

Gwent Public Services Board

Lower Ebbw Fach well-being assessment

A Blaenau Gwent local area well-being assessment

Document reference: BG04

March 2022

Contents

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Description of the area..... | 2 |
| 2 | About Lower Ebbw Fach..... | 3 |
| 3 | Social Well-being | 4 |
| 3.1 | About the community | 4 |
| 3.2 | Getting around | 5 |
| 3.3 | Access to services | 7 |
| 3.4 | Housing, households and health | 8 |
| 4 | Economy | 10 |
| 4.1 | Education, skills and work..... | 10 |
| 5 | Environment | 14 |
| 6 | Culture | 20 |
| | Data Sources | 24 |

1 Description of the area

Cwmtillery, Abertillery, Brynhithel, Six Bells, Aberbeeg, Llanhilleth and Swffryd all form part of the Lower Ebbw Fach Valley, which is named after the river that continues its journey through the area. The main town of this valley is Abertillery but, its surrounded neighbourhoods include; Bournville, Rosheyworth, Cwmtillery, Six Bells, Brynithel etc.

This area has four local authority electoral wards which are; Cwmtillery, Abertillery, Six Bells and Llanhilleth. These wards are represented by eleven ward councillors and an Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council.

There are many landscapes and heritages features within this area such as; Cwmtillery lakes, The Six Bells Miners' Memorial and the Roseheyworth Woodlands.

In terms of education the area is served by the Abertillery Learning Community which is a 3 to 16 campus for the Abertillery area. The campus includes Abertillery Comprehensive School, Abertillery, Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Schools, and Rosheyworth Millennium School. The area also has two other primary schools, Swffryd and St Illtyd's Primary (based in Llanhilleth).

The area has a main train line connection to Cardiff from the local train station in Llanhilleth. There is also regular bus routes such as the X1 that connects people to Brynmawr and Pontypool. The X15 which connects to Newport and then the 98 which is a neighbouring area bus to areas such as Ebbw Vale.

There are two community hubs in these areas, which provide information and advice to residents of Blaenau Gwent on subjects such as council tax. These take place in Abertillery library; 9am-5pm on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and in Llanhilleth Institute on Wednesdays 10am-5pm.





Figure 1 Cwmtillery Lakes



Figure 2 Guardian of the Valleys at Six Bells

2 About Lower Ebbw Fach

| | |
|--|---|
| Area | 26km² – approximately 24% of the total area of Blaenau Gwent at 109km ² |
| Population  | The estimated population is 16,037 – approximately 23% of the total population for Blaenau Gwent at 70,020. |
| Population density | The population density is 617 persons per square kilometre, with most people living in Cwmtillery 2 and Llanhilleth 3. There are 642 persons per square kilometre in Blaenau Gwent. |
| Dwellings  | The dwelling count is 7,279 – approximately 24% of the total number of dwellings in Blaenau Gwent at 30,416. |
| General | Lower Ebbw Fach consists of two Medium Super Output Areas (MSOA), one called North Abertillery covering Cwmtillery & Abertillery and the other called South Abertillery covering Six Bells, Aberbeeg, Brynhithel, Llanhilleth & Swfrydd. The area contains 11 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). By looking at smaller geographical areas, we can see any differences that can impact on well-being. |
| LSOAs | MSOAs |
| Abertillery 1, 2 & 3 | North Abertillery |
| Cwmtillery 1, 2 & 3 | |
| Llanhilleth 1, 2 & 3 | South Abertillery |
| Six Bells 1 & 2 | |

