

Gwent Public Services Board

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

A Caerphilly county borough local well-being assessment

FEBRUARY 2022

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

Contents

1	Executive summary	3
2	Description of the Upper Rhymney Valley	4
3	About the Upper Rhymney Valley	5
4	Social well-being	6
4.1	About the community	6
4.2	Getting around	7
4.3	Access to services	9
4.4	Crime and community safety	9
4.5	Deprivation	10
4.6	Health	13
4.7	Housing and households	14
5	Economic well-being	16
5.1	Education	16
5.2	Work and skills	16
6	Environmental well-being	18
7	Cultural well-being	20
8	What our residents have told us	23
	References	24

1 Executive summary

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

Assets

The population density within the community area is significantly lower than the county borough average, which is due in large part to the topography of the community area.

The community area benefits from a direct railway line which runs from Rhymney to Cardiff and on to Penarth. There are four trains per hour between Bargoed and Cardiff. There are regular bus services up and down the valley to the smaller communities and on towards Merthyr Tydfil.

There is some variation in the house price to income ratio, with Twyn Carno ward having the lowest figure in the whole county borough. This makes it ideal for single people and first-time buyers trying to get a foot on the housing ladder. There has been limited development from volume housebuilders in recent years and there is a need for new market developments in order to diversify the housing stock and provide a wider choice of properties for local residents.

Bargoed Woodland Park is a fantastic green space that has been created from three former collieries in the area. It is also easily accessible to all the local communities that surround it. Parc Cwm Darran is a picturesque country park on the site of the former Ogilvie Colliery and incorporates the Ogilvie lake and an easily accessible lakeside for both local residents and visitors from further afield.

Local residents were positive about the local community spirit and said that people were friendly and work together to make communities a better place to live, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic. They also said that the wider environment is cleaner and more attractive, with lots of green spaces and beautiful landscapes.

Challenges

The community area has a number of significant challenges. In general, public transport starts later in the morning and ends earlier in the evening, making it difficult for shift workers and affects the ability for residents to access social activities, which increases the reliance on cars. Whilst broadband coverage is generally good throughout the community area, cost is a significant issue for people living in more deprived areas like the Upper Rhymney Valley.

Almost all LSOAs in the community area had criminal damage crime rates which are higher than the Wales average. The majority of LSOAs also had rates higher than the Wales average for other crime types such as violent crime, anti-social behaviour and burglary. In addition, almost every LSOA had a fire incidence rate higher than the Wales average.

There are a significant number of LSOAs within the community area which feature in the most deprived category across several different domains – parts of Aberbargoed, Bargoed, Darren Valley, Moriah, New Tredegar and Twyn Carno.

Almost every MSOA in the community area had an all-cause death rate above the Wales average, and every MSOA had a premature death rate significantly higher than the Wales average. In addition, healthy life expectancy for males and females was significantly below the Wales average in every ward. The level of long-term sickness or disability is almost double the Wales average.

Some local residents told us that they were concerned about community safety in relation to issues such as anti-social behaviour, joyriding and drug taking. They said that there is a need for increased facilities and activities for communities, such as day centres, community hubs and youth projects. They also felt that public transport locally is poor and there is a lack of local services and shops, along with poor access to GP surgeries and hospitals. They wanted more opportunities to engage with public services to help inform decisions made about services and facilities in the community area, and noted that individuals were willing to be representatives for their local communities in these discussions.

2 Description of the Upper Rhymney Valley

The Upper Rhymney Valley (URV) community area includes the wards of **Twyn Carno, Moriah, Darran Valley, New Tredegar, Pontlottyn, Bargoed, Aberbargoed and Gilfach**. The area is comprised of small former mining settlements along the line of the River Rhymney and its tributary, the Nant Bargoed Rhymney. The valleys are generally steep sided but broaden out at the Heads of the Valleys into a plateau.

Bargoed is the main town and Rhymney is a local centre. Bargoed has benefitted from extensive regeneration funding that has provided the Angel Way by-pass road, public transport enhancements, improvements to the street scene along the high street and improved pedestrian links. The Bargoed Development Plateau retail complex includes a major supermarket and several smaller shop units, most of which are occupied by national retailers. The Hanbury Road Chapel is a multi-purpose community asset combining a worship space, library and resource centre.

The local centre of **Rhymney** is located in the north of the community area. The town is heavily dependent on local independent traders, and currently has a limited retail offer. The town has an integrated Health and Social Care Resource Centre which serves the health needs of residents in the north of the county borough.

