

Gwent Public Services Board

# Pontypool well-being assessment

**A Torfaen local area well-being assessment**

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## 1 Description of the area

Located in mid-Torfaen, the assessment area is characterised by many smaller communities located around the main settlement of Pontypool. These include Abersychan to the north, New Inn to the east, and Wainfelin and Cwmynyscoy to the west. Panteg is to the south, covering the areas of Griffithstown and Sebastopol.

Pontypool was built around industrial wealth and has a strong claim to be the first 'industrial town' in Wales. Iron furnaces and forges were operating from as early as the 1400s. Between the 1700s and 1900s the area thrived as a major centre for iron and tin-plated 'Japanware' products and a bustling town emerged.

The town had strong links to the local Hanbury family, links which remain today, who were responsible, in the 19th century, for creating most of the town's important civic and religious buildings, as well as Pontypool Park.

Pontypool has lost much of its heavy industry and has faced a growing challenge from the nearby "new town" of Cwmbran. Its industrial past also means that the area has been extensively developed.

Today, the Pontypool town is known for its distinctive architectural heritage, its listed park and Italian gardens, its Victorian market and a strong sense of community spirit. The town centre provides retail, employment and leisure facilities to the surrounding settlement areas and beyond.

There are many opportunities for recreation and exercise, both indoor and out. Torfaen Leisure Trust operate Pontypool Active Living Centre and Pontypool Ski Centre within Pontypool Park, whilst walkers can choose to follow the Afon Lwyd River, explore the upland landscapes or take in the tranquillity of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal. The canal basin at Pontymoile makes an excellent starting point for exploring along the towpath.

Llandegfedd Lake straddles the Torfaen and Monmouthshire border and provides the location for water sports, bird watching, fishing and walking.





*Figure 1: The Italian Gardens, Pontypool Park*



*Figure 2: Folly Tower, Pontypool Park*

## 2 About Pontypool

Area	<b>65.3 km<sup>2</sup></b> – approximately <b>52%</b> of the total area of Torfaen at 126km <sup>2</sup>
Population 	The estimated population is <b>37,700</b> approximately <b>40%</b> of the total population for Torfaen at 94,000 <sup>1</sup> .
Population density	The population density is <b>5.77</b> persons per hectare. Most people live in Panteg 4 and Snatchwood. There are 7.45 people per hectare in Torfaen <sup>2</sup> .
Dwellings 	The dwelling count is <b>16,955</b> approximately <b>40%</b> of the total number of dwellings in Torfaen at 42,645 <sup>3</sup> .

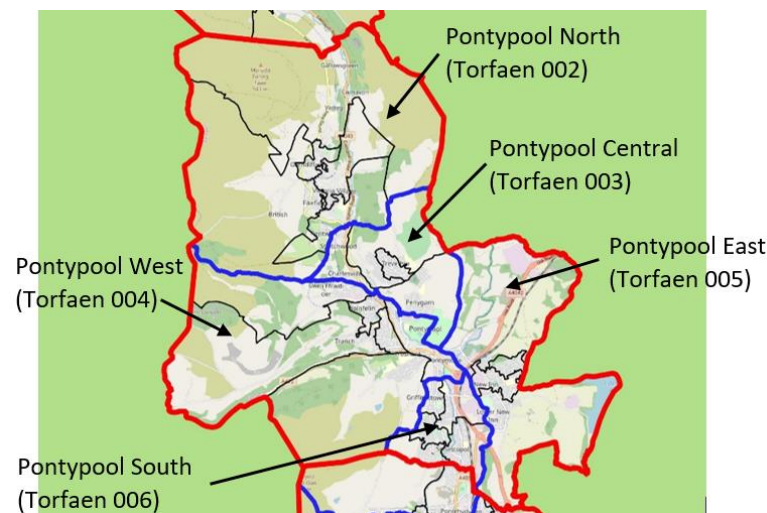


Figure 3: Map of Pontypool showing the 5 MSOAs

General	Pontypool consists of <b>5 Medium Super Output Areas (MSOA)</b> , with <b>24 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)</b> within its boundary. By considering these smaller geographical areas, we can see how well-being differs within communities.	
	<b>Pontypool North</b>	
	<b>LSOA</b>	<b>MSOA</b>
	Abersychan 1	Torfaen 002A
	Abersychan 2	Torfaen 002B
	Abersychan 3	Torfaen 002C
	Abersychan 4	Torfaen 002D
	Abersychan 5	Torfaen 002E
	<b>Pontypool Central</b>	
	<b>LSOA</b>	<b>MSOA</b>
	St Cadocs & Penygarn	Torfaen 003A
	Snatchwood	Torfaen 003B
	Trevethin 1	Torfaen 003C
	Trevethin 2	Torfaen 003D
	<b>Pontypool West</b>	
	<b>LSOA</b>	<b>MSOA</b>
	Brynwern	Torfaen 004A
	Cwmynyscoy	Torfaen 004B
	Pontnewynydd	Torfaen 004C
	Pontypool	Torfaen 004D
	Wainfelin 1	Torfaen 004E
	Wainfelin 2	Torfaen 004F
	<b>Pontypool East</b>	
	<b>LSOA</b>	<b>MSOA</b>
	New Inn 1	Torfaen 005A
	New Inn 2	Torfaen 005B
	New Inn 3	Torfaen 005C
	New Inn 4	Torfaen 005D
	<b>Pontypool South</b>	
	<b>LSOA</b>	<b>MSOA</b>
	Panteg 1	Torfaen 006A
	Panteg 2	Torfaen 006B
	Panteg 3	Torfaen 006C
	Panteg 4	Torfaen 006D
	Panteg 5	Torfaen 006E

### 3 Social well-being

#### 3.1 About the community

Understanding how the population might change in the future can help us think about key well-being challenges and opportunities.

The overall estimated population of Pontypool has increased by approximately 1660 residents from 36,010 in 2001 to 37,670 in 2019 (+4.6%), compared to Wales (+8.6%). The largest net in-flow of residents has been in Panteg 4 (+1122) and the largest net out-flow was from New Inn 3 (-283) <sup>4</sup>.