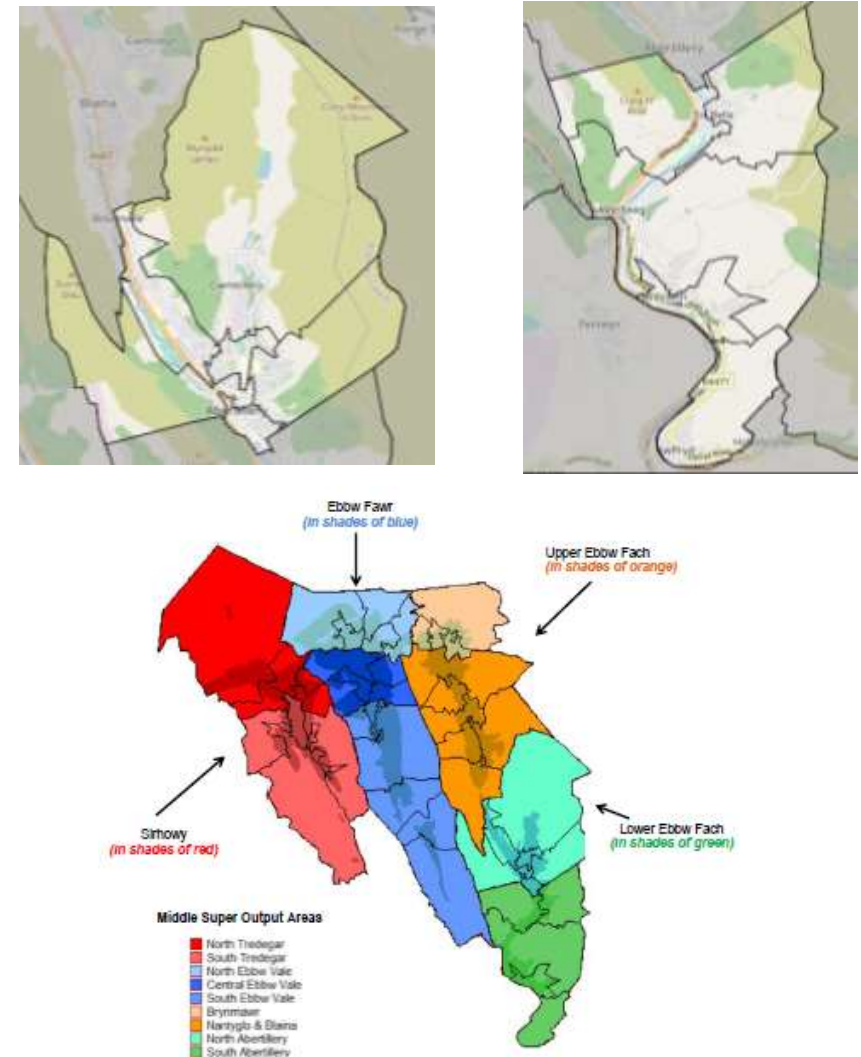
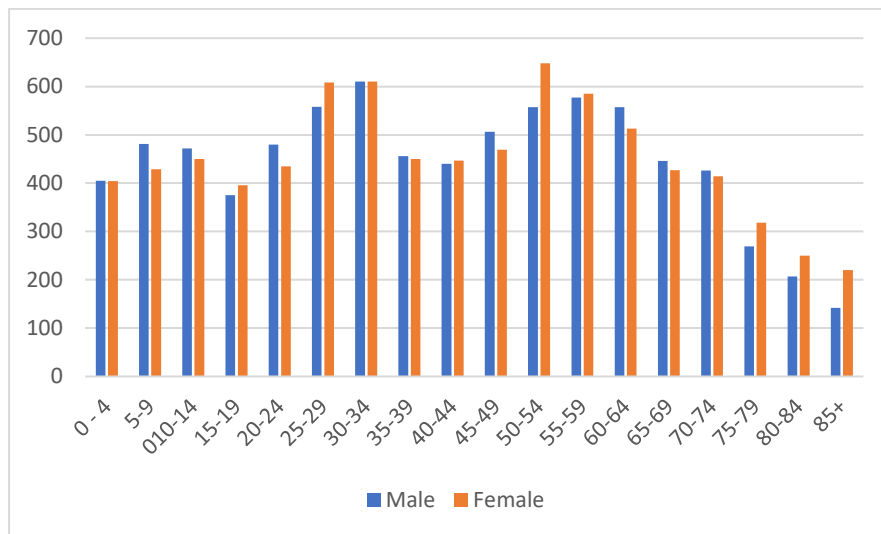


Figure 3 Blaenau Gwent Neighbourhood area map showing Lower Ebbw Fach

3 Social Well-being

3.1 About the community

The overall estimated population of the lower Ebbw Fach has **decreased** by approximately **360** residents from 16,398 in 2011 to an estimated **16,037** in 2020 (-2.2%), compared to Wales (+8.6%). Nine of the 11 LSOAs in the Lower Ebbw Fach have seen a decrease in population over this period, with Cwmtillery 3 and Llanhilleth 2 the only two LSOAs experiencing a net in-flow of residents during this period (+109).



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

The overall population in Blaenau Gwent decreased from 71,292 in 1998 to 69,547 in 2015. Since then though, the overall population is expected to have increased back up to 70,020 in 2020. Blaenau Gwent was the only Local Authority area in South East Wales to experience negative population growth over the 2008 – 2018 period. The population is projected to decrease by a further -1.1% between 2020 – 2043.

A steady, stable population has encouraging implications for life expectancy, climate change and our natural environment, as well as allowing more women to pursue education, employment and highly skilled careers.

In 2019, there were 2,803 people aged 0 – 15, 10,103 people aged 16 – 64, and 3,123 people aged 65 or over living in Abertillery, Aberbeeg & Llanhilleth.

The number of people aged 0 – 64 living in the Lower Ebbw Fach is projected to decrease by -9.3% between 2021 and 2043, much higher than the Welsh average of -3.8%. For the Lower Ebbw Fach area, this could mean **809** fewer people in this age range.

The Lower Ebbw Fach of the future might attract new residents who are able to work from home and want to enjoy an out-door lifestyle.

The number of people aged 65 or over living in Blaenau Gwent is projected to increase by c.2,500 people between 2018 and 2028. This could mean an extra 575 people in this age range.

There are many potential benefits to family and community well-being from people living longer. However, there could be higher demand for social care and health services in the future.

An aging population will require housing that meets their needs.

Enabling all parts of the community to get involved with the areas where they live and local decisions will help support cohesive communities.

Local community groups have been working with the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (and subsequently the BG Local Well-being Partnership) to develop a community participatory budget programme with a focus on enhancing local well-being and supporting communities to recover from the Covid19 pandemic.

3.2 Getting around



People travel for a range of reasons both within the towns and beyond; 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. There are also travellers to the area including for tourism or those enjoying the greenspace.

Blaenau Gwent is relatively geographically isolated, and this is no different for the Lower Ebbw Fach area.

The A467 runs north to south, as a bypass for the whole area, connecting onto the Newport area where it meets the M4, and up to the A465 via Brynmawr for links to Merthyr Tydfil and beyond to the West and Abergavenny and beyond to the East.