Regeneration in the **New Tredegar** area has led to the development of a community school, environmental improvements, new road infrastructure, and the provision of incubator industrial units. New Tredegar also hosts the Winding House Museum, centred on the Victorian winding engine. This machinery was used to operate the cages which transported men and coal between the surface and the mine below, and the facility also brings together local and national coal mining artefacts for display. The Winding House also houses a Public Sector Hub, to encourage collaboration between public sector organisations. The adjacent White Rose Resource Centre also houses the library and provides services for local residents.





Figure 1: Bargoed Library



Figure 2: Winding House Engine, New Tredegar

3 About the Upper Rhymney Valley

Area	58.0 km ² – approximately 21% of the total area of Caerphilly county borough at 278km ²	
Population 	The estimated population is 28,510 – approximately 15.7% of the total population for Caerphilly county borough at 181,731 ¹ .	
Population density	The population density is 3.58 persons per hectare, with the LSOAs of Aberbargoed 2, Gilfach and Pontlottyn having the highest populations. There are 6.53 people per hectare in Caerphilly county borough ² .	
Dwellings 	The dwelling count is 13,002 – approximately 16.2% of the total number of dwellings in Caerphilly county borough at 80,149 ³ .	
General	The Upper Rhymney Valley consists of 4 Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs), containing 18 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). By looking at smaller geographical areas, we can see any differences that can impact on well-being.	
	LSOAs	MSOAs
	Aberbargoed 1 & 2	Moriah 1, 2 & 3
	Bargoed 1, 2, 3 & 4	New Tredegar 1, 2 & 3
	Darran Valley 1 & 2	Pontlottyn
	Gilfach	Twyn Carno 1 & 2
		Caerphilly 001
		Caerphilly 002
		Caerphilly 003
		Caerphilly 004

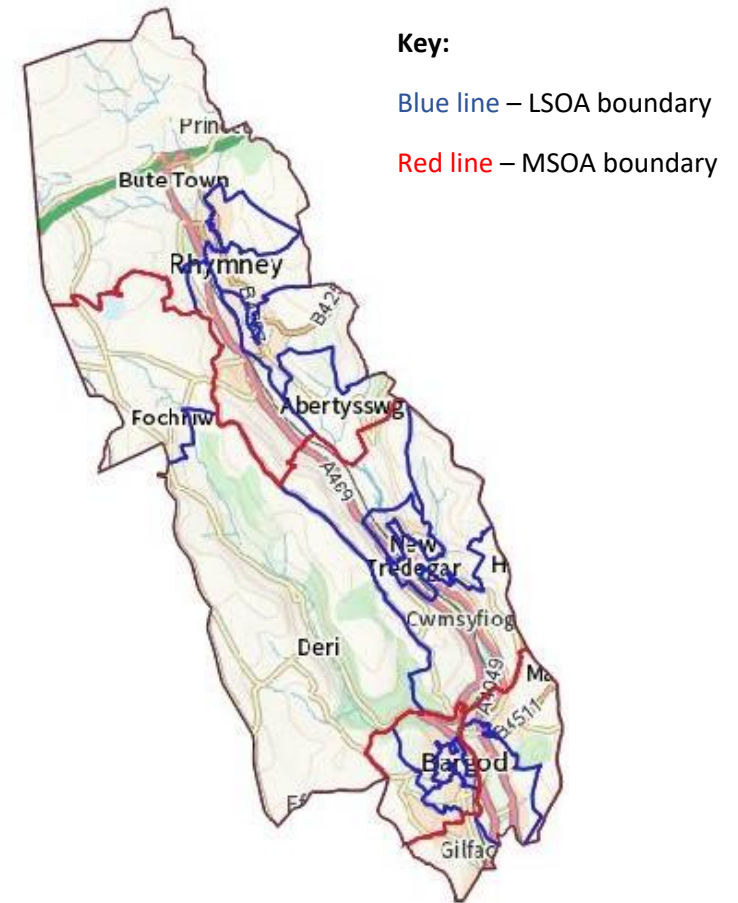


Figure 3: Map of the Upper Rhymney Valley

4 Social well-being

4.1 About the community

Overall, the estimated population of the Upper Rhymney Valley increased by approximately 192 residents, from 28,510 in the 2011 Census to 28,318 in 2020⁴ (+0.7%), compared to an increase of 3.5% in Wales as a whole. Half of the 18 LSOAs in the Upper Rhymney Valley saw an increase in their population over this period, with the largest increase in Aberbargoed 1 (up 18.2% or 280 people). The remaining LSOAs saw a decrease in their population over the time period, with the largest decrease in Darran Valley 2 (down 6.2% or 78 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 2043⁵, 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%⁶. 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 2043⁷.

