

Gwent Public Services Board

# **Lower Islwyn Local Well-being Assessment**

**A Caerphilly county borough local well-being assessment**

FEBRUARY 2022

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## Lower Islwyn Local Well-being Assessment

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### 1 Executive summary

This section provides a summary of the key assets and challenges identified in this Local Well-being Assessment for the Lower Islwyn.

#### *Assets*

Road links from Lower Islwyn to Newport, Cardiff and the M4 are very good. The Ebbw Valley railway line runs through the community area with an hourly service to Cardiff, and an hourly service from Crosskeys to Newport. Ongoing infrastructure works will extend this service to cover the whole community area. There are regular bus services between the communities within the community area, as well as services to Blackwood and Newport.

Risca has several national supermarkets and a range of independent shops on the high street. There are also local employment opportunities at a number of industrial estates through the community area.

There are very low levels of deprivation overall, with no significant pockets of deprivation within the community area. The house price to earnings ratio is fairly consistent throughout the community area.

The Sirhowy Valley Country Park is a major asset for the community area and provides residents with opportunities for cycling and walking. Cwmcarn Forest is a major tourist destination and attracts many visitors from outside the county borough, who come to enjoy the downhill bike trails, the glamping pods and campsite and the forest drive itself. There has been significant investment in the site in recent years, which improves the experience for visitors.

Local residents have told us that the community area is quiet, which makes it a good place to live. They also value the ease of access to local green space and the beautiful surroundings they are able to enjoy.

#### *Challenges*

There are pockets of poor access to adequate speed broadband in parts of the community area, which is a particular issue currently due to the number of services that have moved online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is also limited access to banks or buildings societies, which can make it more difficult for vulnerable individuals to access banking facilities.

Criminal damage rates are higher than the county borough average in most of the community area. Also, fire incidences are higher than the Wales average in most of the community area.

There are significantly higher premature death rates than the Wales average in Crosskeys South and Ynysddu. In addition, there are significantly lower levels of healthy life expectancy than the Wales average in every ward within the community area, although the range between the highest and lowest figures is much smaller than other community areas within the county borough.

There is market demand for new housing within the community area, but developments are constrained by the topography of the area and local flood risk.

Residents have told us that they would like more opportunities for people to get together locally, particularly younger and older people. They would also like more opportunities for residents to have a two way dialogue with public services, improved public transport links and access to more facilities locally.

## 2 Description of Lower Islwyn

The **Lower Islwyn** community area is located north-west of Newport and is comprised of the wards of **Abercarn, Crosskeys, Risca East, Risca West and Ynysddu**. The majority of land is comprised of moorland, grazing land and woodland. There are two steep sided and narrow valleys that have been carved out by the River Ebbw and its tributary the River Sirhowy, topped by mountain plateaux. The urban settlements cover a small percentage of this area, being located primarily on the valley floor, an area at risk from flooding.

The community area has an attractive landscape with notable attractions such as the Cwmcarn Forest Drive and Campsite, the Sirhowy Valley Country Park, and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, which runs throughout the community area. Pontywaun Garden Suburbs is a distinctive settlement that has been designated a conservation area, which contains numerous listed buildings.

The principal town in the community area is **Risca**. It is the only significant shopping centre within the community area and contains a large number of retail units and three food stores. Risca has been the subject of substantial public and private investment that has realised many benefits, not least of which is the conversion of the former Palace Cinema into a library and learning resource centre.

Local employment opportunities in the community area are provided by the following industrial estates: Prince of Wales, Chapel Farm, Pontywaun Farm, Nine Mile Point, North and South Blackvein, Newtown, Park Road, Pontymister and Rogerstone Park.





Figure 1: Cwmcarn Forest Drive



Figure 2: Former Palace Cinema, Risca

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### 3 About Lower Islwyn

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Area</b>  | 44.3 km <sup>2</sup> – approximately 15.9% of the total area of Caerphilly county borough at 278km <sup>2</sup>   |
| <b>Population</b><br> | The estimated population is 24,695 – approximately 13.6% of the total population for Caerphilly county borough at 181,731 <sup>1</sup> .  |
| <b>Population density</b>  | The population density is 5.58 persons per hectare, with the LSOAs of Ynysddu 1, Abercarn 1 and Risca West 3 having the highest populations. There are 6.53 people per hectare in Caerphilly county borough <sup>2</sup> .    |
| <b>Dwellings</b><br>  | The dwelling count is 11,236 – approximately 14% of the total number of dwellings in Caerphilly county borough at 80,149 <sup>3</sup> .   |
| <b>General</b>   | Lower Islwyn consists of 4 Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), containing 14 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). By looking at smaller geographical areas, we can see any differences that can impact on well-being. |
| <b>LSOAs</b>   | <b>MSOAs</b>  |
| Abercarn 1, 2 & 3  | Caerphilly 014  |
| Crosskeys 1 & 2  | Caerphilly 015  |
| Risca East 1, 2, 3 & 4   | Caerphilly 016  |
| Risca West 1, 2 & 3  | Caerphilly 017  |
| Ynysddu 1 & 2  |   |

**Key:**

Blue line – LSOA boundary

Red line – MSOA boundary

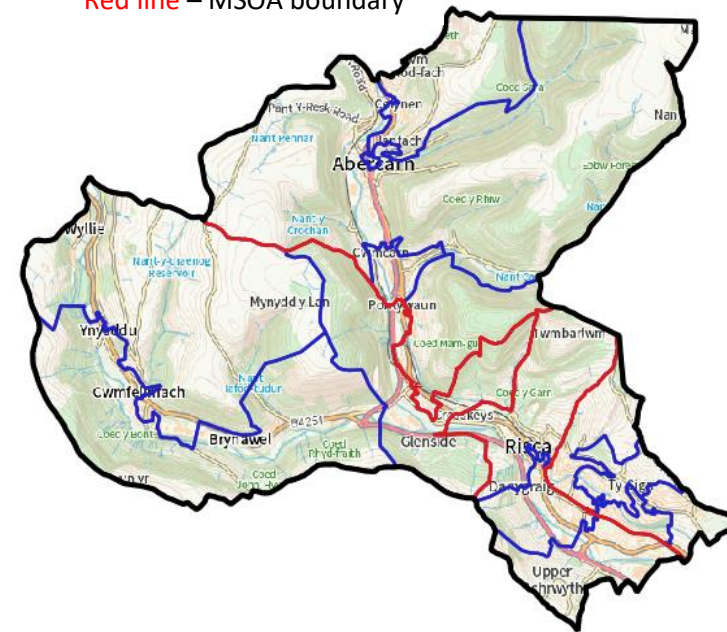


Figure 3: Map of Lower Islwyn

## 4 Social well-being

### 4.1 About the community

Overall, the estimated population of Lower Islwyn increased by approximately 437 residents, from 24,258 in the 2011 Census to 24,695 in 2020<sup>4</sup> (+1.8%), compared to an increase of 3.5% in Wales as a whole. Eight of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn saw an increase in their population over this period, with the largest increase in Abercarn 1 (up 12.4% or 269 people). The remaining six LSOAs saw a decrease in their population over the time period, with the largest decrease in Risca East 1 (down 6% or 85 people). Understanding how the population might change in the future can help us think about key well-being challenges and opportunities.