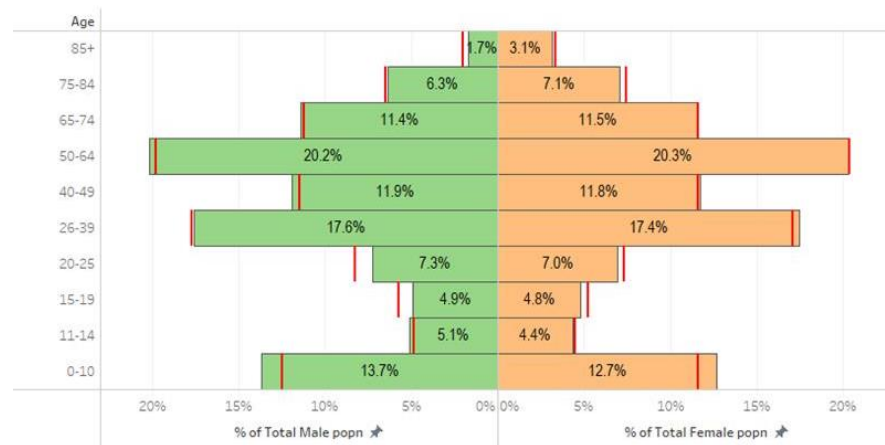


Figure 4: Mid - 2019 population estimates by age for Pontypool vs Wales

**A growing population could attract and sustain more retail provision to the town centre.**

The overall population in Torfaen is projected to increase by 5.5% between 2018 and 2043 <sup>5</sup>. For Pontypool this could mean an extra **1,964** people <sup>6</sup>.

The number of people aged 0-15 living in Torfaen is projected to **decrease** by **3%** between 2019 and 2043, roughly similar to the Welsh average <sup>7</sup>. For Pontypool this could mean **220 fewer** people in this age range <sup>8</sup>.

The number of people aged 16-64 living in Torfaen is projected to fall by 14% by 2036 but then returning to its 2019 level by 2043<sup>9</sup>.

**Pontypool of the future might attract new residents who are able to work from home and want better value housing.**

The number of people aged 65 or over living in Torfaen is projected to **increase** by **28%** between 2019 and 2043, roughly similar to the Welsh average <sup>10</sup>. For Pontypool this could mean an extra **2,170** people in this age range <sup>11</sup>.

The number of people aged 85 or over living in Torfaen is projected to **increase** by **70%** between 2019 and 2043, roughly similar to the Welsh average. For Pontypool this could mean an extra **640** people in this age range <sup>12</sup>.

**More people living longer could mean higher demand for social care and health services in the future.**

The latest data from the 2021 census isn't available to use yet but from the previous census:

<b>Welsh speakers</b>	9.3% of residents in Pontypool can speak Welsh equivalent to half of the Welsh average (19%). The highest is in Pontypool North (11.4%), The lowest is in Pontypool East (8.6%). <sup>13</sup> .
<b>Country of birth</b>	87.2% of Pontypool residents were born in Wales <sup>14</sup> .
<b>Ethnicity</b>	98.7% of residents are of a White ethnicity. There are less than 500 people who are of non-White ethnicity <sup>15</sup> .  Pontypool has a gypsy/traveller community based in Cymynyscoy. Census 2011 estimated just over 100 residents in Pontypool being of gypsy or Irish traveller ethnicity, however this is likely to be under-estimated.
<b>Religion</b>	55.4% of residents have a Christian based religious faith. Only 0.8% people have a non Christian faith. 36% of residents have no religious faith <sup>16</sup> .

**Taking action to help support and grow the Welsh language will help preserve Welsh culture and identity for future generations.**

### 3.2 Getting around

People travel for a range of reasons both into and out of the Pontypool area; for recreation or to meet with friends and family, to

attend education or work, for the movement of goods or the delivery of services, or to access services themselves.

Pontypool is located in the middle of Torfaen, from which Caerphilly and the western valleys beyond can be accessed via the A472 Pontypool to Crumlin. Typically, **16,000+** vehicles are carried in a day <sup>17</sup>.

A4043 Snatchwood Road to Pontypool is a continuation of the A4043 from Blaenavon, it has its urban 30 mph restriction and can be affected by kerbside parking. There are capacity issues during peak travel times, especially through Pontnewynydd. On a typical weekday an average of **16,230** vehicles travel along this route (north and south bound) <sup>18</sup>. The road passed through the town and onto the A472, and the A4042T to Newport & Abergavenny.

Localised air quality monitoring has shown that there is a traffic pollution hotspot north of Pontypool town, on the main road (A4043) between Pontnewynydd and Abersychan.

B4246 Varteg to Abersychan passes through the contiguous villages of Garndiffaith, Varteg and Talywain. Subject to a 30mph restriction, it would form the main connective route for any future development at The British. Typically, **2,540** vehicles are carried by this road on an average weekday (north and south bound) <sup>19</sup>.



The nearest railway station is New Inn, which is a brisk walk from Pontypool Town Centre. Not all trains stop at Pontypool, so some people choose to commute from Cwmbran Station to give them greater travel flexibility.



Transport and its accessibility can have a significant impact on low income households or those receiving benefits. Current prices can make public transport an expensive option for those dependent upon it.

Reducing **transport costs** can increase disposable income and bring people out of in work poverty.

In 2020, the Council installed electric vehicle charging in four of the public car parks in the Pontypool area.

**Future Pontypool is going to need access to more electric charging facilities.**

Walking, cycling and public transport can make an important contribution to local transport needs, whilst also helping to address issues of **congestion, pollution** and **climate change** associated with car dependency.

Safe active travel routes particularly those which provide commuting potential can help support **health lifestyles**.

**In the future more people might choose to travel actively so that they can keep healthier into old age.**



Before the pandemic, just over **30%** of people living in Pontypool also worked in Pontypool, but the majority of people travelled to access employment. Approximately **26%** travelled to Cwmbran to work and only **5%** travelled to Cardiff. **370** people from Blaenavon travelled to Pontypool to work and **1876** from Cwmbran <sup>21</sup>.

**Future generations may not travel as much for work.**


Covid-19 has seen more of us working from home and accessing services on-line, but there are certain types of work that can't be done remotely or digitally.



Pontypool - 15% of working residents (2430) are employed in human health and social work activities and a further 15% (2360) are employed in wholesale and retail trade.<sup>20</sup>.

Some of the jobs in wholesale and retail might relate to online distribution.

**Pontypool of the future needs to be cyber secure and digitally inclusive.**

<b>Broadband access</b> 	Between 1.7% (Pontypool Central) and 13.9% (Pontypool West) of households are unable to access broadband with a minimum speed of 30Mb/s <sup>22</sup> .
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Broadband technology can move quickly, so there may be more households able to access broadband now. However, being able to access broadband isn't the same as having it. Affordability and/or digital literacy can be a barrier for some households.

**Communities of the future may be less reliant of fixed telecommunication systems and more people might use 5G etc.**

We don't know if homeworking will be a permanent arrangement or if people will begin to return to their places of work or choose to access services face-to-face or we will have a blend of all.

### 3.3 Access to services and crime



Pontypool town provides retail, employment and leisure facilities to the surrounding settlement areas and beyond. There are some services or facilities, residents need to travel to Cwmbran, Newport, or elsewhere to access.