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%⁸. For Caerphilly county borough this could mean an additional 9,653 people in this age range by 2043⁹. This figure is 61% higher than the combined projected decrease in the population figures for the 0-15 and 16-64 age groups by 2043¹⁰.

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 2043¹¹.

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 yet available, but from the 2011 Census:

Welsh speakers	19.1% of residents in the URV could at least speak some Welsh, slightly lower than the Caerphilly county borough figure (22.2%) but significantly lower than the Welsh average of 37.8% ¹² .
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Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

Country of birth	92% of residents in the URV were born in Wales, higher than the county borough average of 88.6% and significantly higher than the Wales average of 72.7% ¹³ .
Ethnicity	98.7% of residents in the URV were of a White ethnicity, marginally higher than the county borough average of 98.3% and higher than the Wales average of 95.6% ¹⁴ .
Religion	48.4% of residents in the URV had a Christian based religious, slightly lower than the county borough average of 50.7% and lower than the Wales average of 57.5% ¹⁵ .

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 the Upper Rhymney Valley 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.

The **Rhymney Valley railway line** provides direct links south through the county borough to Cardiff, with stations located at Rhymney, Pontlottyn, New Tredegar, Bargoed and Gilfach. From Rhymney the journey time to Cardiff is just over an hour, with a single train operating every hour, which restricts accessibility from the very north of the county borough. Four trains per hour operate from Bargoed station.

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](#).

Bus services operate regularly up and down the valley, and also on to Merthyr Tydfil, but the main issue with all public transport services in the Upper Rhymney Valley is that they start later in the morning and finish earlier in the evening, making it difficult for shift workers in particular to use public transport

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 small number of electric vehicle charge points in the Upper Rhymney Valley at Parc Cwm Darran, Tirphil and Bargoed¹⁶. Much of the housing stock in the Upper Rhymney Valley is typical terraced housing, which often does not have access to off-road parking. 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.

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

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 to support healthy lifestyles, however much of the Upper Rhymney Valley is 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. Future generations might use electric bikes to navigate the steep gradients of the area.

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

Route 468 of the National Cycle Network runs from Pengam north (just south of Gilfach) towards New Tredegar, forming part of the developing network running the length of the Rhymney Valley. The route runs along a disused railway in the narrowest part of the Rhymney Valley and is mainly wooded (there is a gap in the route between Abertysswg and New Tredegar).

Route 469 connects Bargoed and Fochriw and also utilises an abandoned railway track. The route connects with the village of Deri and Parc Cwm Darran.

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 the Upper Rhymney Valley have access to broadband of at least 30Mb/s, although there are pockets where access is poorer, such as Darran Valley 1 (9.1% without access to this speed) and Bargoed 4 (6.5%)¹⁷.

Whilst broadband accessibility in the Upper Rhymney Valley 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 the Upper Rhymney Valley) will need to be cyber secure and digitally inclusive.

4.3 Access to services



Bargoed is the principal town in the Upper Rhymney Valley and **Rhymney** is a local centre, and residents will travel from surrounding areas to these towns to access the services they need. Some residents will also travel north of the county borough to Merthyr Tydfil and further afield.

Asset type	Number
Primary school	15
Secondary school	2
Libraries	5
Leisure centres	1
Community centre	11
Banks	1
Post office	6
Country parks	2
National Nature Reserve	1

Bargoed has a large supermarket (Morrison's) and a good retail offer, although many national retailers have left the high street due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the change in shopping habits i.e. the move to purchasing online. Bargoed also has one bank branch.

Rhymney has a limited retail offer which is mainly comprised of independent retailers.

The Upper Rhymney Valley 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.

The Upper Rhymney has a large number of primary schools in the different villages and two secondary schools – Heolddu Comprehensive School in Bargoed (11-18 years) and Idris Davies School (3-18 years).

The Upper Rhymney Valley has a Hub Library at Bargoed, a Town Library at Rhymney, a Village Library at New Tredegar and Community Linked Libraries at Aberbargoed and Deri.

Heolddu Leisure Centre is located in Bargoed adjacent to Heolddu Comprehensive School and provides a range of facilities including a swimming pool, fitness suites and group exercise classes.

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.

17 of the 18 LSOAs in the URV had **Criminal Damage** rates higher than the Wales average of 1.14 cases per 100 population. Three LSOAs (New Tredegar 1, New Tredegar 3 and Moriah 3) had rates over three times higher than Wales average for Criminal Damage¹⁸.