The area has a direct train connection to Cardiff and Newport (via Pye Corner) from Llanhilleth train station.

The main bus provision is the X1 which connects the area to Brynmawr and Pontypool, and the X15 which connects the area Brynmawr and Newport. The 98 connects Abertillery to neighbouring Ebbw Vale.

The new Fleccsi bus introduced in June 2021 also enables residents to travel by bus to or from anywhere within the Fleccsi Zone 2, which covers the areas of Brynithel, Aberbeeg, Six Bells, Abertillery and Cwmtillery. Fleccsi services are available between the hours of 5:30am and 8am then resumes in the evening between 5.00pm and 10:30pm. The bus is also designed to link with the TfW train at Llanhilleth station for departures to Cardiff before 08:00 and arrivals from Cardiff after 17:00.

Transport and its accessibility can have a significant impact on households with low or limited incomes, current prices can make public transport an expensive option for those dependent upon it.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

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

Data from the 2011 Census showed that car ownership in the Lower Ebbw Fach area is below that of the overall Wales level with almost one-third of population (32%) not having access to a car or van (Wales 22.9%).

In 2019, Lower Ebbw Fach had its first public electric vehicle charging points installed in the Abertillery Lesiure Centre car park. Much of the housing stock in Lower Ebbw Fach is terraced and doesn't have access to off-road parking. This could limit future take up of electric vehicles as charging could be problematic.

Future Blaenau Gwent may need access to more electric charging facilities. Future generations may also not travel as much for work if more remote working opportunities become available.

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 healthy lifestyles, however parts of the town and surrounding area are very steep which can present mobility challenges for some.

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

Covid-19 has seen many of us walking and cycling more and appreciating the value of our local green spaces. The Lower Ebbw Fach is at the bottom of the Ebbw Fach Trail, is part of an Active Travel route, and has an abundance of public rights of way and open access land, which is one of the reasons it is could be popular to visitors.



Before the pandemic, just over **36%** of people living in Lower Ebbw Fach also worked in the area, but the majority of people travel to access employment. This figure is higher than the Blaenau Gwent average of 31%.

Covid-19 has seen more of us working from home and accessing services on-line, but many of the types of work common amongst residents of Lower Ebbw Fach that can't be done remotely or digitally.

**Broadband
access**



84% of Blaenau Gwent residents were living in households with internet access in 2019-20.

Being able to access broadband isn't the same as having it. Affordability and/or digital literacy can be a barrier to parts of the community.

3.3 Access to services



The town centre of Abertillery supports the southern neighbourhood area and offers a mixed range of shopping and retail facilities. The 2019 Town Centre survey for the Local Development Plan shows that within the town boundary there are 127 units, with a vacancy rate of 18%. The total number of units is down from 131 in 2017. The town also includes the local library. Abertillery also has one large supermarket, Tesco, which sits on the outskirts of the town centre.

There are a number of industrial estates within the area, which provide opportunities for employment these include Rosheyworth Business Park, and Cwmtillery, Glandwr and Llanhilleth Industrial Estate.

In terms of education the area is served by the Abertillery Learning Community which is a 3 to 16 campus for the Abertillery area. The campus includes Abertillery Comprehensive School, Abertillery, Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Schools, and Roseheyworth Millennium School. The area also has two other primary schools, Swffryd and St Illtyd's Primary (based in Llanhilleth).

The area is served by the Communities First programme, and has one Flying Start Community Hub, two supporting Health Centre for Flying

Start delivery, four community venue used for Flying Start, and one childcare setting registered with Flying Start.

| Type of Asset | Theme |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 x Library | Local Service |
| 5 x Post Offices | Local Service |
| 6 x Primary Schools | Local Service |
| 2 x Electric vehicle charging points | Infrastructure |
| 1 x National Cycle Route | Infrastructure |
| 3 x Local Nature Reserves | Greenspace |
| 17 x Children's Play Areas | Recreation |
| 1 x Sports Centre | Recreation |
| 14 x Outdoor Sports Facilities | Recreation |

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan is the nearest Hospital, located in Ebbw Vale. It has 96 in-patient beds, incorporates an adult mental health unit with outpatient, day care and an 11 bedded in-patient facility. The hospital also has an out-patient department, a dedicated minor injuries unit, diagnostic support and a comprehensive therapies department.

There are GP services at the Abertillery Group Practice and Cwm Calon in Abertillery, and at the The Aberbeeg Medical Practice in Aberbeeg.

3.4 Housing, households and health

A key consideration for the future of the Lower Ebbw Fach is ensuring there is the right sort of housing to support the needs of the community.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Housing stock | The majority of housing is older 19th and 20th Century stock with poor energy efficiency and is lacking range and variation. |
| House prices | The average median house price in the North Abertillery is £85,000 , which is significantly higher than the average median house price in South Abertillery of £72,750 . Both figures are lower than the Blaenau Gwent (£95,000) and Wales (£170,000) averages. |
| Tenure | Over a third of housing in the Lower Ebbw Fach is owned outright (36%) and 27.5% is owned with a mortgage or loan. 36.5% is rented from the Local Authority, an RSL, or a private landlord. considerably higher than the Wales average (16.1%) – this is highest in Blaenavon 2 at 44.2%. |

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 housing being built now will be a legacy left for future generations.