Prior to Covid, **vacancy rates** in the Pontypool Town Centre were at **17.5%** <sup>23</sup>. Monitoring in 2021 showed that vacancy rates have increased to **20%** <sup>24</sup>. This increase is likely linked to the pandemic restrictions and the increase in on-line retailing.

In recent years some of the major brands of banks and building societies have left the town. The pandemic has also seen the loss of further retail provision in Pontypool.

Pontypool has both a **library** and an **Adult Community Learning** centre providing advisory services and lifestyle courses. **These can act as a gateway to future skills development.**

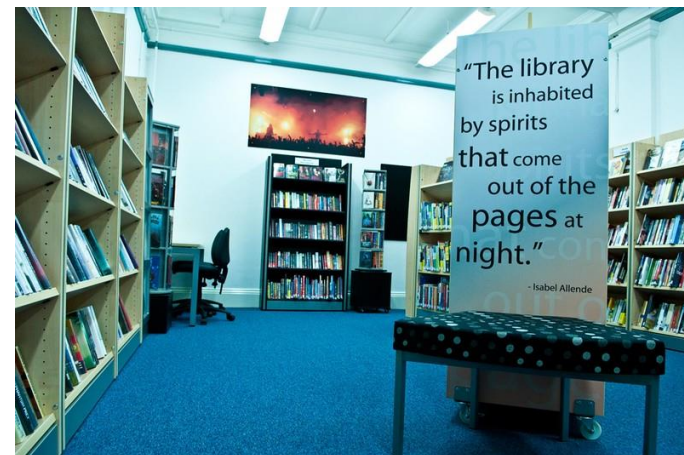


Figure 5: Pontypool Library





Figure 6: Pontypool In-door Market

**County Hospital** provides a wide range of health services including physio-therapy, outpatients, rehabilitation beds across two hospital wards, mental health and elderly mentally ill inpatient services together with social care and third sector services.

There are four secondary schools and nine primary schools in the Pontypool area. Post-16 education is provided for the borough at a new facility in Cwmbran.

**Enhancement of the services already provided in town centre could provide employment, cultural and recreational opportunities to future generations.**

**In future more people might choose to relocate to Pontypool from more expensive housing areas – especially if they are able to work from home.**

Unless people feel safe in their homes and the places they live and work, they may not have the confidence or desire to access services or participate in community life.



Burglary in Pontypool's communities is at its highest level in Pontypool South with **1.87 cases per 100** population compared to the Wales average of **0.98**. Trevethin 2 LSOA has the highest rate of **2.79**. Criminal damage is highest in the community of Pontypool Central with a rate of **2.59** compared to the Wales average of **1.14**. Trevethin 2 has the highest rate of **3.69** <sup>25</sup>.

**Tackling the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour will support greater cohesion in Torfaen's communities.**

### 3.4 Housing, households and health

**Future generations living in Pontypool will need the right sort of housing to support their needs.**

<b>Housing stock</b>	The area is dominated by older, 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> Century terrace properties and characterised by poor energy efficiency. There are also significant areas of post war housing, including in Trevethin and New Inn.
<b>Council tax band</b>	Just under half of the housing in Pontypool ( <b>48.5%</b> ) is rated as council tax <b>band A or B</b> , the lowest valued housing category. Two thirds (65.6%) of A and B rated housing is in Pontypool North Pontypool East is quite different with a greater number of higher value properties and only 14.8% being bands A or B. Trevethin 1 LSOA has <b>93.4%</b> of its dwellings in <b>bands A or B</b> <sup>26</sup> .
<b>Tenure</b>	A third of housing in Pontypool is owned outright (33.5%), equivalent to Wales. This is particularly high in Pontypool East (43.4%). A fifth of housing are rented from the Local Authority or Registered Social Landlords (21.8%)*, considerably higher than Wales (16.1%). This is 38.3% in Pontypool Central, and 60.3% in Trevethin 1 within that MSOA <sup>27</sup> . <i>*In Torfaen no housing is owned by the local authority, so this data relates to Registered Social Landlords only.</i>

The data tells us that number of older people living in Torfaen is projected to increase in the future and they will require suitable housing.

**If the housing of the future was improved in terms of energy efficiency, homes would be warmer, cheaper to run and would produce less carbon emissions.**



The UK climate risk assessment identifies risks to health and well-being from high temperatures. It also highlights that the level of risk to current and future homes in Wales is unknown.<sup>28</sup>

**Homes of the future will also need to be resilient to a changing climate.**



The average cost of a property in the Pontypool area (NP48 postcodes) during 2020 was **£190,033** <sup>29</sup>.

Average annual incomes in Torfaen are about **£32,600** <sup>30</sup> and the house price to income ratio is about **5.8:1**. This means single applicant would have to spend 5.8 times their salary to be able to purchase a property, which would mean most single people and low-income households are prevented from buying without assistance.

**Future generations will need access to housing that is affordable.**

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the Welsh Government's official measure of relative poverty. It identifies those communities, at a LSOA geography, with the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation. WIMD ranks all LSOAs in Wales from most to least deprived.

Figures 5 to 9 show the degree of relative deprivation across Pontypool and its communities, based on data from the Welsh Index of National Deprivation (WIMD).

There is wide variation in the level of deprivation experienced across Pontypool.

**Trevethin 1** is the most deprived LSOA in Torfaen and is in the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales and is experiencing a particular set of challenges related to poor income, health, educational achievement and community safety.

**Breaking inter-generational patterns of deprivation will help future generations fulfil their potential.**

<b>Overall deprivation</b>	Trevethin 1 is in the top <b>10%</b> most deprived LSOAs in Wales.
<b>Income deprivation</b>	Trevethin 1 has the greatest amount of income deprivation (39%) and the least income deprived area is New Inn 3 (3%). Trevethin 1 and Abersychan 2 are in the 10% of most income deprived LSOAs in the whole of Wales.
<b>Health</b>	Abersychan 1, Abersychan 2 and Trevethin 1 are in the top 10% of most deprived areas in Wales.
<b>Education</b>	St. Cadocs and Penygarn, Trevethin 1 and Cwmynyscoy are in the top <b>10%</b> of most deprived areas in Wales.
<b>Community Safety</b>	Abersychan 4, St. Cadocs and Penygarn, Trevethin 1 and 2 and Pontypool are in the <b>10%</b> most deprived areas in Wales.