15 of the 18 LSOA's in the Upper Rhymney Valley had a **Violent Crime** rate above the Wales average of 2.67 cases per 100 population. Two LSOAs (Bargoed 4 and New Tredegar 1) had rates over double the Wales average for Violent Crime¹⁹.

13 of the 18 LSOA's in the Upper Rhymney Valley had an **Anti-Social Behaviour** crime rate above the Wales average of 2.55 cases per 100 population. Only one LSOA (New Tredegar 1) had a rate 75% higher than the Wales average for Anti-Social Behaviour²⁰.

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

15 of the 18 LSOA's in the Upper Rhymney Valley had a **Burglary** rate above the Wales average of 0.98 cases per 100 population. Moriah 3 had a Burglary rate of almost 4 times the Wales average (3.80) and two further LSOAs (Moriah 2 and Twyn Carno 2) had rates over double the Wales average for Burglary²¹.

10 of the 18 LSOA's in the Upper Rhymney Valley had a **Theft** rate above the Wales average of 0.53 cases per 100 population. Twyn Carno 2 had a Theft rate of over six times the Wales average (3.25) and two further LSOAs (Moriah 2 and Moriah 3) had rates over double the Wales average for Theft²².

17 of the 18 LSOA's in the Upper Rhymney Valley had a **Fire Incidence** rate above the Wales average of 0.38 cases per 100 population. Four LSOAs (New Tredegar 3, Twyn Carno 2, Moriah 3 and Darran Valley 1) had rates over three times the Wales average for Fire Incidence²³.

Tackling the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour will support greater cohesion in the communities of the Upper Rhymney Valley.

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 overleaf summarises the LSOAs which fall in the 10% most deprived category in the Upper Rhymney Valley, for Overall Deprivation and certain domains.

Overall deprivation	Six LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived category for Overall Deprivation – Aberbargoed 2, Bargoed 4, Darran Valley 2, Moriah 3, New Tredegar 3 and Twyn Carno 1. Twyn Carno 1 is the most deprived LSOA in the URV for Overall Deprivation, ranked 8 in the whole of Wales
Health Domain	Seven LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived category for the Health Domain – Bargoed 4, Darran Valley 2, Moriah 2, Moriah 3, New Tredegar 2, New Tredegar 3 and Twyn Carno 1. Twyn Carno 1 is the most deprived LSOA in the URV for the Health Domain (rank 25) followed by Bargoed 4 (rank 29)
Community Safety Domain	Half the LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived category for the Education domain. The three LSOAs in the URV that have the highest ranks for this domain are New Tredegar 1 (rank 25), Moriah 3 (rank 27) and New Tredegar 3 (rank 41)
Income Domain	Five LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived category for the Income Domain - Aberbargoed 2, Bargoed 4, Moriah 3, New Tredegar 3 and Twyn Carno 1. Twyn Carno 1 is the most deprived LSOA in the URV for the Income Domain (rank 21), followed by Bargoed 4 (rank 23)

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

Employment Domain	Eight LSOAs are in the 10% most deprived category for the Employment Domain - Aberbargoed 2, Bargoed 4, Darran Valley 2, Moriah 2, Moriah 3, New Tredegar 3, Pontlottyn and Twyn Carno 1. Twyn Carno 1 is the most deprived LSOA in the URV for the Employment Domain (rank 8).
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A table showing the domain ranks for every LSOA in the Upper Rhymney Valley is shown on Page 12. This highlights that there are significant levels of deprivation in pockets throughout the Upper Rhymney Valley, and multiple deprivation across different domains in a number of LSOAs.

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 - Upper Rhymney Valley									
LSOA Name	Overall Deprivation	Income Domain	Employment Domain	Health Domain	Education Domain	Access to Services Domain	Housing Domain	Community Safety Domain	Physical Environment Domain
Aberbargoed 1	349	426	286	349	233	764	877	318	1280
Aberbargoed 2	177	162	139	210	282	1335	149	180	1297
Bargoed 1	538	626	381	300	778	1049	1038	297	1464
Bargoed 2	704	711	553	623	871	1861	551	129	1035
Bargoed 3	456	635	422	486	341	1539	153	248	954
Bargoed 4	29	23	18	29	161	343	765	146	1613
Darran Valley 1	832	958	819	682	816	860	219	712	1731
Darran Valley 2	137	338	98	71	50	736	606	621	1526
Gilfach	482	576	248	501	710	1182	514	464	1096
Moriah 1	391	497	331	230	221	1657	476	863	976
Moriah 2	228	368	122	189	477	1464	582	70	310
Moriah 3	67	137	44	186	62	562	552	27	629
New Tredegar 1	578	768	594	538	651	1204	421	25	1299
New Tredegar 2	246	348	308	188	280	383	279	241	1369
New Tredegar 3	59	73	83	77	104	367	222	41	1075
Pontlottyn	315	370	180	447	258	1079	843	219	1013
Twyn Carno 1	8	21	8	25	9	510	1198	148	450
Twyn Carno 2	473	509	303	642	817	1075	1059	71	426

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

4.6 Health

Good health is a major aspect of well-being for all individuals in every community, but there are a particular set of challenges in the Upper Rhymney Valley in relation to employment, transport, housing, educational achievement and levels of deprivation that are likely to have an impact on health, and possibly contribute to or be caused by poor health.

