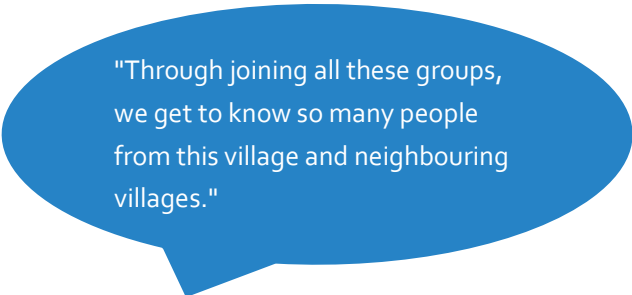
"We are lucky living here. We are so much better off than communities in the Valleys."



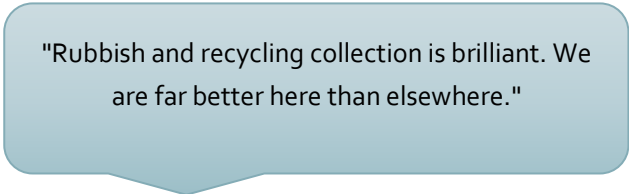
"The bus service is excellent; like clockwork at twenty past the hour. That's amazing when you think it goes from Cardiff and is always spot on time. However, there is no evening service."

- **50 + forums**

We used established forums with six groups of over 50s held across the Cwm Taf region, in Rhondda, Cynon, Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, where in excess of 150 people attended across the six sessions. At the forums we introduced the project and utilised engagement boards and verbal prompts to gather information on people's feelings about independent living and their local area.



"Through joining all these groups, we get to know so many people from this village and neighbouring villages."



"Rubbish and recycling collection is brilliant. We are far better here than elsewhere."

"There should be a specialist social services section which deals with 50+ only."

"Wellbeing is about feeling safe out and about, even at night. Bobbies on the Beat would help with that."

- **Trelewis Young at Heart**

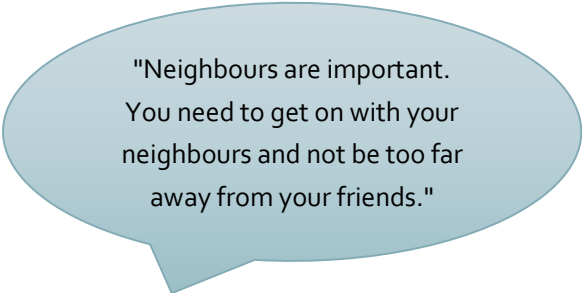
We attended this group for over 50s holding a relaxed group discussion, using general prompts to initiate the conversation. As we did elsewhere when appropriate, our presence was very informal, leading to a natural conversation with those who contributed being more vocal and open. Attendance at this event really highlighted the distinction between members of the group. Those in their 60s and 70s were referred to as the “young ones” by older members of the group and there were distinct differences between what these two separate sub groups talked about. This was a message reiterated in other engagement undertaken with older people, that despite all over 50s being pooled together as “older people” there are clearly differences between those in their 50s, 60s and 70s when compared to those in their 80s and 90s. Despite this disparity within the group, people across the board talked positively about community spirit and access to a variety of social groups with the “young ones” especially making the most of their ability to enjoy their leisure time.

"We enjoy eating out... and a bottle of wine... or three!"

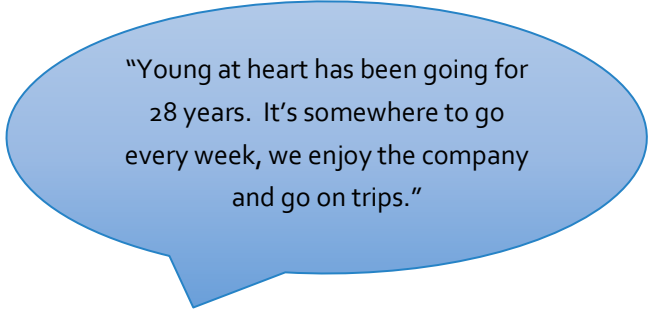
"We all live far away from each other. If I couldn't drive anymore, I'd have to get a taxi. We'd have to pay to get here."

"I have a big family, including three great-great grandchildren. It is important to have family around you."

"Transport - buses don't quite work for us, it takes two buses to get there. Taxis are too expensive."



"Neighbours are important. You need to get on with your neighbours and not be too far away from your friends."