## Pontypool Well-being Assessment

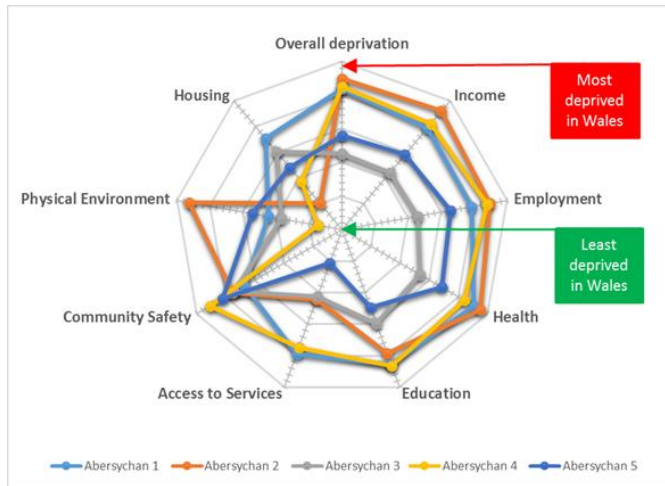


Figure 11: Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) ranks for Pontypool North

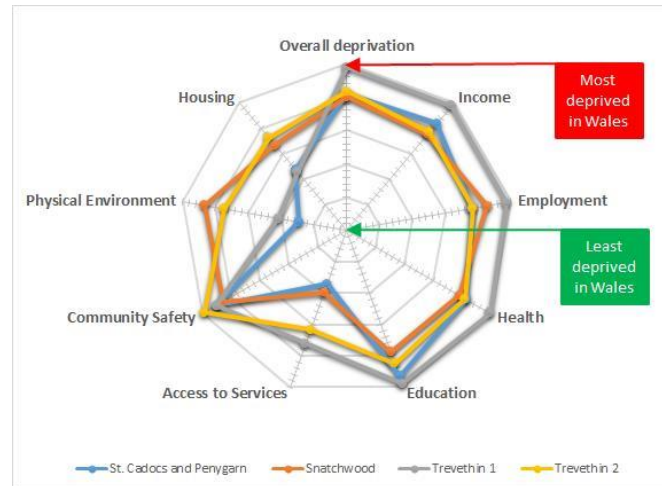


Figure 7: WIMD ranks for Pontypool Central

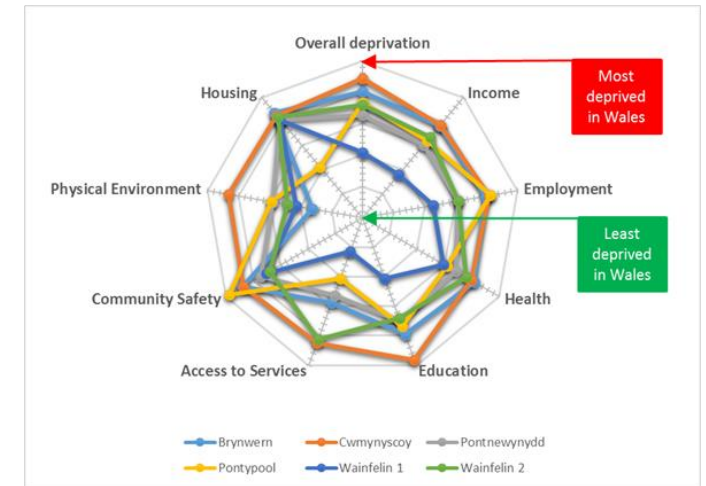


Figure 8: WIMD ranks for Pontypool West

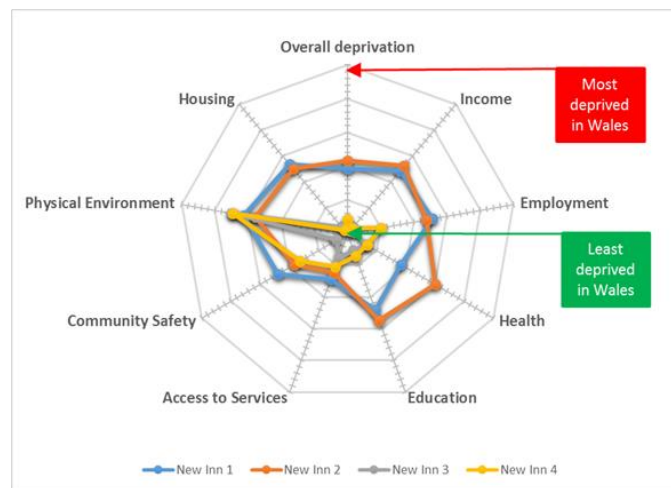


Figure 9: WIMD ranks for Pontypool East

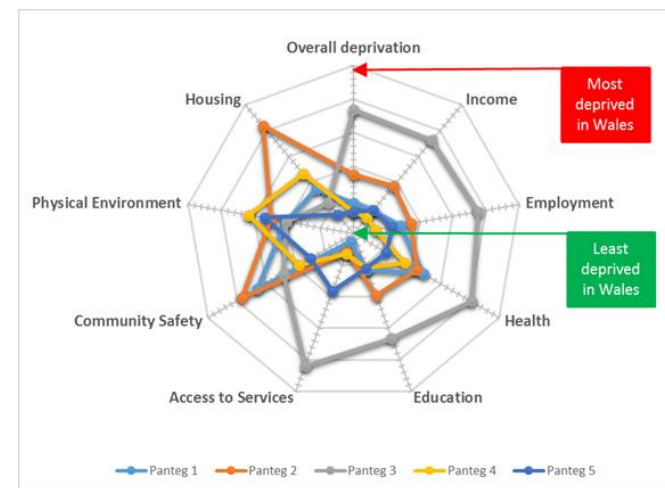


Figure 10: WIMD ranks for Pontypool South

Having a job can be a route out of deprivation, but where pay is low, working hours limited or both, this may not be the case. The data suggests that some people living in Pontypool's communities are experiencing in-work poverty.

**A quarter of working age people in Trevethin 1 are in receipt of employment related benefits <sup>32</sup>.**

Foodbank usage is an indication of the economic inequality that exists in our communities. Eastern Valley Foodbank isn't the only foodbank that people living in Pontypool are able to access, so the data gives an incomplete picture.

<b>Foodbank parcels</b>	9752 food parcels were given to Torfaen residents by Eastern Valley Foodbank between January 2018 and June 2021 <sup>31</sup> . This equates to 232 parcels per month on average. Pontypool residents received 4436 of these parcels. Pontypool Central residents were the highest users of the service with 1692 parcels; an average of <b>40 parcels per month</b> .
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As well as providing an affordable source of good quality food, essential for a healthy diet. The physical activity involved in keeping an allotment can also have wider health benefits. Not every resident has a suitable garden or space to grow fruit and vegetables. There are 18 Council owned allotment sites in the Pontypool area, managed by the Eastern Valley Allotment Association. As of October 2021, there were a small number of vacant plots in the Pontypool area. There is

also a small waiting list for plots <sup>33</sup>. This suggests that the vacant plots aren't in the locations where there is demand.