Although self-reported health is good, the rate of premature death is significantly higher than the average rate for Wales and 30.2% of the people living in the Upper Rhymney Valley have a limiting long-term illness.

Limiting long-term illness	30.2% of residents in the Upper Rhymney Valley reported that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot due to their health. This compares with an average of 25.4% in Caerphilly county borough, and 22.7% in Wales as a whole ²⁴ .
All cause death rate	The all-cause death rate in the MSOAs of the URV for the period 2017-19 was between 1022.4 per 100,000 population in Caerphilly 002 (New Tredegar & Darran Valley) and 1437.6 in Caerphilly 004 (Bargoed), compared with the Caerphilly county borough (1103.7) and Wales (1031.2) average rates ²⁵ .
Premature death	The rate of premature death (under 75) in the URV ranges between 454.2 per 100,000 population in Caerphilly 003 (Aberbargoed & Gilfach) and 515.5 in Caerphilly 001 (Rhymney, Pontlottyn & Abertyswg). The rate in each MSOA is significantly higher than the average rate for Wales is (382.4) ²⁶ .

GP recorded chronic conditions	The percentage of residents with a GP recorded chronic condition in the URV ranges from 16.9% in Caerphilly 003 (Aberbargoed & Gilfach) to 18.4% in Caerphilly 002 (New Tredegar & Darren Valley). The percentage in every MSOA in the URV is higher than the Wales average of 14.3% ²⁷ .
GP recorded mental health condition	The percentage of residents with a GP recorded mental health condition in the URV ranges from 24.6% in Caerphilly 003 (Aberbargoed & Gilfach) to 28.3% in Caerphilly 001 (Rhymney, Pontlottyn & Abertyswg). Once again, the percentage in every MSOA in the URV is higher than the Wales average of 23.2% ²⁸ .

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 the Upper Rhymney Valley, for males at birth healthy life expectancy ranged from 51.1 years in the Moriah ward to 54.3 years in the Darren Valley ward, a gap of 3.2 years. The figures for every ward in the Upper Rhymney Valley were significantly below the Wales average. For females, healthy life expectancy ranged from 52.4 years in the Aberbargoed ward to 56.0 years in the Gilfach ward, a gap of 3.6 years. Once again, for every ward the figures were significantly below the Wales average²⁹.

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 Upper Rhymney Valley.

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.

There are three areas of IWN focus in the Upper Rhymney Valley – Bargoed and Darran Valley, New Tredegar and Rhymney. For more information on the work of the IWNs, visit this website [Integrated Wellbeing Networks Gwent \(iwngwent.wales\)](http://Integrated Wellbeing Networks Gwent (iwngwent.wales)).

The nearest hospitals to the Upper Rhymney Valley are Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (Enhanced Local General Hospital) and Prince Charles Hospital in Merthyr Tydfil (24-hour A&E), although this falls in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area. 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.

Rhymney Health & Social Care Centre brings together a number of health and social care services, making it much more convenient for local residents to access services and for staff to work in an integrated way to provide the best care. The centre incorporates two GP surgeries, a dentist, an optician, a pharmacy, a Social Services Day Centre, and community and outpatient clinics.

30.9% of residents in the Upper Rhymney Valley said that their health was fair, bad or very bad. This compares with an average of 25.2% in Caerphilly county borough, and an average of 22.2% in Wales as a whole³⁰.

4.7 Housing and households

A key consideration for the future of the Upper Rhymney Valley 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.

Housing stock	55.8% of properties in the URV are terraced houses compared with a county borough average of 36.1% Wales average of 27.8%. 25.9% of properties were in the semi-detached category, compared with a county borough average of 39.2% and a Wales average of 31%.
Council tax band	The vast majority of housing in the URV (87.3%) is rated as Council Tax band A or B (the lowest valued housing categories), compared with a figure of 52.9% in the county borough as a whole.
Tenure	62.6% of housing in the URV is owned outright or with a mortgage, compared with a figure of 69.3% in the county borough as a whole and 67.4% in Wales. 25% is rented from the local authority or a housing association, compared with 18.7% in the county borough as a whole and 16.4% in Wales.

