Our Valleys, Our Future

Evidence Paper

Index

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper aims to set out some of the research and analysis which has been utilised to underpin the development of '*Our Valleys, Our Future'*. This has included drawing upon statistical and economic data, engagement through workshops with stakeholders, utilising contemporary and emergent research findings and drawing upon findings from existing engagement with communities through Wellbeing Assessments. The paper presents a snapshot in time and is being published alongside Arad Research's 'Talk Valleys: Engagement Programme – Final Report".

2. Economy and statistics

2.1 To measure progress against the three priority areas (jobs and skills, better public services and personal and community wellbeing) in '*Our Valleys – Our Future'* will be looking to utilise data from the national indicators for Wales (http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/national-indicators/?lang=en), which will provide baseline information to compare progress, where possible. To identify gaps, there will be additional measures identified that the Valleys taskforce will contribute towards. A detailed monitoring framework will be published in Autumn 2017, which will identify a list of key data.

2.2 A range of measures have been mapped which consider deprivation, benefits, accessibility, education, skills and health. Some of the key findings and analysis are presented below.

2.3 Looking at a suite of indicators measuring deprivation through the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation the population within the taskforce areas fare considerably worse than when considering the Welsh population as a whole.
- Around 44% of the population covered by the taskforce live in areas where the low birth rate is higher than 6 per 1,000 live births. This compares to 35% of the Welsh population as a whole.
- Around 64% of the population covered by the taskforce live in areas where more than 29 per cent of adults have no qualifications. This compares to 35% of the Welsh population as a whole.
- Around 54% of the population covered by the taskforce live in areas where the rate of benefit claimants is more than 175 per 1,000 of working age population. This compares to 33% of the Welsh population as a whole.
- Households in the sub-region which includes the local authority areas with the highest working-age benefit claimant rates are expected to lose the most on average from the benefit changes, most of these areas are in the South Wales Valleys.

2.4 The Valleys area generally underperforms Wales as a whole across a range of economic indicators. This underperformance is generally modest in respect of average employment rates, and is also limited across other indicators for Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot.

- The relative underperformance of Wales (and West Wales and the Valleys) compared to the EU over the period since 2004 reflects a UK-wide trend rather than

anything specific to Wales. In fact, West Wales and Valleys have seen a relative improvement compared to both Wales as a whole and the UK.

- Unemployment rates in most South Wales Valleys local authorities have fallen faster than the Welsh average over year ending March 2017. Over the year, the unemployment rate fell in both Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, down by -3.8 percentage points and -0.4 percentage points respectively.
- The employment rate of 16 to 64 year olds in Wales is on the up and is growing fastest in the West Wales and the Valleys, with an increase of 0.7 percentage points on the year ending March 2017.
- Whilst Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita is below the Welsh average in both the Central Valleys and Gwent Valleys, productivity, as measured by GVA per hour worked, in the Central Valleys is the highest in Wales, while in the Gwent Valleys productivity is also higher than the Welsh average in 2015.
- Across the UK as a whole, relative dependence on manufacturing has been associated with below average growth, and this pattern is also seen in Wales, with the Gwent area, and the Gwent Valleys in particular, showing weakness.
- Gross domestic household income (GDHI) per head is probably the best available single indicator of material living standards. The relative performance of the Valleys has increased since around 2005. Notwithstanding the intervening recession, there have been large increases in employment rates across the Valleys areas, with the largest increases generally in areas which had the lowest initial rates. The increases have been driven by lower levels of inactivity (rather than lower unemployment). The causes are not fully understood, but appear to be associated with an improving skills profile for the population (and increasing employment of females and in part-time work).
- In contrast to employment, there have been falls in (relative) wages across much of the Valleys (and for Wales as a whole).

2.5 The South Wales Valleys shows inequality across a range of health, wellbeing and education indicators.

- For life expectancy, for both males and females the figures are generally lower for the local authorities that are entirely covered by the taskforce areas than for Wales as a whole. The same is also true for healthy life expectancy.
- In the local authorities that are entirely covered by the taskforce, adults generally report less healthy lifestyles compared to Wales as a whole.
- Across Wales 20 per cent of adults report smoking and 58 per cent report being overweight or obese. In Merthyr Tydfil the respective figures are 25 per cent and 67 per cent. In Blaenau Gwent the figures are 26 per cent and 62 per cent.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is generally higher in those local authorities that are entirely included in the taskforce area than for Wales as a whole. For example, the proportion of eligible pupils is 25 per cent in Blaenau Gwent and 22 per cent in Merthyr Tydfil, compared to 17 per cent in Wales as a whole.

2.6 Educational attainment is lower in local authorities that are entirely included in the taskforce area than for Wales as a whole. For example, 48 per cent of pupils in Blaenau Gwent achieved level 2 including Welsh/English and maths, the figure for Torfaen was 53 per cent. This compares to a figure of 60 per cent across Wales

3. Summary of evidence

3.1 The following table provides an overview regarding some of the key reports and recommendations in a Valleys context which have helped to underpin the development of the delivery plan. This is not an exhaustive list, but aims to show the current prevailing evidence. Evidence from a range of sources across the UK and international has also been drawn upon, for example the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presented at the taskforce meeting in September 2016.