Defining housing need is complex and several factors will have an influence on the overall levels of demand.



There are **7,279** households in the Lower Ebbw Fach: 3,985 in North Abertillery and 3,294 in the South Abertillery MSOA.

WIMD data based on poor quality housing, overcrowding and properties in disrepair would suggest that levels of housing deprivation are fairly high in the Lower Ebbw Fach.

There is a high supply of 2 bed houses in the area. There are 2,707 two bedroom houses, which is 37% of all houses of the Lower Ebbw Fach. The Blaenau Gwent average percentage of two bedroom households is 29%. Given the significant population in the Lower Ebbw Fach, this demonstrates that overcrowding could be an issue.

7.1% of people in the Lower Ebbw Fach live in overcrowded households (Blaenau Gwent average = 6.45), and the likelihood of living in poor quality (26.8%), housing containing serious hazards (24.4%), or housing being in disrepair (5%) are all the highest percentages of any Blaenau Gwent area.

Existing housing stock is old and does not always meet owners' current needs or requirements; with no parking making access

difficult and poor energy efficiency making them expensive to maintain.

So whilst properties in the Lower Ebbw Fach are becoming increasingly overcrowded and of poor quality, they are also not necessarily adequate for local needs, with some residents unable to access or afford to maintain accommodation in the town.

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.

Figure X provides an overview of the degree of relative deprivation across the lower Ebbw Fach, based on full data from the Welsh Index of National Deprivation (WIMD).

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Foodbank parcels | 3,945 food parcels were distributed to Blaenau Gwent residents by Trussel Trust foodbanks alone between April 2020 and March 2021. |
|-------------------------|--|

4 Economy

4.1 Education, skills and work

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data tells us that the six out of 11 LSOAs in the Lower Ebbw Fach are in the top **20%** of most deprived areas in Wales. There is also a high concentration of several different types of deprivation. The data tells us the social-economic factors could be contributing to attainment gaps between communities.

7.2% of those economically active in the Lower Ebbw Fach are unemployed. This figure is particularly high in the South Abertillery MSOA, where 7.6% of those economically active are unemployed, the highest of any MSOA in Blaenau Gwent.

Ensuring all children receive a good quality education and raising the aspirations of future generations of young people will support their long-term economic well-being.

The data shows that less pupils are entering higher education in the Lower Ebbw Fach than the average for Wales. It also shows that 30.5% of adults aged 25 – 64 have no qualifications, this is significantly higher than the average figure for Wales (19.4%).

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



Current and future generations of young people need to be supported and encouraged to prevent them becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

| | |
|---|---|
| Pupils not entering higher education | 76% of pupils in the Lower Ebbw Fach area do not enter higher education aged 18 to 19, which is higher than the Blaenau Gwent (74%) and Wales (70%) average. |
| Repeat school absenteeism | Repeat absenteeism of school pupils in Lower Ebbw Fach is 6.5% , being higher than the Blaenau Gwent (5.7%) and Wales (5.4%) averages. The North Abertillery MSOA has higher levels of absenteeism (6.8%) than South Abertillery (6.2%) but both are above the local and national average. |

Improving local skills through work-force planning, training, apprenticeships, and volunteering opportunities will help future generations find decent work and avoid in-work poverty.

Manufacturing, hospitality, construction, health and care sectors will benefit from a future workforce equipped with vocational skills.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

| | | | |
|--|--|------------|----------|
| Employment  | There are 7,805 economically active residents in the Lower Ebbw Fach, of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6,348 are employees• 574 are self-employed• 883 are unemployed . | | |
| Skills  | | No. | % |
| | No Qualifications | 5,081 | 37.5 |
| | Level 2 | 2,203 | 15 |
| | Level 3+ | 3,164 | 23.5 |
| Industry of employment | The largest industry of employment in the Lower Ebbw Fach is manufacturing – 15.6% of all jobs. This is considerably more than the Wales average (10.9%), but lower than Blaenau Gwent as a whole (19.6%). | | |
| Main employment sites | Tillery Valley Foods Ltd, Tesco Superstore, Roseheyworth Business Park, Llanhilleth Industrial Estate | | |

Delivering employability support to help those furthest from the job market can enabling them to fulfil their potential and will help support a prosperous economy.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

| MSOA Name | LSOA | WIMD | Income | Employment | Health | Education | Access to Services | Community Safety | Physical Environment | Housing |
|-------------------|---------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|---------|
| North Abertillery | Abertillery 1 | 20%-30% | 40%-50% | 30%-40% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 70%-80% | 10%-20% | 10%-20% | 10% |
| | Abertillery 2 | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10% | 30%-40% | 10%-20% | 60%-70% | 10% | 30%-40% | 10% |
| | Abertillery 3 | 50%-60% | 50%-60% | 30%-40% | 40%-50% | 40%-50% | 90%-100% | 20%-30% | 50%-60% | 10%-20% |
| | Cwmtillery 1 | 10% | 10%-20% | 10% | 10%-20% | 10% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 80%-90% | 20%-30% |
| | Cwmtillery 2 | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 70%-80% | 10%-20% |
| | Cwmtillery 3 | 20%-30% | 30%-40% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 60%-70% | 20%-30% | 50%-60% | 30%-40% |
| South Abertillery | Llanhilleth 1 | 10%-20% | 10%-20% | 10% | 10% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 40%-50% | 60%-70% | 30%-40% |
| | Llanhilleth 2 | 10%-20% | 10%-20% | 10% | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 20%-30% | 40%-50% |
| | Llanhilleth 3 | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 10%-20% | 10% |
| | Six Bells 1 | 10%-20% | 10%-20% | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 20%-30% | 10%-20% | 40%-50% | 10% |
| | Six Bells 2 | 30%-40% | 30%-40% | 40%-50% | 40%-50% | 30%-40% | 50%-60% | 20%-30% | 50%-60% | 10%-20% |