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

In WIMD 2019, 12 of the 18 LSOAs in the Upper Rhymney Valley had percentages higher than the Wales average (5.5%) of people living in overcrowded households, and Aberbargoed 2, Moriah 3 and Bargoed 4 had percentages over 10%³¹.

11 of the 18 LSOAs in the Upper Rhymney Valley had percentages higher than the Wales average (19.7%) for the likelihood of poor quality housing, and five LSOAs (Bargoed 3, New Tredegar 1, New Tredegar 2, Darran Valley 1 and Bargoed 2) had a percentage over one and a half times higher than the Wales average³².

11 of the 18 LSOAs in the Upper Rhymney Valley had percentages higher than the Wales average (18%) for the likelihood housing containing serious hazards, and five LSOAs (Bargoed 3, New Tredegar 1, New Tredegar 2, Bargoed 2 and Darran Valley 1) had a percentage over one and a half times higher than the Wales average³³.

12 of the 18 LSOAs in the Upper Rhymney Valley had percentages higher than the Wales average (3.2%) for the likelihood of housing being in disrepair, and two LSOAs (Bargoed 3 and New Tredegar 1) had a percentage of at least twice the Wales average³⁴.

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.



There is a substantial variation in the median increase in prices paid for houses in different wards in the Upper Rhymney Valley between March 2019 and March 2021. In Aberbargoed ward the median price has increased by 77.5% to £157,998, and in Bargoed ward the median price increased by 33.5% to £117,500. Conversely, the median price in Twyn Carno ward increased by just 4.3% to £86,000³⁵.

The average annual income in Caerphilly county borough is £29,289³⁶, which means that the house price to income ratio is over 5:1 in Aberbargoed ward, but less than 3:1 in Twyn Carno ward. This means that a single person would have to spend over 5 times their salary to be able to purchase a property in the Aberbargoed 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. The Upper Rhymney Valley is generally characterised by lower house prices and rental values when compared to the other community areas.

There has also been limited development from volume housebuilders within this area in recent years. During the 15 year adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) period, only 8% of all housing development on large sites (10 or more dwellings) was delivered in this area, (equating to only 347 units). There is a need for new market sector development in the area to diversify the housing stock and provide a wider choice of property types for residents. The 2018 Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) shows an additional requirement for the development of one bed, general needs social housing and a small requirement for low-cost home ownership.

5 Economic well-being

5.1 Education

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

For the Upper Rhymney Valley, the WIMD 2019 Education domain shows the following:

Education Domain	Five LSOAs in the URV are in the 10% most deprived category for the Education domain – Bargoed 4, Darran Valley 2, Moriah 3, New Tredegar 3 and Twyn Carno 1. Twyn Carno 1 is the most deprived LSOA in the URV for the Education domain (rank 9 from 1909 in Wales).
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Twyn Carno 1 also has a high concentration of several different domains of deprivation – overall deprivation plus Income, Employment, Health 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 the proportion of Key Stage 4 leavers entering Higher Education ranges between 12.9% in Bargoed 4 and 40.4% in Moriah 2. It also shows that the proportion of adults aged 25 – 64 years with no qualifications ranges from 24.3% in Darran Valley 1 to 53.8% in Twyn Carno 1³⁷.

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 the URV ranges from 3.7% in Darran Valley 1 to 14.5% in Moriah 3 ³⁸ . (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)
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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.

<p>Economic activity/inactivity</p> 	<p>There were 20,761 residents aged 16-74 years in the URV at the time of the 2011 Census³⁹. Of these, 12,339 were economically active:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45.6% were employees (49.5% in Wales) • 5% were self-employed (8.6% in Wales) • 6.9% were unemployed (4.3% in Wales). <p>There were 8,422 economically inactive residents in the URV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15.9% were retired (16.1% in Wales) • 5.2% were looking after their home or family (3.8% in Wales) • 11.8% were long term sick or disabled (6.3% in Wales)
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Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