Providing healthy school meals can help improve overall health, support a child's ability to learn, and can influence food choices away from school.



**29.4%** of children resident in Pontypool that attend Torfaen schools are eligible for free school meals <sup>34</sup>

**Future generations will need local, sustainable food which keeps them healthy, provides good jobs and doesn't damage our environment.**

We know that some of the food we buy in the supermarkets travels long distances to reach our plate, we also know issues happening in one part of the world can impact on supply, availability, and cost.

**Food and the distance it can travel makes a significant contribution to global and local carbon emissions.**

**Sourcing food locally, reducing food miles and eating seasonally can all help reduce food miles.**

There is a strong relationship between health-harming behaviour and deprivation and the life circumstances that go with it, meaning that rates are higher in areas of higher multiple deprivation.

**Preventing health-harming behaviours and promoting mental well-being will help tackle the leading causes of premature death and illness, delay frailty and help working age adults live healthier lives for longer.**

Although self-reported health is good, **29.7%** of the people living in Pontypool Central have a limiting long-term illness and the rate of premature death in Abersychan 2 is **almost twice the average rate** for Wales. **Trevethin 1** has the highest levels (**35.7%**) of chronic health conditions, limiting long-term illnesses and poor mental health in Pontypool.

A pre-Covid survey of Pontypool residents<sup>35</sup> told us that.....

<b>Physical health</b>	67.3% of respondents rate their physical health as very/fairly good. About <b>10%</b> rate it as very/fairly poor.
<b>Mental and emotional health</b>	75.4% of respondents rate their mental and emotional health as very/fairly good. About <b>9%</b> of residents rate it as very/fairly poor.

**Taking action to reduce the inequalities that exist in communities will reduce the impact of poor health on future generations.**

<b>Limiting long-term illnesses</b>	Within the 5 communities of Pontypool, the levels of limiting long-term illness range from a lower rate of 19.8 per 100 population in Pontypool East, to a higher rate of 29.7 in Pontypool Central. 3 of the 5 communities are higher than the average Torfaen rate (24.2), 4 are higher than the average Wales rate (22.7). At the smaller geography LSOA areas within these communities, the rates range between 17.3 in New Inn 4 and 35.7 in Trevethin 1 <sup>36</sup> .
<b>All cause death rate</b>	Within the 5 communities of Pontypool, the levels of all cause deaths range from a lower rate of 879.1 per 100k population in Pontypool East, to a higher rate of 1243.7 in Pontypool Central. 3 of these communities are higher than the average Torfaen and Wales rates of 1078.7 and 1048.3 respectively <sup>37</sup> .
<b>Premature death</b>	The rate of premature death (under 75) in Pontypool communities ranges from <b>242.1 per 100,000</b> in Pontypool East to <b>499.8</b> in Pontypool Central. The average rate for Wales is <b>382.4 per 100,000</b> . Abersychan 2 has the highest rate at <b>638.6 per 100,000</b> <sup>38</sup> .

**More people living longer with a greater range and complexity of chronic health conditions could mean higher demand for social care and health services in the future.**



## 4. Economy

### 4.1 Education, skills and work

People with more qualifications have usually had a good start in life, go on to have better jobs with higher wages, are able to engage better with services and have better health.

The WIMD education data tells us that St. Cadocs and Penygarn and Trevethin 1 have the lowest foundation phase average point scores in Pontypool. This means that there are young people in our communities that are struggling to meet the early stages of educational achievement, this could increase the chances of them not doing well later on. The WIMD data also tells us that some of Pontypool's communities have high levels of several different types of deprivation. This tells us the social-economic factors could be contributing to attainment gaps between communities.

**Supporting children and young people to meet their developmental milestones will give them the best start in life.**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful experiences in childhood that can directly hurt a child, such as abuse or neglect, or affect them through the environment in which they live, such as growing up in a house with domestic violence or with individuals with alcohol and other substance use problems.

Information on Adverse Childhood Experiences is not available at a local level for Pontypool. However, it is known that those living in areas of deprivation are at greater risk of experiencing multiple ACEs.

**Future generations will get the best start in life through experiencing healthy family behaviour, especially in the first 1000 days and breaking the cycle of adverse childhood experiences.**

Under Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme work has been undertaken to improve learning facilities across Torfaen. In Pontypool modifications have been made to one primary school (George Street), two primary schools (Garnteg & Cwmffrwdor) have been extended, a further primary school (Penygarn) has been refurbished, and primary provision is being added at Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw to extend the age range of that school to 3-18. A 3G sport's pitch has also been added at a secondary school (West Monmouth) and refurbishment is about to start at a further primary school (Ysgol Bryn Onnen). Investment has also been made in new post-16 provision in Cwmbran. By supporting modern teaching methods, pupils and communities will benefit both now and in the future.

Pontypool residents aged 25 to 64 with no qualifications range from 13.3% in Pontypool East to 32.3% in Pontypool Central, compared to the Welsh average of 19.4%. **Trevethin 1** is the LSOA with the **highest rate of 42.0%** <sup>39</sup>.

<b>Repeat school absenteeism</b>	Repeat absenteeism of school pupils who live in Pontypool ranges from 3.7% in Pontypool South to 9.3% in Pontypool Central, in comparison to Torfaen (6.2%) and Wales (5.4%). However this hides the excessive level of absenteeism in Cwmynyscoy of 21.5%, being the highest LSOA rate in Wales <sup>40</sup> .
<b>Pupils not entering higher education aged 18-19</b>	Pupils that do not enter higher education aged 18-19 in the Pontypool communities range from 84% in Pontypool Central to 66% in Pontypool East. At the smaller LSOA geography, this ranges from the highest of <b>92%</b> in Trevethin 1 to the lowest of 47% in New Inn 3. <sup>41</sup> .



Pontypool residents aged 18 to 19 that enter higher education range from 15.6% in Pontypool Central to 33.6% in Pontypool East, compared to the Wales average of 29.9%. Trevethin 1 is the LSOA with the lowest rate of 8.2% <sup>42</sup>.

A survey of 1058 year 11 pupils (aged 16) leaving school across Torfaen in 2018, shows that 35% go to 6th form, 49% go to college, 8.6% go into work-based training and 4% go into work. A follow-up survey undertaken a year later in 2019 shows that for the same cohort those continuing in full-time education at school dropped by 21% and those full-time at college dropped by 91% <sup>43</sup>.

For some young people, their financial circumstances and the cost and availability of transport can be barriers to entering and staying in higher education.