"Young at heart has been going for 28 years. It's somewhere to go every week, we enjoy the company and go on trips."

- **Care Homes**

We attended three separate care homes locally and spoke with just under 40 residents in group discussion settings. Using conversational prompts, as elsewhere, to initiate the discussion, valuable information relating to both Assessments was derived from this, so often, seldom heard, part of the community. Engagement information from this source included input from residents in traditional residential care homes, as well as from those housed in "extra care" facilities (similar to sheltered housing). These Older People talked positively about the support and company in these settings and also the range of activities available to them.

### **13. Engagement outputs - How we analysed and used the information gained**

Having gathered a wide range of information, we needed to probe further to make sure that the qualitative findings from our engagement activities were valid and that the data was interpreted and used effectively to draw conclusions. This included identifying the most frequently made points or the most strongly or widely held views. The evidence from the engagement was brought together with the work from the Data Sub group to help us answer the "so what" questions.

Much of the information we obtained through engagement activities was made up of good local ideas and examples, which were recorded simply as "sound bites" on post it notes. Part of our work was to initially categorise this information, together with all the other information obtained during the period of engagement. We used the four themes of the Well-being Assessment and the seven themes identified for the Population Assessment to categorise the information and then analysed this information to identify consistent/recurring messages. As more engagement was undertaken the "bigger picture" began to emerge. This information fed into engagement reports which were put together and distributed to the authors of the various briefing documents to inform the writing process, with the evidence from engagement activities used extensively throughout the briefing documents and the Assessments themselves. Frequently recurring themes included people talking positively about local assets like the Taff Trail, Barry Sidings, and Pontypridd Lido, as

well as people commonly talking about problems accessing information with regards to services available to them.

#### **14. Equality Information**

Post cards were used during engagement to record equality information, this ensured we had valuable data as a record of who had been involved in the conversation and contributed to the Assessments. This included details of those with protected characteristics and from specific groups, for example: children and young people, older people and those with disabilities.

#### **15. How we approached subsequent engagement**

Once the first drafts of the briefing documents were finalised, these were published in both English and Welsh on the “Understanding Our Communities” webpage. Following this, engagement continued with the project continuing to be heavily signposted to, as previously, using email signatures, social media, and prominent web logo boxes on partner organisations intranet and internet homepages. The project homepage now hosted links to each of the briefing documents and invited stakeholders and interested members of the public to view the briefing documents and to provide online feedback. Online feedback was, again, limited in terms of quality and volume. As a result, we will need to fully consider whether it is worthwhile investing as much time and effort in this resource in the future.

As well as the opportunity to provide online feedback, we also organised a series of collaborative stakeholder workshops where we presented the findings of the individual briefing documents and attendees actively provided feedback on the contents. Simultaneous Welsh language translation was available for all workshops. There were ten stakeholder workshops in total; four for each of the well-being themes and six for the various themes identified for the Population Assessment (the workshop for Older People and Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment was combined, due to the potential crossover). Details of the workshops were made available to key stakeholders and individuals were able to self-identify their workshop(s) of interest and book a place. A collaborative approach was utilised for all workshops, with the Environmental Well-being workshop run in partnership with the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Planning Team, an approach noted by the Future Generations Commissioner as positive.

The [workshops](#) were led by the Institute of Public Care (Population Assessment sessions) and jointly by Netherwood Sustainable Futures and PricewaterhouseCoopers (Well-being Assessment sessions). Facilitators brought

local and national knowledge and experience of the respective Acts. The workshops were co-designed by the Core Group and facilitators.

The aim of the collaborative workshops was:

- To test headlines with stakeholders and identify any gaps;
- To discuss existing practice, ideas and assets in Cwm Taf which could potentially be used to address headlines; and
- To explore connections between headlines relating to specific themes and how they were connected to the headlines under other themes.

Authors and members of the Core and Engagement Groups supported the sessions by facilitating group discussions and activities, as well as the running of the sessions. The collaborative workshops were held in community venues across the Cwm Taf region, including some in each of the four community areas (Rhondda, Cynon, Taf and Merthyr Tydfil) and were attended by a wide range of stakeholders, including service users, members of the public, local Councillors, officers and senior representatives from a range of partner organisations and third sector bodies. Over 225 people attended across the ten sessions with in excess of 600 ideas shared.