Unfortunately, population projections are not available below the county borough level, so these figures are included below.

The overall population in Caerphilly county borough is projected to increase by 2.0% between 2019 and 2043<sup>5</sup>, to 186,991. This is in contrast to recent trends, where the population grew by 5.4% between the 1991 and 2011 censuses.

The number of people aged 0-15 living in Caerphilly county borough is projected to decrease by 7.4% between 2019 and 2043, roughly similar to the Welsh average of 8.0%<sup>6</sup>. The largest decline is projected up to 2028 and following that the figure is projected to remain fairly consistent at around 31,000. This could mean 2,521 fewer people in this age range across the county borough by 2043.

The number of people aged 16-64 living in the county borough is projected to fall by 3.1% between 2019 and 2043 (compared with a decline of 2.1% in Wales as a whole), with a fairly steady projected decline over the time period. This could mean 3,487 fewer people in this age range across the county borough by 2043<sup>7</sup>.

The number of people aged 65 or over living in Caerphilly county borough is projected to increase by 27.2% between 2019 and 2043, slightly lower than the Welsh average of 28.7%<sup>8</sup>. For Caerphilly county borough this could mean an additional 9,653 people in this age range by 2043<sup>9</sup>. This figure is 61% higher than the combined projected decrease in the population figures for the 0-15 and 16-64 age groups by 2043<sup>10</sup>.

The number of people aged 85 or over living in Caerphilly county borough is projected to increase by 82.6% between 2019 and 2043, significantly higher than the Welsh average of 69.5%. For the county borough this could mean an additional 3,145 people in this age range by 2043<sup>11</sup>.

Without question there are many potential benefits to individual, family and community well-being from people living longer.

However, this does mean that there could be higher demand for social care and health services in the future, particularly amongst the elderly population, as the demand for health and social care services tends to increase as we get older.

An ageing population will also require appropriate housing that meets their needs, both now and in the future.

The latest data from the 2021 Census is not available, but from the 2011 Census:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Welsh speakers</b> | 20.1% of residents in LI could speak at least some Welsh, marginally lower than the Caerphilly county borough average of 22.2%, but significantly lower than the Welsh average of 37.8% <sup>12</sup> . |
|-----------------------|---|

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|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Country of birth</b> | 87.8% of residents in LI were born in Wales, slightly lower than the county borough average of 88.6% but significantly higher than the Wales average of 72.7% <sup>13</sup> .  |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>        | 98.5% of residents in LI were of a White ethnicity, virtually identical to the county borough average of 98.3% and higher than the Wales average of 95.6% <sup>14</sup> .      |
| <b>Religion</b>         | 52.3% of residents in LI had a Christian based religious, marginally higher than the county borough average of 50.7% but lower than the Wales average of 57.5% <sup>15</sup> . |

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

### 4.2 Getting around



People travel for a range of reasons both within Lower Islwyn 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, such as those working in the industrial estates or shops and offices, and those visiting for tourism purposes or enjoying the wonderful countryside.

Road links are good to both Newport and Cardiff, whilst also connecting Blackwood town centre and the communities of the Ebbw and Sirhowy valleys, which provides significant work and retail opportunities. Risca and Crosskeys

both have stations on the **Ebbw Valley railway line** that runs hourly services to Cardiff. From December 2021, an hourly service has operated between Newport and Crosskeys, which will be extended to Ebbw Vale in 2023 following infrastructure improvements. The area is also well served by buses, with a quarter hourly service from Newport through Risca and Crosskeys to Blackwood, and a half hourly service through the Sirhowy Valley settlements from Wattsville and Wyllie to Blackwood.

The **South Wales Metro** is an integrated public transport network that will make it easier for people travel across the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), transforming rail and bus services as well as cycling and walking. Transport for Wales are investing £750 million pounds to upgrade the railway lines to Aberdare, Coryton, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney and Treherbert, known as the Core Valleys Lines. For more information on the plans for the Metro, visit the Transport for Wales website [South Wales Metro | TfW](#).

Transport and its accessibility can have a significant impact on households with low or limited incomes, and high prices can make public transport an expensive option for those who depend on it. Reducing transport costs can help to increase disposable income and help to reduce in work poverty.

There are a number of public electric vehicle charge points in Lower Islwyn, at High Street car park (Ynysddu), Cwmcarn Forest Drive Visitor Centre, Coleg Gwent Crosskeys Campus, Longbridge car park (Risca) and Tesco Extra (Risca)<sup>16</sup>. The housing stock in Lower Islwyn consists of almost half terraced properties, and a mix of semi-detached and detached properties.

A large proportion of terraced housing will not have drives or off-street parking available, so this could limit future take-up of electric vehicles as charging could be problematic. Future developments in electric charging facilities will hopefully help to solve this issue.

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.

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Safe active travel routes, particularly those which provide commuting potential, can help to support healthy lifestyles. In the future more people might choose to travel actively, so that they can keep healthier into old age. Future generations might use electric bikes to navigate the numerous inclining roads within the area.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen many of us **walking and cycling more** and appreciating the value of our local greenspaces.

**Route 47 of the National Cycle Network** passes through the Sirhowy Valley, and this stretch is known as the 'Three Parks Trail'. It starts at the Sirhowy Valley Country Park near Crosskeys, and passes through Wattsville, Cwmfelinfach and Ynysddu. It then continues over the Hengoed/Maesycwmmmer Viaduct before travelling through Penallta Park and through Nelson before leaving the county borough.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen many more of us working from home and accessing services online, but there are certain types of work that cannot be done remotely or digitally, such as factory work or retail. Future generations may not need to travel as much for work.

### Broadband access



The vast majority of households in Lower Islwyn have access to broadband of at least 30Mb/s, although there are pockets where access is poorer, such as Abercarn 2 (23.6%), Abercarn 1 (14.7%) and Risca East 2 (10.4%). In every other LSOA in Lower Islwyn, the proportion of households without access to broadband of at least 30Mb/s is lower than the Wales average (6.9%)<sup>17</sup>.

Whilst broadband accessibility in Lower Islwyn is generally good, affordability of broadband is much more of an issue for those with low or limited incomes. Poor digital literacy can also be a significant barrier for certain groups within the community.