**Focusing employability support on those furthest from the job market will improve life opportunities, help people to reach their potential and support a prosperous local economy. Having work can also have a positive impact on a person's health.**

Pontypool has a diverse economy, as well as employment linked to health and social care, the main employment base of the Pontypool area includes education (12.6%), wholesale and retail trade (11.3%), and manufacturing (11.1%) <sup>44</sup>.

<b>Employment</b>	There are approximately 17,396 economically active residents in Pontypool, of these:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13,933 are employees</li> <li>• 1,573 are self-employed</li> <li>• 1,260 are unemployed <sup>45</sup></li> </ul>		
<b>Skills</b>		<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
	<b>No Qualifications</b>	8,848	<b>29.8</b>
	<b>Highest - Level 2</b>	4,750	16.0
	<b>Highest - Level 3+</b>	9,257	31.2 <sup>46</sup>

<b>Industry of employment</b>	The largest industry of employment in Pontypool is human health and social work activities - <b>18.6%</b> of all jobs. This is more than the Wales average (14.6%). There are approximate <b>2326</b> jobs in human health and social work activities in Pontypool. <sup>47</sup> .
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Torfaen along with 9 other local authority areas is part of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) which over a 10-year period seeks to deliver a set of targets in the region including 25,000 new jobs by 2036, the leveraging of £4bn of private sector investment and securing economic growth. 8 priority sectors have been identified as important for the region going forward <sup>48</sup>:

Lifesciences	Fintech (financial technology)	Artificial intelligence	Creative economy
Transport engineering	Semi-conductors	Cybersecurity & analytics	Energy & environment

Pontypool's core employment base is well-placed to work in these priority sectors, particularly transport and energy but there may also be opportunities for new businesses or for existing businesses to diversify.

### **Forecasting long-term education and skill requirements will provide opportunities for future generations in the employment sectors of tomorrow.**

In addition to the priority sectors, the **foundational economy** which provides the everyday services that our residents and businesses rely on, such as energy and food and healthcare will always have an important part to play in contributing to the **long-term resilience** of the local economy.

With projections of an aging population in Torfaen, this might mean there will be increased demand for certain care and health services in the future. Technological advances may mean that new skills are required to work in this sector.

**Future generations will need the right skills to benefit from jobs linked to the transition to a zero carbon Wales, for example those related to decarbonising Torfaen's homes.**

**Global supply chains can be affected by a whole range of factors – many of which are outside of our influence.**

2021 has seen the impact on business of energy supply chain issues and increases to the cost of wholesale gas.

**In addition to being energy efficient, both current and future businesses in Torfaen need secure supplies of energy.**

A future workforce well equipped with vocational skills will particularly benefit manufacturing, hospitality, construction, and health and care sectors.

**Work-place training, apprenticeships, and volunteering opportunities can develop skills that will help future generations find decent work and avoid in-work poverty.**

We don't have any information about the number of people in Pontypool that were furloughed, had their working hours reduced or lost or changed employment as a result of Covid-19. We also don't know what the longer-term impact of the pandemic will be on employment.

<b>Main employment sites</b>	There are 8 main industrial areas, including the Polo Grounds in New Inn, North Pontypool Industrial Park and South Pontypool Industrial Estate. Mamhilad Industrial Estate and Usk Vale Business Park are in north east. All have good access to the M4.
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There aren't many places left in the Pontypool area that could be used for future employment development. The Replacement Local Development Plan is looking to protect existing employment sites

and allocate new sites where suitable in order to support and encourage Torfaen's economy.



The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies that there may be opportunities for businesses from increased demand for adaptation-related goods and services and from an increase in tourism and outdoor activity. Water scarcity, flooding of premises and disruptions to supply chains and distribution networks were all identified as risks for businesses <sup>49</sup>.

**Land use pressures will need to be balanced by future generations.**

By improving management of green infrastructure, future generations can experience the social, economic and environmental benefits it can provide, including helping Torfaen to adapt to a changing climate and providing land for employment, housing, recreation and energy generation.

## 5. Environment



Our air, land, water, wildlife, plants, and soil - provide our most basic needs, including food, timber, fuel and recreation, they also provide less visible services including water management, supporting pollinating insects, and carbon storage.

This part of the assessments tells us about the condition and resilience of Pontypool's natural resources and identifies long-term management challenges.

<b>Notable features</b>	Ancient woodland, heathland, parkland, hedgerows, marshy grassland, open standing water, rock outcrop, open mosaic habitats on previously developed land, semi-improved acid and neutral grassland, canal and river corridors'.
<b>Notable species</b>	Otter, white-clawed crayfish, lesser horseshoe bat, European eel, brown trout, dingy skipper butterfly, grayling butterfly, polecat, toad, linnet, bullfinch.
<b>Key nature conservation designations</b>	Cwmynyscoy Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Cwmavon Corridor LNR and Tirpentwys LNR. Several Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Five Regionally

Important Geological Sites (RIGS). Llandegfedd Reservoir SSSI and Ty-r- hen forwyn. Afon Lwyd and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal strategic ecological corridors.

Pontypool sits at the junction between the upland habitats of the north and the mainly lowland agricultural landscape to the south and east. Its industrial past has influenced the natural environment we see today – from canal infrastructure, former quarry sites, mines, ironworks and forges, to the ecological important post-industrial habitat that has developed on coal spoil tips.

Once used to move raw materials, the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** skirts Pontypool before continuing into rural Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons National Park. Although no longer navigable beyond Five Locks at Pontnewydd in the other direction, the canal is an important wildlife corridor connecting and providing a route between fragmented areas of habitat.

In the south, the former limestone quarry at **Cwmynyscoy** is a **Local Nature Reserve** and regionally important geological site. It is home to important species including noctule bats and barn owls.

Some fragmented areas of semi-improved grassland habitat within and between the urban communities of Pontypool still remain. These areas are species rich, albeit of low biodiversity value as a result of traditional grass management regimes, but with the right management, could be a valuable resource for pollinating insects and wild flowers.

The Afon Lwyd is one of the main natural features of Pontypool and its communities. The river runs adjacent to Pontypool Park, which is the largest area of publicly accessible green space in the town and home to veteran trees and protected species such as otter, white-clawed crayfish and lesser horseshoe bats.

**Having good and equitable access to open space for recreation and physical activity can support healthy lifestyles.**

Between Pontypool and Blaenavon, the valley sides are characterised by areas of ancient semi-natural woodland. This includes **Cwmavon Corridor Local Nature Reserve** covering an area of over 45 hectares. A cycle trail follows the route of an old railway through grassland and mature Oak, Beech and Hazel woodland.