*Figure 6: Photograph and engagement outputs from Environmental Well-being Stakeholder Workshop, held in Merthyr Tydfil.*



Attendance at the workshops varied depending on the theme, with some well represented by council staff and others by those from the third sector. Across the workshops, there was limited public participation, although as previously stated, there was a great deal of community engagement involved in informing the briefing documents and getting to this point. There is however a great deal of merit in the public and professionals sharing their unique perspectives in a workshop setting, and this approach should be supported and encouraged for the future.

*Figure 7: Group activity exploring cross-cutting headlines for Well-being Assessment, at Stakeholder Workshop in Merthyr Tydfil.*



## **16. Redrafting the briefing documents**

Following the stakeholder workshops, during which time, further data from national organisations, etc. had continued to feed in, the briefing documents needed to be redrafted. This redrafting process was about refining the headlines and ensuring the messages were correct and representative of all the additional engagement information and data received. The headlines were no longer speculative, and were now more robust based on the workshop outputs, with identified cross-cutting themes across the briefing documents.

During this process we re-engaged with service providers, partners and key stakeholders to take account of their views and to ensure the collaborative effort presented was agreed.

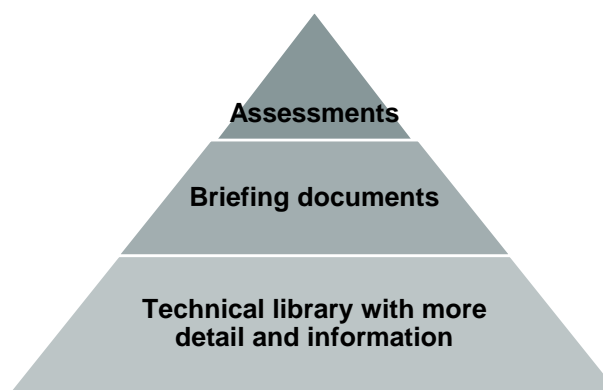
In addition to the individual stakeholder workshops, we also held a specific workshop for the members of the Social Services and Well-being Transformation Leadership Group. This group is made up of representatives from Social Services across the Cwm Taf area including directors from both Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils, Cwm Taf University Health Board and third sector. Again this collaborative workshop was externally facilitated, with the findings of the redrafted briefing documents and facilitators output report relevant to the Population Assessment presented. This gave these individuals an additional opportunity to consider the emerging priorities and challenges for the Population Assessment.



We looked at the redrafted individual briefing documents and pulled them together to compile the overall Assessment documents.

### **17. Methodology for writing the overall Assessment documents**

We produced two Assessment reports; the Cwm Taf Population Assessment report and the Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment report. As previously described the overarching Assessment reports are the top level of information, detailing the key messages and headlines relevant to each of the briefing documents, presented together in a wider context. Additional information can be obtained by referring to the individual briefing documents for each of the themes and even more detailed technical information is available via the technical library.



As part of this process we involved “critical friends” to review the first drafts of the Assessments and latterly following part of the governance process to review redrafted versions prior to final versions being approved. In addition to this, for the Well-being Assessment, there are also a number of statutory consultees, including Welsh Government, Future Generations Commissioner and the Councils Scrutiny Committees. Feedback from statutory consultees (for the Well-being Assessment), those involved in the governance process and critical friends was considered and was used to refine the final versions of the Assessment reports prior to approval. This feedback included a need for clearer signposting to supporting information (briefing documents, technical library etc), inclusion of specific examples and data to support identified headlines, and comments regarding the use of language and tone.

### **18. Things to build on/do in the future**

Despite making advances in terms of the innovative engagement work undertaken, for which we have received praise, we know there is still more we can do.

There is scope for additional links, specifically in terms of the community. When considering this going forward, we need to include a greater focus on individual communities across Cwm Taf to gain a clearer picture of any differences between

communities within the region. We can achieve this by building on some of the connections made during the engagement undertaken for this round of Assessments when re-engaging with these groups next time, or rather by continuing the conversation with them for next time. If we can demonstrate to them the benefits of having their say in the shaping of future services, they are more likely to be interested in having their say again in the future.