Communities of the future may be less reliant on fixed telecommunication systems and more people might use newer technologies such as 5G etc.

We do not currently know if homeworking and online access to services will be a permanent arrangement for the foreseeable future, or if people will begin to return to their places of work or choose to access services face-to-face. In reality it is probable that there will be a blend of online, remote and in-person interactions.

In the future the whole of Caerphilly county borough (including Lower Islwyn) will need to be cyber secure and digitally inclusive.

### 4.3 Access to services



**Risca** is the principal town within Lower Islwyn, and residents will travel from surrounding areas to the town to access the services they need. It is the only significant shopping centre within Lower Islwyn and has three national supermarkets (Tesco, Lidl and Aldi), one bank branch and one building society branch, plus a range of smaller national and independent shops. Risca has been the subject of substantial public and private investment that has realised many benefits, not least of which is the conversion of the former Palace Cinema into a library and learning resource centre.

Local employment opportunities in Lower Islwyn are provided by the following industrial estates: Prince of Wales, Chapel Farm, Pontywaun Farm, Nine Mile Point, North and South Blackvein, Newtown, Park Road, Pontymister and Rogerstone Park.



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Across Lower Islwyn are the following services:

| Asset type               | Number |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Primary school           | 9      |
| Secondary school         | 1      |
| Sixth Form/FE college    | 1      |
| Libraries                | 2      |
| Leisure centres          | 2      |
| Community centre         | 7      |
| Banks/building societies | 2      |
| Post office              | 5      |
| Country Park             | 1      |
| Local Nature Reserve     | 2      |

Lower Islwyn also has a number of Post Office branches in the smaller villages, which offers alternative access to banking services where there are no bank branches.

Lower Islwyn has eight English medium primary schools, one Welsh medium primary school and one Comprehensive school (Risca). Coleg Gwent also has a large campus at Crosskeys, which offers 6<sup>th</sup> Form provision for the whole of the former Islwyn area (which covers Mid Valleys East and Lower Islwyn) plus further education provision.

Lower Islwyn has a Portal Library at Risca and a Joint Use/Village Library at Abercarn.

Risca Leisure Centre is located adjacent to the Comprehensive school and is open seven days a week. It has a swimming pool, fitness suite, dance studio, squash courts, multi-use sports hall and 3G Artificial Turf Pitch.

### 4.4 Crime and community safety

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.

12 of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn had **Criminal Damage** rates higher than the Wales average of 1.14 cases per 100 population. Three LSOAs (Risca West 2, Abercarn 1 and Risca East 2) had rates one and a half times the Wales average for Criminal Damage<sup>18</sup>.

Five of the 14 LSOA's in Lower Islwyn had a **Violent Crime** rate above the Wales average of 2.67 cases per 100 population, with Risca West 2 (3.96) and Risca West 3 (3.02) having the highest figures<sup>19</sup>.

Four of the 14 LSOA's in Lower Islwyn had an **Anti-Social Behaviour** crime rate above the Wales average of 2.55 cases per 100 population, with the highest figures in Risca West 2 (3.94) and Abercarn 1 (3.18)<sup>20</sup>.

Four of 13 LSOA's in Lower Islwyn had a **Burglary** rate above the Wales average of 0.98 cases per 100 population (the information was not available in the remaining LSOA), with Risca West 2 (1.36) and Risca East 4 (1.14) having the highest figures<sup>21</sup>.

Only two of 14 LSOA's in Lower Islwyn had a **Theft** rate above the Wales average of 0.53 cases per 100 population (the information was not available in the remaining LSOA). These LSOAs were Risca West 1 (0.77) and Risca West 2 (0.61).<sup>22</sup>

10 of 13 LSOA's in Lower Islwyn had a **Fire Incidence** rate above the Wales average of 0.38 cases per 100 population (the information was not available in the other two LSOAs). Three LSOAs (Risca East 4, Risca West 1 and Ynysddu 1) had rates over one and a half times the Wales average<sup>23</sup>.

Tackling the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour will support greater cohesion in the communities of Lower Islwyn.

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### 4.5 Deprivation

The **Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)** is the Welsh Government’s official measure of relative poverty. It identifies those communities (at an LSOA geography), with the highest concentrations of different types of deprivation, plus overall deprivation. WIMD ranks all LSOAs in Wales from the most (rank 1) to the least (rank 1909) deprived.

WIMD domain ranks are available for every LSOA in Wales, and the information below summarises the LSOAs which fall in the most deprived categories in Lower Islwyn, for Overall Deprivation and certain domains.

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Overall deprivation</b>     | There are no LSOAs in either the 10% most deprived category or the 11-20% most deprived category in LI for Overall Deprivation. There are only two LSOAs in the 21-30% most deprived category – Risca East 2 (rank 447 from 1909 in Wales) and Risca East 4 (rank 566).   |
| <b>Health Domain</b>           | There are no LSOAs in either the 10% most deprived category or the 11-20% most deprived category in LI for the Health Domain. There are five LSOAs in the 21-30% most deprived category – Crosskeys 2 (Rank 409), Risca East 2 (rank 412), Risca East 4 (rank 462), Risca West 3 (rank 495) and Ynysddu 1 (rank 535). |
| <b>Community Safety Domain</b> | There are no LSOAs in the 10% most deprived category in LI for the Community Safety Domain. There are two LSOAs in the 11-20% most deprived category – Risca West 2 (rank 193) and Abercarn 1 (rank 353).   |

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Income Domain</b>     | There are no LSOAs in either the 10% most deprived category or the 11-20% most deprived category in LI for the Income Domain. There is one LSOA in the 21-30% most deprived category – Risca East 2 (rank 417).   |
| <b>Employment Domain</b> | There are no LSOAs in either the 10% most deprived category or the 11-20% most deprived category in LI for the Employment Domain. There are three LSOAs in the 21-30% most deprived category – Risca East 4 (rank 429), Crosskeys 2 (rank 552) and Abercarn 2 (rank 573). |

A table showing the domain ranks for every LSOA in Lower Islwyn is shown on Page 11. This highlights that there are very few pockets of deprivation throughout Lower Islwyn, with virtually no LSOAs in the 10% or 11-20% most deprived categories for overall deprivation and across multiple domains.