Figure 4 WIMD 2019 data for Lower Ebbw Fach

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Income deprivation | 22% of people in South Ebbw Fach are living in income deprivation. This is higher than the Blaenau Gwent (21%) and Wales (16%) averages. |
| Education | 30.5% of adults aged 25-64 have no qualifications. This is higher than the Blaenau Gwent (29%) and Wales (19.5%) averages. |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Overall deprivation | 7 of the 11 LSOAs in the Lower Ebbw Fach are in the top 20% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. Cwmtillery 1 is in the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. |
| Employment | 16% of working age people are in employment deprivation. This is higher than the Blaenau Gwent (15%) and Wales (10%) averages. |

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

Although self-reported health is good, the rate of premature death is significantly higher than the average rate for Wales and 28.5% of the people living in the Lower Ebbw Fach have a limiting long-term illness.

There are a particular set of challenges in the Lower Ebbw Fach related to employment, transport, housing, educational achievement and levels of deprivation that could be having an impact on health. Having work can have a positive impact on a person's health.

Tackling the leading causes of premature death and illness, delaying frailty and helping working age adults live healthier lives for longer by preventing health-harming behaviours and promoting mental well-being will help create a healthier Lower Ebbw Fach.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Limiting long-term illnesses | 28.5% of people in the Lower Ebbw Fach have a limiting long-term illness. This is marginally higher than the Blaenau Gwent average (27.7), but significantly higher than Wales (22.7). |
| All cause death rate | The all cause death rate in the Lower Ebbw Fach is 1,155 per 100,000 population , which is in line with the Blaenau Gwent average (1,155.5) but higher than both and Wales rate. |
| Premature death | The rate of premature death (under 75) in the Lower Ebbw Fach is 463.0 per 100,000 people . The average rate for Wales is 382.4 per 100,000. The North Abertillery MSOA has a particularly high rate of 475.5 per 100,000. |

5 Environment



Our air, land, water, wildlife, plants, and soils 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.

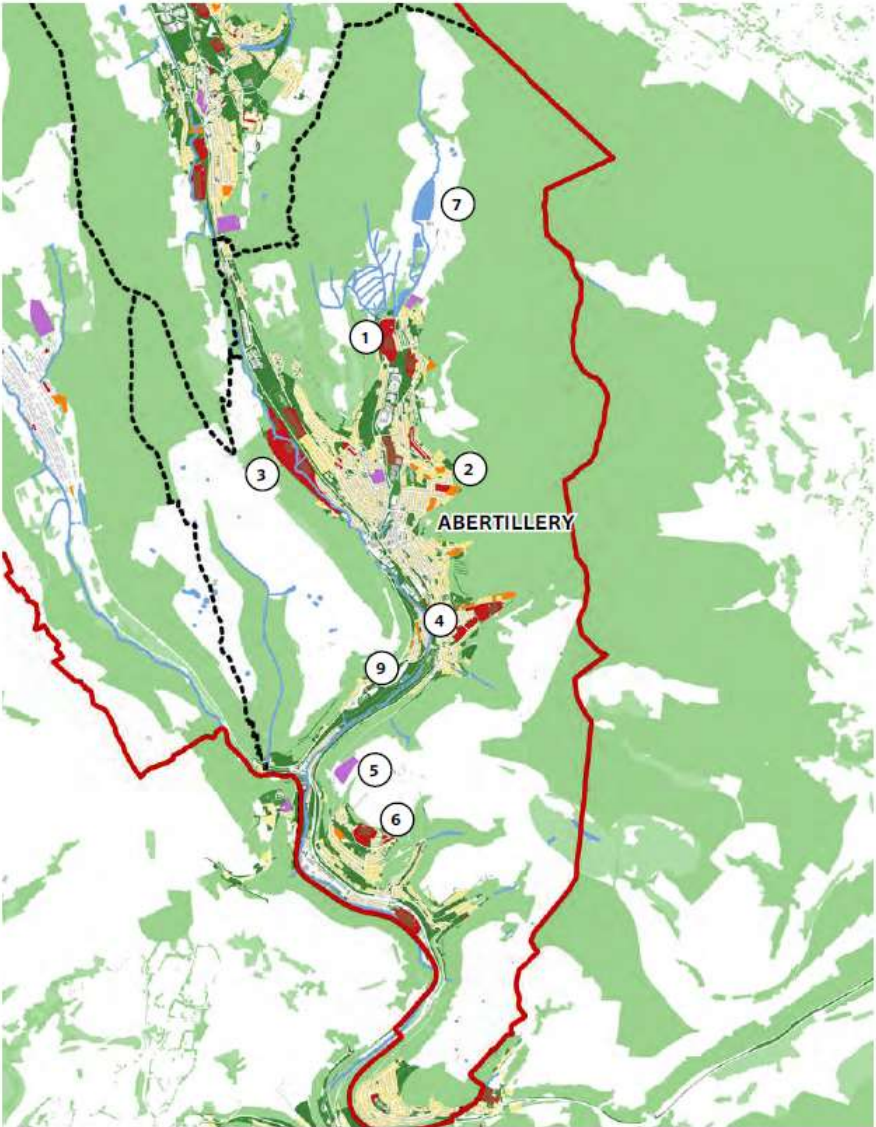
| | |
|---|---|
| Notable Green Spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cwmtillery Park - Gelli Crug Park - Abertillery Park - Six Bells Park - Brynithel Rec - Parc Arael Griffin |
| Notable Active Travel routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ebbw Fach Trail - Roseheyworth Wildlife Trail |
| Key nature conservation designations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cwmtillery Lakes - Six Bells Local Nature Reserve - Roseheyworth Woodlands |