We have also identified additional means of engagement, which, unfortunately, we were unable to fully utilise on this occasion, but which we need to ensure are used to their full potential for future iterations. Examples of these include:

- Aggregated information collected through implementation of the SSWB Act, including the collection of information for the National Outcomes Framework and performance management requirements. This information from individual Assessments could be used to supplement the evidence gained through direct engagement. For example, feedback from the new Information, Advice and Assistance Service and its online tool DEWIS, and responses to individual social care user questionnaires/interviews.
- Housing Association's Annual Tenant Surveys. These annual surveys reach a wide cross section of society in great numbers, and the inclusion of questions relating to well-being would be a useful source of engagement data for future rounds of these Assessments. Initial links have been made with local Housing Associations, with a view to achieving this. However, this potential resource needs cementing further with appropriate data sharing protocols in place to ensure the availability of this valuable engagement data for future iterations of this work.
- Initial links have been made, using the third sector, with looked after children, with an engagement session undertaken. It will be important to build on these links to include these children and young people in the future.
- In terms of general engagement there are existing links and groups we need to utilise more fully in the future. These include the Cwm Taf Public Engagement Group (PEG) and Education/School Forums in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the borough wide Youth Forum in Merthyr Tydfil.
- In undertaking our engagement, the Engagement Sub Group worked closely with the SSWB workstream leading on Building Community Capacity (including the development of new service delivery models and preventative services) and also the Cwm Taf Public Engagement Group which supports the work of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board. A briefing/ training session was held for the range of staff or volunteers from local partner agencies and third sector/community groups who facilitated and supported engagement activities

to ensure a consistent approach, understanding of the key messages and materials used.

- We also liaised with national organisations which have particular knowledge or experience of working with specific groups that can be hard to reach locally. We need to build on this and continue to use this useful engagement resource in the future, in order to achieve meaningful engagement with these more difficult to reach groups, ensuring their views are included and represented.

We know there are groups that we need to make more of an effort to engage with in the future these include adults and children with physical disabilities, hard of hearing groups, children leaving care placements and the private sector/industry, both in general as this could be most insightful in terms of economic well-being and more specifically with regards the SSWB Population Assessment when considering private care providers. The more fully we are able to engage with all parts of the community the more the Assessments will reflect the true local picture in Cwm Taf.

### **Next steps**

Both Assessments are really important documents. For the Population Assessment; the current picture of needs for care and support is captured, as well as where these needs are not being met and what needs to be done to address this. Whilst, for the Well-being Assessment; the current picture of well-being across Cwm Taf is reported, as well as what needs to be done to improve and maintain this, now and in the future.

Organisations and services will use the information in both Assessments to inform how they design, plan and deliver services. The Assessments complement each other and it is important that they are considered and used together.

The Assessments will also be used by the public bodies involved to write and publish a Local Area Plan (PNA) and a Local Well-being Plan (WBA). These plans need to be completed by April 2018 and must contain details of what care and support services will look like going forward for the Local Area Plan and well-being objectives for the Well-being Plan.

As this is the first time these Assessments have been produced, it is important to look back at the process as a whole and at the engagement that has contributed to this to learn from the experience. As such we will be conducting a review of the project and compiling a lessons learned log, taking account of the opinions expressed. This log will be an important tool to inform how we go forward in terms of the work which will contribute to the Well-being and Local Area Plans, and of course, future iterations of the Assessments themselves.

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales has encouraged us to build on our engagement work through the Cwm Taf Hub and our Understanding Our Communities project to ensure we continue to provide opportunities for a broad range of stakeholders to get involved in influencing the development of our well-being objectives, demonstrating that their input has an effect on what we do. This is, of course, relevant to the SSWB Local Area Plan too. The continuation of our engagement, has always been our intention, and we have been clear with the people we have talked to that this is an ongoing process. Using information we collected via postcards during our engagement activities, we have a means of feeding back to the people who spoke to us, to let them know how we have used their information. We know from our engagement that people want to be listened to, and that this “closing the loop” is an important part of the process to clearly demonstrate to these people that what they have to say is important and has been taken account of. To reiterate the statement from the Joint Public Engagement Strategy, we must aim to achieve the kind of involvement that values people and communities and makes a difference, where everyone of all ages, whoever they are, can say:

“My views are needed and considered in shaping services. I can easily get involved in services that affect my community and me if I choose to. My involvement is highly valued and it makes a difference.”

It is hoped that our approach to engagement has achieved the above, with the feedback from statutory consultees to date certainly suggesting so, with both Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales highlighting the good work undertaken in Cwm Taf.