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| Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 - Lower Islwyn |                     |               |                   |               |                  |                           |                |                         |                             |
|---|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| LSOA Name   | Overall Deprivation | Income Domain | Employment Domain | Health Domain | Education Domain | Access to Services Domain | Housing Domain | Community Safety Domain | Physical Environment Domain |
| Abercarn 1  | 1032                | 1241          | 1113              | 900           | 796              | 1321                      | 378            | 353                     | 737                         |
| Abercarn 2  | 718                 | 646           | 573               | 643           | 581              | 1108                      | 794            | 982                     | 1413                        |
| Abercarn 3  | 720                 | 785           | 822               | 628           | 363              | 1616                      | 280            | 694                     | 1380                        |
| Crosskeys 1   | 1275                | 1077          | 1042              | 1152          | 933              | 1340                      | 771            | 1097                    | 1487                        |
| Crosskeys 2   | 654                 | 613           | 552               | 409           | 825              | 907                       | 1139           | 606                     | 963                         |
| Risca East 1  | 1225                | 1204          | 1171              | 986           | 1023             | 1326                      | 763            | 554                     | 755                         |
| Risca East 2  | 447                 | 417           | 636               | 412           | 353              | 404                       | 903            | 472                     | 801                         |
| Risca East 3  | 1387                | 1228          | 1150              | 1196          | 1365             | 1502                      | 892            | 558                     | 1009                        |
| Risca East 4  | 566                 | 632           | 429               | 462           | 657              | 936                       | 1341           | 449                     | 451                         |
| Risca West 1  | 844                 | 792           | 606               | 800           | 940              | 1625                      | 669            | 684                     | 486                         |
| Risca West 2  | 922                 | 886           | 703               | 951           | 1051             | 1766                      | 1215           | 193                     | 280                         |
| Risca West 3  | 635                 | 702           | 763               | 495           | 549              | 1023                      | 617            | 518                     | 327                         |
| Ynysddu 1   | 887                 | 893           | 1006              | 535           | 889              | 1051                      | 386            | 701                     | 1221                        |
| Ynysddu 2   | 1083                | 1097          | 881               | 939           | 1035             | 658                       | 962            | 804                     | 1504                        |

| WIMD Rank 1-1909              |
|-------------------------------|
| 1-191: 10% most deprived      |
| 192-382: 11-20% most deprived |
| 383-573: 21-30% most deprived |
| 574-955: 31-50% most deprived |
| 956-1909: 50% least deprived  |

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### 4.6 Health

Good health is a major aspect of well-being for all individuals in every community, but there are some challenges in Lower Islwyn in relation to housing and educational achievement that are likely to have an impact on health, and possibly contribute to or be caused by poor health.

Although self-reported health is generally good, the rate of premature death is higher than the average rate for Wales in three out of the four LSOAs and 24.7% of the people living in Lower Islwyn have a limiting long-term illness.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Limiting long-term illness</b> | 24.7% of residents in LI reported that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot due to their health. This figure is slightly lower than the Caerphilly county borough average (25.4%), but higher than the average (22.7%) in Wales as a whole <sup>24</sup> .                             |
| <b>All cause death rate</b>       | The all-cause death rate in the MSOAs in LI over the period 2017-19 was between 931.5 per 100,000 population in Caerphilly 014 (Crosskeys North & Abercarn) and 1156.4 in Caerphilly 016 (Risca East), compared with the Caerphilly county borough (1103.7) and Wales (1031.2) average rates <sup>25</sup> . |
| <b>Premature death</b>            | The rate of premature deaths (under 75) in LI ranged between 374.9 per 100,000 population in Caerphilly 014 (Crosskeys North & Abercarn) and 454.3 in Caerphilly 015 (Crosskeys South & Ynysddu), which is significantly higher than the average rate for Wales (382.4) <sup>26</sup> .                      |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>GP recorded chronic conditions</b>      | The percentage of residents with a GP recorded chronic condition in LI ranges from 14.2% in Caerphilly 017 (Risca West) to 15.4% in Caerphilly 015 (Crosskeys South & Ynysddu). The percentage in three of the four MSOAs in LI is higher than the Wales average of 14.3% <sup>27</sup> .                    |
| <b>GP recorded mental health condition</b> | The percentage of residents with a GP recorded mental health condition in LI ranges from 22.5% in Caerphilly 014 (Crosskeys North & Abercarn) to 33.1% in Caerphilly 016 (Risca East). Once again, the percentage in three of the four MSOAs in LI is higher than the Wales average of 23.2% <sup>28</sup> . |

Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy can vary considerably even within relatively small areas, especially where there are a mix of more deprived and less deprived areas. Within Lower Islwyn, for males at birth healthy life expectancy ranged from 57.4 years in the Ynysddu ward to 59.4 years in the Risca East ward, a gap of 2.9 years. The figures for every ward were significantly below the Wales average. For females, healthy life expectancy ranged from 58.1 years in the Ynysddu ward to 61.9 years in the Risca East ward, a gap of 3.8 years. For every ward apart from Risca East the figures for every ward were significantly below the Wales average<sup>29</sup>.

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 Islwyn.

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The nearest hospitals to the Lower Islwyn are the Royal Gwent in Newport (within the Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board area) and Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, which is an Enhanced Local General Hospital is located in Mid Valleys West at Ystrad Mynach. It has a Minor Injury Unit and a Medical Assessment Unit, and provides Day Surgery, Rehabilitation and Therapy Services, Diagnostic Services, a wide variety of Specialist Outpatient Clinics, an Elderly Frail Unit for the care of older people, 164 inpatient beds, Children’s Outpatient appointments, Maternity services and Bowel Screening.

The Grange University Hospital is located in Cwmbran (within the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area) and provides Specialist, Trauma and Critical Care Services for the whole of Gwent.

25.1% of residents in Mid Valleys West said that their health was fair, bad or very bad. This figure is almost identical to the county borough average of 25.2%, but higher than the Wales average of 22.2%<sup>30</sup>.

**Integrated Wellbeing Networks (IWNs)** are about working together better and more effectively, to support community well-being to continue to improve the health and well-being of our communities, now and in the future. They involve statutory, third sector and community partners working together to decide how best to support and strengthen well-being in our communities as the current situation evolves and we all adjust to post Covid-19 life.

Risca is the one area of IWN focus in Lower Islwyn. For more information on the work of the IWNs, visit this website [Integrated Wellbeing Networks Gwent \(iwngwent.wales\)](http://iwngwent.wales).

### 4.7 Housing and households

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

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

Homes of the future will need to be resilient to a changing climate. The housing being built now will be a legacy left for future generations.