Total tree cover in 2013 for the urban area of Abertillery was 26.5%, for Aberbeeg and Llanhilleth it was 27.3% and Swffryd was 10.9%.

Urban woodlands represent as much as 50% of Blaenau Gwent's urban canopy cover. The rest of the tree canopy in urban areas is made up of individual and groups of 'amenity trees' growing along streets, gardens, car parks and other urban public and private open spaces.

| Urban Green space | No. | Area | Key examples |
|--|-----|-------|--|
| Public Parks & Gardens | 2 | 15ha | Abertillery Park |
| Play Spaces | 17 | 0.8ha | Abertillery Park |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities (including Playing Fields) | 14 | 18ha | Windsor Road Playing Fields, Brynithel Recreation Ground, Abertillery Park |
| Amenity Greenspaces | n/a | 156ha | n/a |
| Amenity Greenspaces (Domestic Gardens) | n/a | 100ha | n/a |
| Allotments | 10 | 5.5ha | Adam Street, Rhiw-Park Road, Upper Gwastod Terrace |
| Cemeteries & Churchyards | 4 | 3ha | Brynithel Cemetery, St Paul's Church |

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment



Contains Natural Resources Wales information © Natural Resources Wales and Database Right. All rights Reserved. Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019741. Crown Copyright and Database Right. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2021

KEY

Strategic Green Infrastructure:

- Green Space
- Blue Space

Urban Green Spaces¹:

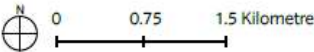
- Public Parks & Gardens (including Play Spaces)
- Outdoor Sports Facilities (including Playing Fields)
- Amenity Greenspaces
- Amenity Greenspaces (Domestic Gardens)
- Allotments
- Cemeteries & Churchyards

①

Key Accessible Green Infrastructure Sites:

1. Cwmtillery Park
2. Gelli Crug Park
3. Abertillery Park
4. Six Bells Park
5. Brynithel Cemetery
6. Brynithel Rec
7. Cwmtillery Lakes
8. Parc Arael Griffin

¹ Sources: OS Mastermap Greenspace, Blaenau Gwent CBC Open Space Data



MAP 5.15A

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

Outside the urban areas are some significant blocks of woodland, particularly in the south, including a large area of accessible woodland at Penrhiwgarreg.

The Lower Ebbw Fach's natural environment is strongly influenced by its industrial past. The locally distinctive landscape of coal tips and ponds are now a significant ecological resource supporting a range of notable species.

Cwmtillery Lakes were once feeder ponds for Cwmtillery Colliery, and are now home to a variety of wildlife including waterfowl and insects.



Figure 5 Cwmtillery Lakes

The mosaic of habitats such as grasslands, hay meadows, wet mire heath, swamp and open water contains a huge diversity of plant life, ranging from the Heath Spotted and Southern Marsh Orchids to Blue and white Bells, Scabious, Primroses, Lady's Smock, and Teasel.



Figure 6 Cormorant at Cwmtillery Lakes

Many species of birds can be found throughout the valley, such as Cormorants, Buzzards, Kestrels, Sparrow Hawks, Skylarks, and Barn, Tawny and Little Owls, along with Noctule and Pipistrelle Bats in Summer.

Ponds, lakes, ditches, and the Ebbw rivers support insects and amphibians like dragon flies, butterflies, frogs and newts. Rabbits, hedgehogs, shrews, voles, mice and squirrels also inhabit the valley.

Habitats at risk from a changing climate include peatland and upland heath and beech woodland. A changing climate could increase the frequency of grassland fires.

Where the environment is already stressed, for example through habitat loss and fragmentation, then the risks from climate change are greater.

Our natural resources have an important role to play in supporting our capacity to mitigate climate change by storing carbon. They can also help support our adaptation response by, for example, managing water in the landscape and reducing the impact of temperature rise.

The main **Ebbw River** is formed by the confluence of the two minor Ebbw rivers, Ebbw Fach, and Ebbw Fawr. The source of the Ebbw Fach river is on Mynydd Llangatwg in the Upper Ebbw Fach valley.

Both rivers meet at Aberbeeg, then the river continues flowing south east towards Newport, where the Ebbw joins with the River Usk, before flowing into the Severn Estuary.