Skills 	<p>The highest level of qualifications for residents of the URV in the 2011 Census is shown below⁴⁰.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">URV</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Wales</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No qualifications</td> <td style="text-align: center;">39.8%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">25.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Level 1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">15.1%</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;">22.1%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">36.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apprenticeship</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.3%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		URV	Wales	No qualifications	39.8%	25.9%	Level 1	15.1%	13.3%	Level 2	15.8%	15.7%	Level 3+	22.1%	36.8%	Apprenticeship	3.3%	3.9%
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Apprenticeship	3.3%	3.9%																	
Industry of employment	<p>In the 2011 Census the largest industry of employment in MVW was Manufacturing on 18.3% (10.5% in Wales). This was followed by Wholesale and Retail Trade: Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles on 14.6% (15.6% in Wales) and Human Health and Social Work Activities on 13.9% (14.5% in Wales)⁴¹.</p>																		
Main employment sites	<p>There are five industrial estates located in the Upper Rhymney Valley area (Heads of the Valleys, Capital Valley, Maerdy, Bowen and the Lawn) and two business parks (Angel Lane and St. Margaret's Park), all of which provide valuable local employment opportunities.</p>																		

The Upper Rhymney Valley 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 forward⁴²:

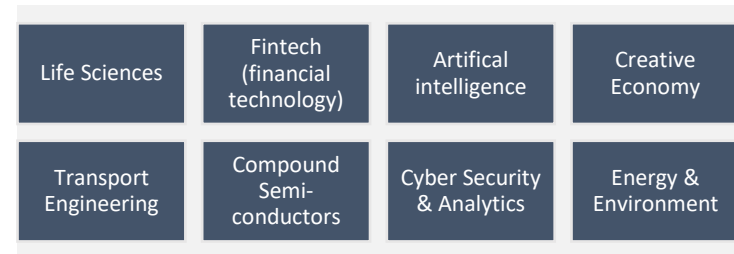
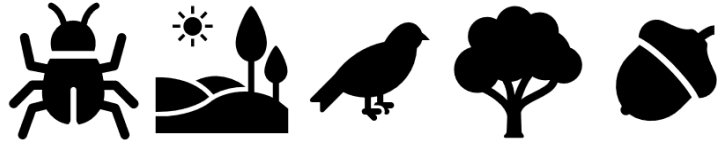


Figure 4: Cardiff City Region priority sectors

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 Park⁴³.

Set in heart of the Rhymney Valley with easy access from the neighbouring communities, **Bargoed Woodland Park** is an unusual place. It's like the countryside, but this obscures its industrial past. It is also being shaped; shaped by the people who lived and worked here years ago and still shaped by those living here today. Created on the site of three collieries and surrounded by the communities that worked in them, Bargoed Woodland Park is now a place to walk and play.

Tucked away in the Darran Valley, **Parc Cwm Darran** is a peaceful, picturesque country park and winner of a Green Flag Award. This beauty belies its history as the site of the former Ogilvie Colliery. Whilst most traces of this previous life have disappeared, there's still a few reminders of that past to be discovered. The wonderful Ogilvie Lake nestles in the valley bottom, surrounded by an easily accessible lakeside.

Located at the northern end of Parc Cwm Darran, **Cwmlwytrew Meadows** consists of two hay meadows, an ant meadow, two ponds and a small alder woodland. The Ant Meadow is home to over 300 yellow meadow anthills providing a ready meal for green woodpeckers. Both the common blue and the small pearl bordered butterfly can be seen from early summer.

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

In the Fen and Pond Meadows, marsh marigolds bloom in the spring with common spotted orchids and devil's-bit scabious abounding in the summer. Grass snakes, toads and newts live around the ponds. If visitors are lucky, they may see a barn owl hunting in the evening for voles and mice, and pied flycatchers nest in the woodland.



Figure 5: Parc Cwm Darran

Aberbargoed Grasslands National Nature Reserve is the biodiversity jewel within the county borough's wildlife crown. It is a nationally important area of conservation grassland that is home to a large population of the marsh fritillary butterfly and the purple moor-grass and rush pasture it depends upon. The Grasslands was the first National Nature Reserve in Wales to be designated in an urban setting and the first in the Central and Eastern Valleys. Not only that, it has also been designated as a Special Area

of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Habitats Directive, highlighting its importance in a European context.

The reserve is made up of old farmland that has never been intensively managed or drained. The mixture of wet and dry areas, old hedges, scrub, trees and old meadows are jam packed with wildlife including rare grasses and flowers, fungi, insects, amphibians, mammals and reptiles. There are plenty of birds that call the reserve home or use it as a holiday destination. The very important population of marsh fritillary butterflies can be seen floating across the meadows on sunny days during late May and June.

In 2021, in a partnership supported by the Integrated Well-being Networks and Aneurin Bevan UHB Neighbourhood Care Networks (NCNs) and the Valleys Regional Park, a novel 'Nature Prescribing' pilot was undertaken, which will provide an additional way forward for supporting community health and well-being by connecting residents to activities in the surrounding natural environment.