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Housing stock</b>    | 45.5% of properties in LI are terraced houses compared with a county borough average of 36.1% and a Wales average of 27.8%. A third of properties (33.6%) were in the semi-detached, compared with a county borough average of 39.2% and a Wales average of 31%.  |
| <b>Council tax band</b> | 63.2% of housing in LI is rated as Council Tax band A or B (the lowest valued housing categories) compared with a figure of 52.6% in the county borough as a whole.   |
| <b>Tenure</b>           | 69.3% of housing in LI is owned outright or with a mortgage, an identical figure to the county borough as a whole, and slightly higher than the figure of 67.4% in Wales as a whole. 17.4% is rented from the local authority or a housing association, lower than the figure of 18.7% in the county borough as a whole but higher than the figure of 16.4% in Wales. |

In WIMD 2019, half of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn had percentages higher than the Wales average (5.5%) of people living in overcrowded households, with Risca East 2 (8.6%) and Abercarn 3 (6.5%) having the highest percentages<sup>31</sup>.

Half of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn had percentages higher than the Wales average (19.7%) for the likelihood of poor quality housing – the highest figures were in Crosskeys 1 (32.9%), Abercarn 1 (31%) and Ynysddu 2 (30.5%)<sup>32</sup>.

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## Lower Islwyn Local Well-being Assessment

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Half of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn had percentages higher than the Wales average (18%) for the likelihood of housing containing serious hazards – the highest figures were in Crosskeys 1 (29.8%), Abercarn 1 (28.4%) and Ynysddu 2 (28%)<sup>33</sup>.

Eight of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn had percentages higher than the Wales average (3.2%) for the likelihood of housing being in disrepair. Four of these LSOAs had the same figure (6%) – Crosskeys 1, Ynysddu 2, Ynysddu 1 and Risca West 2<sup>34</sup>.

The **Welsh Housing Quality Standard** is a set of standards that all Council and Housing Association homes in Wales must meet. The standard states that all homes should be in a good state of repair, safe and secure, adequately heated, up to date in kitchens and bathrooms, well managed, in attractive and safe environments and suitable for specific households. As the Council has retained its housing stock, it is responsible for bringing the stock up to this standard.

Around £260 million has been spent across the county borough in recent years to achieve this standard. Internal works have included new kitchens, bathrooms, heating and electrical rewiring. External works have included new doors, windows, guttering/downpipes and reroofing properties. An environmental improvement programme has also been delivered as part of WHQS, which looks at areas outside the curtilage of council homes.

The average annual income in Caerphilly county borough is £29,289<sup>36</sup>, which means that the house price to income ratio is over 5:1 in Risca West ward, and 4:1 in Abercarn ward (the ward with the lowest median price in March 2021). This means that a single person would have to spend over 5 times their salary to be able to purchase a property in the Risca West ward, which is likely to mean that many single people are prevented from buying a property without assistance, such as help from family or shared ownership.

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

This area is characterised by lower house prices and rental values when compared to the other areas. Lower Islwyn has accommodated 18% of new development on large sites over the last 15 years, which equates to 830 units. The adopted LDP strategy promotes development on previously developed land in this area and the level of development has been constrained by the topography and flood risk issues, particularly in Risca. However, there is market demand for new development in this area.



There is a fair amount of variation in the median increase in prices paid for houses in different wards in Lower Islwyn between March 2019 and March 2021. In Risca West ward the median price has increased by 20% to £149,975, and in Ynysddu ward the median price increased by 15.9% to £127,500. Conversely, the median price in Abercarn ward decreased by 1.7% to £118,000<sup>35</sup>.

## 5 Economic well-being

### 5.1 Education

Childhood experiences can determine long-term development and overall life achievements.

For Lower Islwyn, the WIMD 2019 Education domain shows the following:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Education Domain</b> | Two LSOAs in LI are in the 10% most deprived category for the Education domain – Risca East 3 (rank 353 from 1909 in Wales) and Abercarn 3 (rank 363). In addition, two LSOAs are in the 11-20% most deprived category – Risca West 3 (rank 549) and Risca East 4 (rank 657). |
|-------------------------|---|

Risca East 2 also features relatively highly in a number of the other domains of deprivation – overall deprivation plus Income, Health, Access to Services and Community Safety. This tells us that a range of socio-economic factors could be contributing to educational attainment gaps between individuals and communities.

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 with Lower Islwyn the proportion of Key Stage 4 leavers entering Higher Education ranges between 14.7% in Risca East 2 to 39.5% in Risca East 1. It also shows that the proportion of adults aged 25 to 64 years with no qualifications ranges from 16.1% in Risca East 3 to 30.1% in Risca East 2<sup>37</sup>.

For some young people, their financial circumstances and the cost and availability of transport can be major 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).

#### Repeat school absenteeism

Repeat absenteeism of school pupils in LI ranges from 2.3% in Risca East 3 to 9.5% in Risca East 4<sup>38</sup>. (This indicator measures the percentage of primary and secondary pupils missing more than 15% of school sessions, and is based on a three-year average)

### 5.2 Work and skills

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

#### Economic activity/inactivity




There were 17,967 residents aged 16-74 years in LI at the time of the 2011 Census<sup>39</sup>. Of these, 12,128 were economically active:

- 54.7% were employees (49.5% in Wales)
- 5.7% were self-employed (8.6% in Wales)
- 4.9% were unemployed (4.3% in Wales).

There were 5,839 economically inactive residents in MVW:

- 16% were retired (16.1% in Wales)
- 3.6% were looking after their home or family (3.8% in Wales)
- 7% were long term sick or disabled (6.3% in Wales)

## Lower Islwyn Local Well-being Assessment

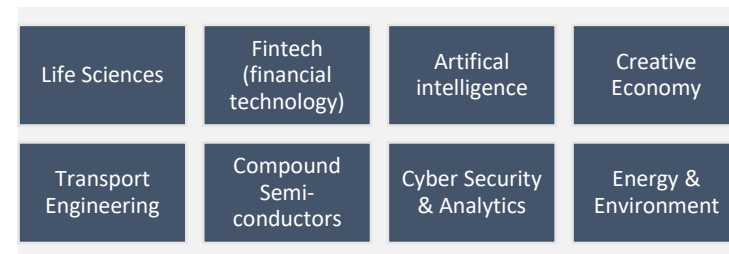
| <b>Skills</b><br> | <p>The highest level of qualifications for residents of LI in the 2011 Census is shown below<sup>40</sup>.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">LI</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Wales</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No qualifications</td> <td style="text-align: center;">29.6%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">25.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Level 1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">16.4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Level 2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">15.8%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">15.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Level 3+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">30.4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">36.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apprenticeship</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4.0%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> |       | LI | Wales | No qualifications | 29.6% | 25.9% | Level 1 | 16.4% | 13.3% | Level 2 | 15.8% | 15.7% | Level 3+ | 30.4% | 36.8% | Apprenticeship | 4.0% | 3.9% |
|--|---|-------|----|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|----------------|------|------|
|  | LI  | Wales |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| No qualifications  | 29.6%   | 25.9% |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| Level 1  | 16.4%   | 13.3% |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| Level 2  | 15.8%   | 15.7% |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| Level 3+   | 30.4%   | 36.8% |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| Apprenticeship   | 4.0%  | 3.9%  |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| <b>Industry of employment</b>  | <p>In the 2011 Census the largest industry of employment in LI was Manufacturing on 17.5% (10.5% in Wales), then Wholesale and Retail Trade: Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles on 15.9% (15.6% in Wales). This was followed by and Human Health and Social Work Activities on 12.5% (14.5% in Wales)<sup>41</sup>.</p>   |       |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |
| <b>Main employment sites</b>   | <p>There are industrial estates at Prince of Wales, Chapel Farm, Pontywaun Farm, Nine Mile Point, North and South Blackvein, Newtown, Park Road, Pontymister and Rogerstone Park, providing a range of local employment activities for the area.</p>  |       |    |       |                   |       |       |         |       |       |         |       |       |          |       |       |                |      |      |