**Beech woodlands have been identified as being at particular risk to a changing climate being susceptible to projected reduced summer rainfall and increasing temperatures.<sup>50</sup>**

Some of the woodland between Pontypool and Blaenavon has been affected by Phytophthora disease of Larch and Ash dieback. This means that significant areas of Larch and Ash have been felled to stop both diseases spreading further.

**Valley side woodland works effectively to moderate water run-off. Future Torfaen is predicted to experience more extreme weather events – including intense rainfall.**

Urban Pontypool and Abersychan's mean tree canopy cover was estimated at **23%** in 2013 <sup>51</sup>

Trees are important in urban areas because they can mitigate extremes of climate change, helping to reduce storm water run-off and the urban heat island affect <sup>52</sup>.

There are some small areas of coniferous woodland plantation in the Pontypool area, mainly owned by Natural Resources Wales. With sustainable management, plantations can provide timber for construction<sup>53</sup>.

**Where the environment is already stressed, for example through habitat loss and fragmentation, then the risks from climate change are greater <sup>54</sup>.**

<b>Water quality</b>	Under the Water Framework Directive, the upper Afon Lwyd and tributaries, from its source in Blaenavon to the canal in Pontypool, is classified <b>poor ecological status</b> .
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Reasons for this classification include **barriers** to fish passage, suspected **sewage discharge** impacting upon fish and phosphate levels and probably **pollution** from abandoned mining



infrastructure. The lower Afon Lwyd and tributaries beyond the canal is classified as being of good ecological status <sup>55</sup>.

Not all freshwater species are able to tolerate increased temperatures associated with a changing climate and warm water can contain less oxygen.

**Japanese knotweed** is also putting natural resources under pressure in Pontypool and its surrounding communities. This invasive non-native plant species can out-compete native flora and can cause structural damage to buildings and other built infrastructure.

**Climate change brings an increased threat to our native plants and animals from new and emerging pests and diseases, and from invasive non-native species** <sup>56</sup>.

<b>Renewable energy potential</b>	Studies have shown the potential for generating more energy from roof-top photo voltaics, wind and hydro. There is also some potential for district heating schemes <sup>57</sup> .
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There are numerous **roof top photo voltaic** installations on both public and privately owned buildings in the Pontypool area and capacity for even more.

The high ridgelines and plateaus to both the east and west of Pontypool could provide a potentially significant wind resource. Any proposals will have to be considered in the light of landscape impact both within and beyond the county borough. Any biodiversity impact

will also have to be assessed. Land to the west of Pontypool and Cwmbran has been identified by Welsh Government as being suitable for **wind turbines**, part of their pre-assessment work found that the potential landscape impact would be acceptable.



The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment identifies risks to freshwater species in Wales from warming water. It also highlights that more evidence is needed on the scale of risk and effectiveness of adaptation measures <sup>58</sup>.

The former ironworks site 'The British' in Abersychan may provide opportunities for a wider range of renewable energy technologies to include **solar, hydro** and **wind** as part of the longer-term regeneration of the area. District **heat network** schemes may have potential in relation to strategic development sites and the town centre.



Cardiff Capital Region has identified energy and environment as a priority economic sector with the potential to create prosperity in the region over the next 10 – 20 years <sup>59</sup>.

Poor air quality caused by emissions from fossil fuel powered transport can have a negative impact on health. Air quality can be improved by avoiding unnecessary journeys, switching to electric vehicles, using public transport, or by walking and cycling more.

<b>Air quality</b>	Monitoring undertaken in Torfaen in 2020 reveals that air quality in Torfaen meets all national standards, with concentrations of all pollutants measured being within stipulated air quality objectives <sup>60</sup> . However localised monitoring has shown that there is a traffic pollution hotspot north of Pontypool town, on the main road between Pontnewynydd and Abersychan.
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**Improving the management of our natural resources means that we will be better able to address challenges such as climate change, tackling poverty and inequality, and improving people's health.**

As part of joint work to improve well-being in Torfaen, a shared Green Infrastructure Strategy has been developed which outlines priorities and opportunities for strengthening the resilience and connectivity of Torfaen's green infrastructure network <sup>61</sup>. Key priorities for Pontypool include:

- Promoting greater understanding of the environment.
- Improving the management of water resources.
- Increasing renewable energy generation.
- Supporting heritage conservation.
- Improving to the Rights of Way network.
- Tree management and planting in polluted areas.
- Maintaining and managing public parks and gardens.
- Managing grassland areas to support pollinating insects.

## 6. Culture

This part of the assessment tells us about culture in Pontypool from the volunteering, leisure and sporting activities that people enjoy, to the unique industrial heritage and natural environment of the area.

<b>Key attractions</b>	Dry-Ski Slope, Shell Grotto and Pontypool Folly, Pontypool Park and Italian Gardens Pontymoile basin and Canal area.
<b>Key heritage designations</b>	Pontypool Town Centre Conservation Area. Grade II listed Pontypool Park

**Engaging the local community in the significance of their rich cultural heritage is important in ensuring a sense of place and increasing community pride and well-being.**

Pontypool has a rich and diverse cultural heritage from important civic and religious buildings, to Pontypool Park with its Italian Gardens.

**Pontypool and Torfaen can expect to experience a changing climate with more extreme weather events in the future. This could impact on the historic townscape.**

Pontypool is home to a range of clubs and societies from a Local History Society hosting monthly lectures to those hosted by Pontypool library and adult learning centre.

Pontypool's older population are well-served by groups such as the Retired-Men's Society and Age Connects Torfaen's base Widdershins. There are also a number of bowls teams and other options for light exercise.

Various community venues provide activities for children and families whilst bigger annual family events such as Party in the Park are always well attended. There are also local branches of the Boys Brigade and Army Cadet Force.

School can often be the first time that sporting and other cultural activities are experienced and can seed a life-long interest and involvement.

Volunteers play a key part in supporting Pontypool's cultural heritage and groups include Volunteering Friends of Pontypool Town, Pontypool Park Friends and Torfaen Museum Trust who operate Torfaen Museum in Pontypool.

Getting involved in cultural activities can help people to feel part of their community. It can also bring people of different ages and background together, helping to support community cohesion and helping to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

**Heritage volunteering provides the opportunity to meet new people, to gain confidence and learn new skills for future employment or to continue to contribute to the community into retirement, and to have fun in an informal setting.**



Torfaen Leisure Trust operate Pontypool Active Living Centre and Pontypool Ski Centre within Pontypool Park.

*Figure 13: Pontypool Ski Centre*

There are many sports clubs across Pontypool and its communities, many of which are supported by volunteers. Football clubs include Cwmffrwdroer, New Inn, and Trevethin. There are rugby clubs in the communities of Abersychan, Garndiffaith and Talywain. Cricket clubs can be found in Panteg, Pentwyn and Pontnewynydd.