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 the Upper Rhymney Valley ranges from 12.9% in New Tredegar 1 to 27.4% in the Moriah 2. 16 of the 18 LSOAs in the Upper Rhymney Valley have a figure below the county borough average (22.2%) and the figure in all LSOAs is significantly below the Wales average (37.8%)⁴⁴.

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.

Key attractions	The Winding House in New Tredegar is the museum for Caerphilly county borough, with engaging exhibitions on local history and heritage, hands-on activities and an exciting events programme. The Victorian winding engine is maintained by a team of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers and is run on special event days and Bank Holidays.
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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.

Visual Arts - the visual arts have nearly 20 groups within the county borough covering photography, sculpture, painting, film, printmaking and crafts. Groups such as Bargoed Art Society have been established for over 50 years and members produce a diverse range of work.

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.



Figure 6: Miners Heads public art at Bargoed

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

Examples of public art in the Upper Rhymney Valley include the ‘Twisted Chimney’ at Llechryd, the Guardian Angel, Daffodils and Miners Head in Bargoed, and the ‘Spirit of the Stream’ at Glanynant.

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.

The Upper Rhymney Valley is home to a wide range of clubs and societies, including guides & scout’s groups; OAP associations; male voice choirs; allotments & garden societies; history groups; residents associations and community partnerships.

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.

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 the Upper Rhymney Valley are also home to volunteering efforts, particularly providing lunch clubs and food distribution to those in need. There are a number of foodbanks in the Upper Rhymney Valley who provide free or very cheap food to those in

need or on low incomes – these include White Rose Information & Resource Centre, St Gwladys Church Hall in Bargoed, and St Dingat’s Church in New Tredegar

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 the Upper Rhymney Valley including football, rugby, cricket, bowling and cycling. 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 the Upper Rhymney Valley is superimposed by features that relate to the major industrial change that occurred in the South Wales area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There are a number of examples of planned industrial heritage, including the ironworkers housing in Bute Town (1825-30). 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 the Upper Rhymney Valley there are a total of 40 **Listed Buildings** – this term refers to a building or other structure officially designated as being of special architectural, historical, or cultural significance:

- Bargoed – 5 x Grade II and 2 x Grade II* (St Sannan’s Church and Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel & Schoolrooms)

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

- Darran Valley – 2 x Grade II
- New Tredegar – 4 x Grade II and 1 x Grade II* (Elliot Colliery Winding House & Engine)
- Rhymney – 24 x Grade II and 2 x Grade II* (St David's Church and Penuel Baptist Church)



Figure 7: Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel & Schoolrooms, Bargoed

There are 9 **Scheduled Ancient Monuments** in the Upper Rhymney Valley – these are sites of archaeological importance with specific legal protection against damage or development. There are seven in the Darran Valley and one in both Bargoed and Rhymney.



Figure 8: Capel y Brithdir Scheduled Ancient Monument

There are two **Conservation Areas** within the Upper Rhymney Valley – Bute Town and Rhymney Town. 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 the Upper Rhymney Valley, respondents generally felt very positive about the community spirit in their area, where people were friendly and worked together to make their communities a better place to live. This was particularly evident following the various lockdowns and social restrictions that were imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, when many communities came together and helped those who were more vulnerable and less able to help themselves. They also expressed the sense that the wider environment was cleaner and more attractive, with a lot of green spaces and beautiful landscapes due to nature taking back control following industrial decline. This

provides greater scope for everyone to enjoy and helps improve mental and physical health and should continue to be encouraged, perhaps by developing and publicising heritage trails and walks locally.

Many respondents expressed a concern for safety in their area, having experienced issues such as with anti-social behaviour, joyriding and drug taking in public places such as parks, even though some had seen greater police presence. They felt that this could be improved by increasing the facilities and activities for communities, such as day centres, community hubs and youth projects. This would help to give young people a focus and help combat loneliness, especially for those people who live alone.

Additionally, communities could help improve their areas by forming volunteer groups that could clean up and carry out activities such as litter picks in their local vicinity, make use of disused buildings and turning them into useful community assets to encourage greater participation in useful pursuits.

For some respondents the public transport facilities were considered poor and this was exacerbated by the feeling that there were not many local facilities and shops, or access to health facilities such as GP surgeries and hospitals.

Respondents asked for more opportunities to engage to help inform decisions about services and facilities within their local area. They said that there are a number of people who are interested in representing their community, and recommended that a local resident should be allocated to attend various meetings within different communities, to help feed back the problems that people are currently concerned about within their local area.

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.

Upper Rhymney Valley Local Well-being Assessment

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