Lower Islwyn is not alone in having an over-reliance on the Manufacturing sector, with a similar picture right across Caerphilly county borough and much of South Wales.

The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have had a significant impact on the pattern of employment locally, with the biggest impacts in the Retail, Hospitality, Tourism and (to an extent) Construction sectors.

The most successful localities will be able to offer a range of quality jobs in different sectors, and the foundational economy is also of growing importance (the foundational economy provides the everyday services that our residents and businesses rely on, such as energy, food and healthcare, and has an important part to play in contributing to the long-term resilience of the local economy). Having good quality, well paid employment will have a positive impact on a person's health and well-being.

Caerphilly county borough, along with nine other local authority areas in South East Wales is part of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal, 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. Eight priority sectors have been identified as important for the region going forward<sup>42</sup>:

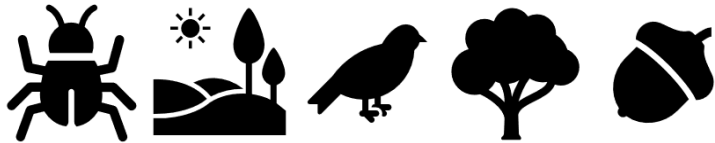


*Figure 4: Cardiff City Region priority sectors*

One of the key challenges for the whole of the county borough will be to ensure that the public, private and community sectors link in with the CCR City Deal where appropriate, so the area benefits as much as possible from the investment and economic growth that will take place in the years to come.



## 6 Environmental well-being



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.

The former mining and iron industries and the associated heavy industrial sites have had a big impact on the landscape of Caerphilly county borough. Coal mines were located throughout the county borough, with the Upper Rhymney Valley alone having forty coal mines by the beginning of the 20th Century. These industries have contributed to the legacy of poor health within the county borough. By the end of the 20th Century, following the closure of all the pits, many of the remnants of those industries were reclaimed or removed and landscaped to remove the visible evidence of the county borough's industrial past. This past industrial legacy illustrates the importance of both maintaining and enhancing the natural heritage of the county borough, in order to improve quality of life and create a healthier environment for local people. However, it should also be noted that many of the remaining derelict and contaminated sites contain the most ecologically important landscapes within the county borough.

The greening of the South Wales valleys has been transformative – where pit heads and mine workings once stood, country parks and forestry now offer a green and healthy environment that attracts thousands of residents and tourists every year. The landscape is maintained, conserved and improved by farmers, enterprises and groups, supporting linked ecological systems, rich

biodiversity, mitigation against climate change and providing the food on our plates.

The natural living environment in particular helps in lifting peoples' mental well-being, as well as providing a free green gym for improving peoples' physical health. This results in positive consequences in terms of increasing healthy lifespans, reducing the incidence of chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, type 2 Diabetes and osteoporosis.

The Valleys Regional Park champions the iconic landscape and people of the South Wales Valleys, working with partners to maximise the environment and social benefits for local communities and future generations. The whole of the Caerphilly county borough is part of the Valleys Regional Park<sup>43</sup>.



*Figure 4: Sirhowy Valley Country Park*

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## Lower Islwyn Local Well-being Assessment

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**Sirhowy Valley Country Park** is all about transport links old and new, and visitors can take a gentle stroll along part of the former railway track that ran from Tredegar in the north to Newport docks in the south. At nearly four miles long there is plenty of flat and well-surfaced path to be covered. It is also possible to walk or cycle through the woodlands that rise from the riverbank and extend up the valley sides.

Route 47 (the Celtic Trail) of the National Cycle Network runs the length of the park and beyond. So those wishing to explore by bike can follow the route west crossing the impressive Hengoed Viaduct and on into Parc Penallta. The Park has much more to offer than just the former railway track. It also rises up the hillside into the woodlands managed by National Resources Wales (NRW), offering a wider range of more strenuous walking. Alternatively, visitors can drop down to the riverbank of the River Sirhowy and enjoy a walk accompanied by the sights and sounds of the water rushing past on its way downstream. Points of interest are the spectacular Penllwyn Tramroad Bridge (complete with original stone sleepers) or discover Babel Chapel, the last resting place of the poet Islwyn. The Park also has two of the county borough's local nature reserves – Graig Goch and the Flatwoods Meadows – and the traditional working hill farm at Ynys Hywel.

Much of the original woodland in the South Wales Valleys was cleared to provide charcoal for the early iron industry and timber for the pits. The woodland at **Graig Goch Local Nature Reserve** is one of the few remnants of that pre-industrial woodland and is an important wildlife and landscape feature. It is an ancient oak and beech woodland, and the best time to visit is in the springtime when the woodland floor is carpeted with bluebells. Springtime also brings the woods alive with birdsong - redstarts, flycatchers and warblers can all be heard as they look for a mate.



*Figure 5: Penllwyn Tramroad Bridge, Nine Mile Point*

**Flatwoods Meadows** are old hay meadows and are some of the few remaining examples of species rich grasslands in the Sirhowy Valley. Grasslands like these are becoming less common across the country too. Careful management of this Local Nature Reserve has allowed the wildflowers to flourish and these in turn provide food for insects, birds and mammals. There are two large warm summer meadows on the banks of the Sirhowy River, and the locally scarce marsh pug moth and the small pearl-bordered fritillary both make their home here. In the spring, the small pond is a seething mass of amorous amphibians, and herons often pop in for a frog feast. In the evening, Daubenton and noctule bats flit across the meadow. By day, kingfishers and dippers commute up and down the river collecting food for their young, it's sometime possible to catch a glimpse of an otter on the Sirhowy. At either end of the meadows where the grassland gives way to woodland there are some spectacular carpets of bluebells under the developing oak trees.