In recent years Pontypool Park Run has become popular with all ages. Local running groups include Griffithstown Harriers and Pontypool & District Runners.

There is also developing interest in mountain biking around Pontypool, with at least two active groups operating.

**As well as bringing people together, the health benefits of exercise and physical activity are well documented.**



The historic townscape and areas beyond can be navigated via many walks and trails, including along the Afon Lwyd River, through the upland landscape or on the canal's towpath. Gardens, the gothic Shell Grotto and iconic Folly and the Pontymoile basin offer plenty to see along the way. Torfaen Take a Stroll provide support with social walks for varying abilities.



*Figure 14: Distant view of Llandegfedd Lake*

Llandegfedd Lake, on the Monmouthshire border, also offers opportunities for walking, alongside water sports, bird watching and fishing.

**Supporting people to live healthy lives, where they can achieve their educational potential and become part of a healthy workforce will contribute to wider economic well-being.**

Pre Covid, what Pontypool residents tell us.....		
<b>Sport and leisure</b>		<b>83.1%</b> of respondents said sport and leisure was very/fairly important to them.
		<b>35.4%</b> of respondents participate in sport and leisure activities on a weekly basis <sup>62</sup> .
<b>Arts and culture</b>		<b>55.7%</b> of respondents said that arts and cultural activities were very/fairly important to them.
		<b>19.2%</b> of respondents participate in arts and cultural activities on a monthly basis. <b>24.8%</b> said they never participate in arts or cultural activities.

A pre-Covid survey of residents told us that not everyone who enjoys sport and leisure activities participates in them regularly.

**Ensuring all our communities have equitable access to green space for recreation and physical activity can support healthy lifestyles.**

The survey also tells us that not everyone who identified that arts and cultural activities were important to them, participated in them on a regular basis.

We know that some of Pontypool's communities have high levels of several different types of deprivation, and there are households experiencing income deprivation, this means that affordability is likely a barrier to some people getting involved with sports and other cultural activities.

**If future generations are to realise the health benefits of being active and cultural activities, then barriers to participation need to be addressed.**

## 7 What people are telling us

Alongside looking at the data, we have involved our communities to get a better understanding of people's experiences and appreciate how we can all work together to improve well-being, focusing on the strengths of our people and places. This section tells us what people living in Torfaen think about well-being in their community.

During late summer 2021 residents across Gwent were asked to complete a well-being questionnaire. A total of 127 responses were received from people living in Torfaen. Our communities were asked 4 questions:

***What is special about your community?***

***What things are important to you and your family?***

***What would you like your community to look like in the future?***

***How can your community work with us to make that happen?***

Figure 15 is a summary of the key themes that people thought were special about Torfaen's communities and what they thought would make them a better place.

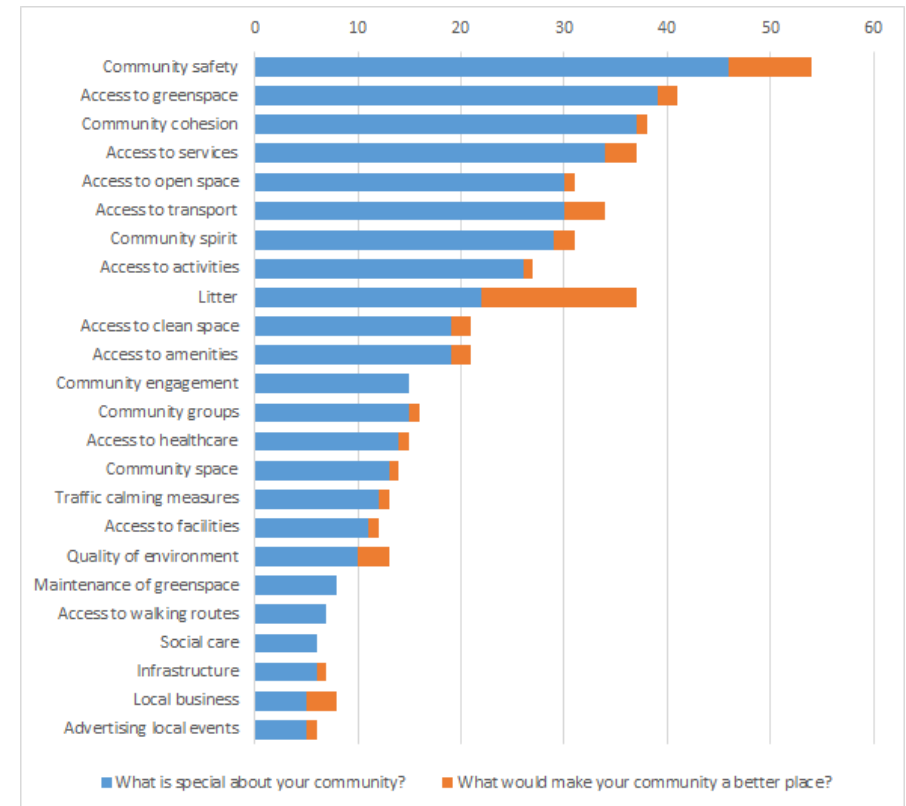


Figure 15: What residents in Torfaen say is special and what would make their communities better



## Pontypool Well-being Assessment

Q1 What is special about your community?	Q2 What would make it a better place?	Q3 What things are important to you and your family?	Q4 What would you like your community to look like in the future?	Q5 How can your community work with us to make that happen?
Access to open space (30)	Community safety (20)	Community safety (48)	Community safety (20)	Community engagement (11)
Community cohesion (24)	Litter (15)	Access to services (15)	Community spirit (16)	Community cohesion (4)
Community spirit (15)	Traffic calming measures (10)	Access to activities (14)	Access to clean space (14)	Community groups / Community spirit / Volunteering (3)

Figure 16: The top three responses for Torfaen

Figure 16 shows the top responses to the survey questions from people living in Torfaen.

Communities within Pontypool told us that having **access to transport** is important for their day to day lives. They told us that **addressing public transport times** along with providing more **affordable transport** would help provide a better service for everybody.

People also told us that **safety** within their community is very important to them and how **increasing police presence** on the streets would go a long way to making people feel safer within their local communities.

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- <sup>6</sup> ONS MYE 2019
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- <sup>8</sup> ONS MYE 2019
- <sup>9</sup> Mid-2018 based population projections, Welsh Government
- <sup>10</sup> Mid-2018 based population projections, Welsh Government
- <sup>11</sup> ONS MYE 2019
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- <sup>46</sup> ONS (2011) Census. Table KS501EW
- <sup>47</sup> ONS (2011) Census. Table WP605EW
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