- Enhance green spaces including parks and woodlands to provide safe and attractive destinations that encourage people to return regularly.
- Improve maintenance of woodlands by supporting 'Friends of' community groups for Penrhigreg Forestry and other local accessible green spaces.
- Improve quality of habitat for pollinators by implementing alternative pollinator grassland management regimes for parks (e.g. Abertillery Park), amenity greenspaces and along road verges to promote resilient ecological networks.
- Promote opportunities for incorporating GI into the masterplanning and design of new developments.
- Embed and retrofit GI into built development within urban areas such as biodiverse green spaces between buildings, green roofs, walls and facades, sustainable drainage schemes and other green design measures.
- Ensure ongoing management and maintenance of church yards and cemeteries, taking opportunities where possible to improve biodiversity and habitat quality.
- Enhance the quality of school grounds, taking opportunities where possible to improve biodiversity and their use as multifunctional places where young people can gain health and wellbeing benefits and develop a connection with the environment.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

- Improve connectivity of woodlands and trees by seeing opportunities to increase urban tree planting and replacing aging trees as necessary.
- Improve connectivity between gardens by enhancing the profile of wildlife gardening through communications and education in line with the Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales' Guidance on [Wildlife Gardening](#)

The Lower Ebbw Fach is also home to a variety of Green Corridor active travel routes, including footpaths (61.2km), bridleways (39.3km), and National Cycle Network routes (10.2km).

The Ebbw Fach Trail links the Cwmtillery Lakes at the top of the Lower Ebbw Fach to Granny's Wood in Llanhilleth. It passes through several green spaces and takes in the culture of the area, which was an important industrial centre for the iron and coal industry.



Figure 7 Ebbw Fach Trail Map

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

The opportunities for improving the quality and connectivity of the Lower Ebbw Fach's green corridors are outlined below:-

- Ensure ongoing management and maintenance of existing rights of way, through seeking opportunities to develop the volunteer network in Blaenau Gwent to assist with public rights of way maintenance.
- Ensure ongoing management and maintenance of the Ebbw Fach Trail.
- Improve connectivity of the Ebbw Fach Trail by enhancing signage.
- Improve connectivity of the Ebbw Fach River network by opening up culverts and re-naturalising rivers where appropriate, enhancing bankside land and the wider floodplain, buffering and extending existing habitats and linkages and improving access both to and alongside rivers for both people and wildlife.

6 Culture

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Welsh speakers | 7% of residents aged 3+ in the Lower Ebbw Fach can speak Welsh, which is less than the Welsh average (19%). |
| Country of birth | 89% of residents in the Lower Ebbw Fach were born in Wales. |
| Ethnicity | 98.6% of population are white, similar to that witnessed for the Blaenau Gwent area (98%), which is slightly above the rate noted for Wales overall. The largest ethnic minority groups are mixed/multiple ethnic groups (0.7%) and Asian or Asian British (0.4%). |
| Religion | 45.3% of the population are Christian, whilst 45.4% of the population identify as No Religion. Lower Ebbw Fach sees the highest percentage of No Religion and the lowest percentage of Christians in Blaenau Gwent. |

The Welsh language is not spoken by the majority of people that live in Blaenau Gwent, and even those that are Welsh language speakers (or have Welsh language ability) have low levels of fluency. Blaenau Gwent consistently has the lowest use of Welsh Language in Wales, along with other areas in South East Wales with similar levels. No public service can achieve the necessary increases in Welsh language

use by itself, and wider engagement and participation of the residents of Blaenau Gwent will be important.

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

The Lower Ebbw Fach is rich in cultural history and community spirit that remains today. Its surviving streets of miners' housing, churches, schools and the Llanhilleth Miners' Institute powerfully reflect the distinctive culture that developed in coal mining communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Key attractions | Llanhilleth Miner's Institute, The Guardian of the Valleys, Abertillery & District Museum, Cwmtillery Lakes, Roseheyworth Woodlands |
|------------------------|---|

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



Figure 8 Llanhilleth

The Lower Ebbw Fach is home to a range of community groups, hubs, clubs, institutes and societies, from community centres like Pentref Tyleri, to Brownies and Scout Groups, Abertillery Town Band and other music and drama groups, the Rotary Club of Abertillery & Blaina, Abertillery Men's Den, the Workmen's Welfare Institute, and various sports clubs including rugby, football, cricket and bowls clubs.

Taking part in cultural activities can be a good way of bringing all parts of the community together and building community cohesion.

A popular theme for local people involved in the Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement programme in 2017 considering what was special about the area was social and cultural activities. Specific social and cultural attractions mentioned by people were the local cinema, local festivals, pubs, community centres, youth service events, theatres, local clubs, and churches.

The many churches and chapels demonstrate the rich history of the local area and are also home to volunteering efforts, providing lunch clubs (pre-Covid19) and food distribution to those in need.

St. Illtyd's Church in Aberbeeg dates back to the 13th century and is considered the oldest standing building within the borough of Blaenau Gwent.



Figure 9 St Illtyd's Church

The Ebenezer Baptist Church and Community Hub in Abertillery was established in 1876 and has supported the local community for many years by hosting community groups, businesses and local services. They now offer a community café and food parcels to local families in need.

Volunteers play a key part in sharing the Lower Ebbw Fach's rich cultural heritage through its various museums and institutes.

The Abertillery Sports Centre offers a range of sports and recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors. The 2019 Outdoor Sport and Play Facilities Survey shows that there are 16.4 hectares of outdoor sports and play space within the Lower Ebbw Fach, which is significantly below the Ward Requirements totalling 39.4 hectares for the area.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

The mental and physical benefits that exercise and socialising can provide are well documented. Childhood experiences can seed a lifelong interest in sports and cultural activities.