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From the last remaining bandstand in the county borough to a gold medal winning garden, visiting **Waunfawr Park** is full of unexpected surprises. Dating from the early Edwardian era, the Park sits in the dramatic setting of the lower Ebbw Valley at Crosskeys, overlooked by the surrounding hills.

The Park is a major sporting venue for the Crosskeys and Pontywaun areas and much of the park's nine hectares are used for cricket, football and rugby. The sporting opportunities are also extended with a bowling green, outdoor gym equipment and a multi-use games area. For younger visitors there is a 10 station play area with a range of slides, swings and climbing frames. The Park is the proud holder of a Green Flag Award in recognition of a well-managed green space.



*Figure 6: Waunfawr Park, Crosskeys*

The hills of the previously mined Cwmcarn area have been transformed into **Cwmcarn Forest**, with peaceful forests and impressive views, where nature has reclaimed the majority of its former industrial past. Today the Forest has become a haven for people and wildlife.

It is mountain biking paradise with three mountain bike trails, ample parking, a bike repair shop and lift service, everything is on hand for a day of biking for thrill seeking adrenaline junkies. Visitors can stay at one of the glamping pods or newly added lodges on site, and breakfast is available along with snacks and hearty meals at Raven's Cafe, located in the visitor centre. Whether its walking trails or a leisurely stroll, Cwmcarn Forest has it all, from challenging hill climbs up Twmbarlwm to gentle walks around the forest and valley floor.

Following significant investment from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cwmcarn Forest Drive has recently welcomed visitors for the first time in over six years, having closed in 2015 to allow for the felling of 150,000 trees affected by the disease Phytophthora Ramorum.

Visitors can meander around the twisting bends and allow the enchanting forest to immerse them in its tranquillity. There are seven car parks to absorb the breath-taking panoramic views of the surrounding countryside or use one of the many picnic and BBQ spots to relax and take it easy. Children burn off some energy in three new adventure playgrounds, sensory tunnels, the woodland sculpture trail or follow the several all-ability trails along the route.

Cwmcarn Forest is one of the three areas within Caerphilly county borough that is one of the 12 Valleys Regional Park 'Discovery Gateways'. They are launchpads into the landscape and heritage that make up the valleys story and are places where people can get out and about, have fun, explore the landscape and find out more about nature.

**7 Cultural well-being**

Culture is broad and all-encompassing, covering shared beliefs, customs, characteristics and identity and defined by everything including language, tradition, heritage, social norms, and involvement in dance, music and arts and other recreational activities. Culture is also influenced by people moving into an area and increasing cultural diversity, leading to a growth in the culture of the area.

The ability to speak the Welsh language is seen as a big part of the culture of Wales by many people. The proportion of people able to at least speak Welsh in Lower Islwyn ranges from 15.3% in Crosskeys 2 to 23.9% in Abercarn 2. Ten of the 14 LSOAs in Lower Islwyn had a figure below the county borough average (22.2%) and the figure in all LSOAs is significantly below the Wales average (37.8%)<sup>44</sup>.

Younger age groups are more likely to more likely to be able to speak Welsh, demonstrating the influence of Welsh language education in the area.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Key attractions</b> | <b>Cwmcarn Forest</b> offers something for everyone, from thrilling adventures to tranquil overnight stays, it is close enough to retreat to yet feels like a million miles away. Visitors can gear up or wind down; choose from adrenaline fuelled mountain bike trails and water activities or enjoy a stroll around one of the many walking trails. They can stay at one of the six luxury lodges, ten glamping pods, or use the campsite. Cwmcarn Forest boasts a modern visitor centre experience with spacious information point stocked with maps and local information. |
|------------------------|---|

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Raven’s Café offers hot meals and cold snacks along with delicious homemade cakes and a great selection of hot and cold drinks. A meeting room is available to hire for training courses, conferences and meetings.</p> <p>Caerphilly Adventures are lucky to be able to call Cwmcarn Forest their home, perfect for mountain biking, orienteering and water activities on the lake.</p>   |
|  | <p><b>Sirhowy Valley Country Park</b> runs along the western side of the Sirhowy Valley between the Full Moon roundabout at Crosskeys and Gelligroes. There are three short self-led walks available within the country park – the River Walk, the Meadows Trail and the Woodland Trail. There is also a Mountain Bike trail that uses the forest roads within the National Resources Wales woodlands. For those looking for longer walking challenges both the Sirhowy Valley Walk (27 miles) and the Raven Walk (12 miles) pass through the park.</p> |

The county borough is blessed with a large number of community arts organisations that are vital in raising the profile of the arts, for drawing in visitors and additional income into the county borough and providing an essential social element for local communities through opportunities for people to develop their skills or perform. There are nearly 100 arts groups that meet to rehearse, develop, make and showcase their work within the county borough. There are also a considerable number of community arts activities which go under the radar, such as one-off projects in schools, youth clubs, older persons groups, summer schemes, adult education and community centres.

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*Visual Arts* - the visual arts have nearly 20 groups within the county borough covering photography, sculpture, painting, film, printmaking and crafts.

*Public art* - many towns and villages in the county borough have imaginative pieces of public artwork, including sculptures, mosaics, and murals. Caerphilly County Borough Council works with local schools, communities, artists and arts-based organisations to develop and produce artwork that enriches and reflects the history and culture of local communities.

Examples of public art in Lower Islwyn include the Ripple Railings (Hall's Road, Pontywaun), the 'Risca Cuckoo' (near Tesco Superstore) and Tredegar Grounds Mural (Toilet Block in Risca Park).

Over recent years a significant amount of investment has focused on public artwork within the county borough, with around £1.7 million invested in such projects. Funding for these schemes has come from the Council, and a range of external organisations, including European funding.

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

Lower Islwyn is home to a wide range of clubs and societies, including scout groups, memorial societies, art groups, welfare associations, allotment groups, parent & toddler groups, residents' associations, youth groups, community associations and OAP groups.

Taking part in cultural activities can be a good way of bringing all parts of the community together and building community cohesion. This has been particularly important since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and whilst meeting with others has been problematic for a significant period of time, the bonds forged within our communities has meant that vulnerable individuals have been supported through this difficult period.



*Figure 7: Risca Cuckoo*

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Volunteering provides the opportunity to meet new people, to gain confidence and learn new skills for future employment and to have fun in an informal setting. Without volunteers giving up their time for the benefit of their local communities, none of the clubs and societies listed above would be able to exist.

The many churches and chapels in Lower Islwyn are also home to volunteering efforts, particularly providing lunch clubs and food distribution to those in need. There are a number of foodbanks in Lower Islwyn who provide free or very cheap food to those in need or on low incomes – these include New Life Christian Church, Abercarn, Ty Sign Methodist Trust and the Risca Covid-19 Volunteers group.

The mental and physical benefits that exercise can provide are well documented. Through the hard work of members of the community, there are many sporting clubs and teams in Lower Islwyn including cricket, bowls, rugby, football, angling, gymnastics and athletics. If future generations are to realise the health benefits of being active then barriers to participation need to be addressed, particularly amongst young women, who typically drop out of sporting activities as teenagers. A varied range of childhood experiences can help to seed a lifelong interest in sports and cultural activities.

Predominantly, the natural landscape of Lower Islwyn is superimposed by features that relate to the major industrial change that occurred in the South Wales area in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are a number of examples of planned industrial heritage, and these provide the rich industrial heritage of the area, which is increasingly becoming recognised as a unique attribute of both the county borough and the wider South Wales Valleys.

A key issue in respect of the area's industrial heritage is its protection and, more importantly, the beneficial re-use of its buildings. Bringing these buildings back into use will help to ensure their continued retention.

Within Lower Islwyn there are a total of 114 **Listed Buildings** – this term refers to a building or other structure officially designated as being of special architectural, historical, or cultural significance:

- Abercarn – 14 x Grade II and 1 x Grade II\* (Church of St Luke)
- Crosskeys – 64 x Grade II (59 of these relate to Pontywaun Garden Suburbs)
- Risca East – 5 x Grade II
- Risca West – 17 x Grade II
- Ynysddu – 12 x Grade II and 1 x Grade II\* (Church of St Tudor, Mynyddislwyn)



*Figure 8: Church of St Tudor, Mynyddislwyn*

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There are seven **Scheduled Ancient Monuments** in Lower Islwyn – these are sites of archaeological importance with specific legal protection against damage or development. There are three in Ynysddu, two in Risca and one each in Abercarn and Crosskeys.



*Figure 9: Twmbarlwm Mound and Bailey Castle, Risca*

There are two **Conservation Areas** within Lower Islwyn – Cwmcarn Memorial Park and Pontywaun Garden Suburbs. The term Conservation Area almost always applies to an area (usually urban or the core of a village) of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is considered worthy of preservation or enhancement.

## 8 What our residents have told us

The views of communities on how resources are used to meet their needs are vital, to help inform the way in which programmes and projects are delivered within and alongside public, private and voluntary sector organisations. People are involved throughout the process of assessing the well-being of our community areas, Caerphilly county borough and Gwent, right through to setting the objectives which will be included in the Well-being Plan. A group of engagement and communications professionals from across the Public Services Board member organisations developed a consistent involvement process to gather community views to support the Assessment process.

Due to the obvious difficulties in being able to engage with people face-to-face due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the primary engagement tool was an online survey. Paper copies were also made available in public places such as libraries and doctors' surgeries. In addition, two workshop sessions were arranged for each of the five community areas in Caerphilly county borough, enabling people to contribute their views through group discussions. Social media was used to advertise the survey and workshops and stakeholder groups were enlisted to encourage communities and groups to participate.

We have been able to analyse the views of residents within the community areas through postcode and other analysis, so that differing perceptions within an area can be understood and compared with the data in this Local Well-being Assessment.

Within Lower Islwyn, most respondents felt that their neighbourhood was friendly, close-knit and had a good sense of community where people looked out for each other. There were a number of local initiatives where groups were already set up helping those who needed it, and neighbourly collaboration had increased since the Covid-19 pandemic had begun.

Respondents said that living in a small community in Lower Islwyn had helped improve their well-being, as it is very quiet and peaceful.

Many respondents were also happy that it was easy to access the local countryside and parkland where they could take long walks, breathe in the fresh air, and enjoy the beautiful surrounding scenery. Respondents highlighted that litter is a problem within local communities and noted that more consideration could be given to the placement of litter bins to help encourage people to reduce the volume of litter that is present in the area.

A number of respondents said that there should be more events for people to get together, particularly for younger and older people. They thought that people in the area themselves should be involved in coming up with ideas and delivering plans for how to use current buildings and facilities for use by the communities. Increasing the opportunities for residents to open dialogue with public services through social media would also provide better two-way communication, encouraging people to voice their opinions and keeping residents better informed. There were also calls for improved public transport links (particularly to hospitals), more public toilets and additional parking facilities.

Respondents said that having access to facilities within their community is very important, because it can help people take control of their mental and physical well-being. They said that this is essential for older people within the community, as it is important for them to remain as healthy and independent as they can for as long as possible.

Although most respondents felt reasonably safe in their area, it was common for them to ask for a greater police presence, which may help combat incidences of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing in open view and gangs of youths loitering.

The Integrated Well-being Networks undertook some collective analysis with network partners in its focus areas in late 2020, which highlighted that the pandemic had exacerbated many of the existing inequalities in communities, in areas such as mental health and well-being and digital exclusion, as well as indicating that people increasingly took advantage of the opportunities for leisure activities in their local landscapes.



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## Lower Islwyn Local Well-being Assessment

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- <sup>15</sup> 2011 Census Table KS209EW, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>
- <sup>17</sup> WIMD 2019 Access to Services Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>18</sup> WIMD 2019 Community Safety Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>19</sup> WIMD 2019 Community Safety Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>20</sup> WIMD 2019 Community Safety Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>21</sup> WIMD 2019 Community Safety Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>22</sup> WIMD 2019 Community Safety Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>23</sup> WIMD 2019 Community Safety Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>24</sup> 2011 Census Table KS301EW, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>25</sup> Number of deaths and European age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 population based on date of registration, 3 years average, 2017-19, HealthMapsWales
- <sup>26</sup> WIMD 2019 Health Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>27</sup> WIMD 2019 Health Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>28</sup> WIMD 2019 Health Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>29</sup> Life expectancy, healthy life expectancy and disability free life expectancy for males/females at birth by 2011 Census Wards 2009 to 2013, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>30</sup> 2011 Census Table KS301EW, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>31</sup> WIMD 2019 Housing Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>32</sup> WIMD 2019 Housing Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>33</sup> WIMD 2019 Housing Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>34</sup> WIMD 2019 Housing Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>35</sup> Median house prices by ward: HPSSA Dataset 37, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>36</sup> Gross Salary of Full Time Workers - Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2021, Nomis
- <sup>37</sup> WIMD 2019 Education Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>38</sup> WIMD 2019 Education Domain Indicator Data, StatsWales
- <sup>39</sup> 2011 Census Table KS601EW, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>40</sup> 2011 Census Table KS501EW, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>41</sup> 2011 Census Table KS605EW, Office for National Statistics
- <sup>42</sup> [Cardiff Capital Region Industrial and Economic Plan](#)
- <sup>43</sup> <https://valleysregionalpark.wales/>
- <sup>44</sup> 2011 Census Table KS207WA, Office for National Statistics