Through the hard work of members of the community, there are many activities taking place in the Lower Ebbw Fach including rugby, football, dance, netball, running, lawn bowls, grappling and walking groups.

The Heritage Centre at the Llanhilleth Miners Institute offers a unique experience of life, throughout the ages, of the four distinct local communities (Aberbeeg, Brynithel, Swffryd and Llanhilleth) that make up the South Abertillery MSOA.



Figure 10 Llanhilleth Institute

The Aneurin Leisure Trust Art Service manages and operates the Metropole Cultural and Conference Centre in Abertillery. The recently refurbished Met building retains many of the original Victorian architectural features. The main auditorium is a multi-functional space utilised as a performance area as well as an events and meeting space.



Figure 11 Inside the Metropole auditorium

Head4Arts, a community arts organisation, based in Llanhilleth Institute, works across the regions of Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly. The organisation is funded by the Arts Council for Wales.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

Community arts and leisure organisations are under increased financial pressure due to the Covid19 pandemic. There are some examples of clubs that have positively embraced asset transfer and engaged the local community in the club to ensure sustainability however this is not the case for all clubs. Feedback from clubs to Aneurin Leisure's INSPIRE team indicates that some clubs will fold as a result of financial pressure.

The Lower Ebbw Fach's rugged landscape offers a range of trails to explore and there are also set walking routes taking in the townscape and the valleys. The area is very popular with walkers, cyclists and mountain bikers.

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

Maximising the opportunities from the inspirational natural environment and cultural heritage of the Lower Ebbw Fach by promoting wildlife, outdoor activity and heritage tourism can provide future employment opportunities.

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment

Data Sources

| | |
|--|--|
| ONS Mid-year (30 June) estimates of the usual resident population for 2011 Census Output Areas (OAs) in Wales. | Welsh Government Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (full Index update with ranks): 2019 |
| ONS Standard Area Measurements (2011) for 2011 Census Areas in England and Wales (MSOA) | Nomis WD102EW - Population density Census 2011 MSOA |
| ONS Standard Area Measurements (2011) for 2011 Census Areas in England and Wales (LSOA) | Stats Wales Population estimates by local authority and year |
| ONS Lower layer Super Output Area population density 2020 (National Statistics) | Nomis Welsh language skills KS207WA MSOA Census 2011 |
| Stats Wales Population estimates by lower super output area and age group - 2019 (within MSOA) - Stats Wales | Nomis QS203EW - Country of birth (detailed) MSOA Numbers and Pct Census 2011 |
| Nomis Population estimates - small area based by quinary age by year | Gov.UK House prices by Admin grographies Dec 1995 to year ending Dec 2020 (incl LA and Wales) |
| Stats Wales Population projections by local authority and year (2018 based) All Ages | Stas Wales Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) Analysis |
| Stats Wales Population projections by local authority and year (2018 based) 0-15 | Health Map wales All Deaths, Death Rates (Age-standardised) per 100k pop, Persons, All Ages |
| Stats Wales Population projections by local authority and year (2018 based) 16-64 | Nomis KS601EW to KS603EW - Economic activite employed unemployed and self employed Census 2011 by MSOA |
| Stats Wales Population projections by local authority and year (2018 based) 65 plus | Nomis KS501EW - Qualifications and students Census 2011 By MSOA |
| Nomis KS208WA - Welsh language profile (Census 2011) | Nomis WP605EW - Industry (Workplace population) Census 2011 By MSOA |
| Nomis KS204EW - Country of birth Census 2011 | Nomis WP605EW - Industry (Workplace population) Census 2011 Wales |
| Nomis KS201EW - Ethnic group - Nomis - Census 2011 MSOA | Nomis Population estimates - Wales by five year age band 2020 |
| Nomis KS209EW - Religion - Nomis - Census 2011 - MSOA | Stas Wales Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 by decile Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) |
| Nomis KS605EW to KS607EW - Industry - Census 2011 - MSOA | Stas Wales WIMD 2019 Indicator data by Local Authority - All Domains |
| WIMD (Stats Wales) Indicator data by Middle Layer Super Output Area - All Domains Includes Broadband Speed -WIMD 2019 - MSOA | Stas Wales Proportion of council tax dwellings, by band and year (per cent) |
| Nomis WU03EW - Location of usual residence and place of work by method of travel to work - Census 2011 - (MSOA level) | ONS via Uk Data Service Household composition by Number of bedrooms (England and Wales) 2011 - Middle Super Output Areas |
| BRES via Nomis Business Register and Employment Survey 2019 - Employed - Broad Industry Group - MSOA | Stats Wales Pupils eligible for free school meals by local authority, region and year By LA |
| Nomis KS402EW - Tenure - Census 2011 - MSOA | UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017, Synthesis report: priorities for the next five years. Committee on Climate Change. |
| ONS Median price paid by MSOA, England and Wales, year ending Dec 1995 to year ending Dec 2020 | Blaenau Gwent Open Spaces Report 2019 |
| | Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board Blaenau Gwent Green Infrastructure Strategy. March 21 |
| | Beaufort Theatre & Ballroom |
| | Aneurin Leisure Trust BG Life |
| | Ebbw Fach Trail |

Lower Ebbw Fach Local Well-being Assessment