50 Years of Regeneration in the Valleys, 2016 – Welsh Government **http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/meetings/taskforce/161122-fifty-years-regeneration-in-the-valleys-en.pdf** The Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys has considered multiple sources of evidence to inform the plan. This has included drawing upon evidence to consider the impact of previous regeneration approaches in the South Wales Valleys.
A New Deal for the Valleys, 2016 and Taking the Valleys Forward, 2017 - Bevan Foundation **https://www.bevanfoundation.org/commentary/new_deal_valleys/** Both reports make a range of recommendations for the taskforce which bring together suggestions about how the Valleys Taskforce could increase the prosperity and security of the Valleys economy and labour market. This includes exploring spatial priorities, more and better jobs for the Valleys and help people into better work. The Bevan Foundation has also provided a range of reports and analysis on an all Wales basis on the foundational economy, housing, in-work poverty, city deals and education which have been considered. Dr Victoria Winckler presented at the taskforce in September 2016.
All Around Us: The Pontypool Deep Place Study, 2016 - Sustainable Places Research Institute, Cardiff University **http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/sustainable-places/research/projects/the-deep-place-study** The Deep Place is study is a holistic approach to sustainable place-making. It is based on an empirical concern with how to achieve more economically, socially, environmentally and culturally sustainable places and communities. The approach continues to be strongly influenced by theories of social exclusion, transition theory, the Total Place public service reform agenda, and foundation economics. The findings from the study into Tredegar Deep Place in 2014 were utilised. Dr Mark Lang presented at the taskforce in September 2016.
Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Growth and Competitiveness Commission, 2016 **http://www.cardiffcapitalregioncitydeal.wales/cardiff-capital-region-growth-**

competitiveness-commission-report.html

The report makes recommendations to draw upon the strengths of the area, where Cardiff Capital Region is widely recognised as a region with major strengths, an attractive environment, a strong heritage, a growing economy and emerging opportunities. However, it is also a region where there are intense concentrations of poverty, where many people suffer from poor health and where not all have access to the opportunities available. In recent reports about both the Cardiff and the Welsh city regions, these twin priorities of realising great potential and tackling stubbornly high levels of disadvantage are recognised.

Jobs and the Economy: A Thriving Neath, 2017 - Neath Economic Forum

http://www.jeremymiles.cymru/en/jobs-and-the-economy-a-thriving-neath/

The Neath Area Economic Forum is an initiative by Jeremy Miles AM to facilitate discussion on the economic issues facing Neath. The issues raised at the forum led to the development of a report which draws upon the strengths and opportunities in the local economy.

Prosperity Without Poverty: a framework for action in Wales - JRF and Bevan Foundation, 2016

https://www.bevanfoundation.org/publications/prosperity-without-poverty-framework-action-wales/

The framework takes a broader view of poverty than either relative-income measures or area-based deprivation approaches. It recognises that while government must lead, all including businesses, communities and individuals must play a part. It sees action to increase prosperity and reduce poverty as an integral part of all public policies, not supplementary services delivered in target areas. It suggests a place-based approach to generating decent employment is essential.

South East Wales Employment and Skills Plan and Regional Employment and Skills Plan, South West and Mid Wales, 2016

http://www.lskip.wales/   **http://www.rlp.org.uk/**

The plans help to identify and prioritise skills and economic priorities across the regions. This includes identifying gaps and exploring opportunities for inward investment.

Sustainable Livelihoods, 2016 – Oxfam Cymru

http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-toolkit-for-wales-297233

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is a method of analysing and changing the lives of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. It is a participatory approach based on the recognition that all people have abilities and assets that can be developed to help them improve their lives.

Kirsty Davies-Warner presented at the taskforce in September 2016.

4. Wellbeing assessments

4.1 In accordance with the 2015 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Public Service Boards have to develop Local Well-being Plans by April 2018. In order to achieve this, they must engage with local citizens as well as develop well-being assessments of the local area. A review of the eight engagement reports supporting the draft well-being assessments are highlighted below. This helps to supplement the engagement taking place through the taskforce.

4.2 There are several common themes across the valleys as a whole as highlighted through the well-being assessments engagement. These have been set out below and grouped in line with the themes of the Valleys Taskforce report '*Our Valleys, Our Future'*. In general, all engagement reports highlighted community spirit and pride as high, in particular the importance of family and friends. This was seen as an important factor across all eight valleys authorities.

Good quality jobs and the skills to do them

4.3 Employment and income was raised in all Valleys local; authorities. There is a need for more suitable employment opportunities (Carmarthenshire and Caerphilly) as well as a need to feel valued and have security of employment (Carmarthenshire). The need for well paid local employment that gives young people the ability to train and work locally was highlighted (Caerphilly).

4.4 Financial security was a key pressure for those on low incomes. Employees were concerned about erosion of living standards, as some had not seen a pay increase for many years and others had gradually moved into lower-skilled, less well paid jobs (Swansea). Utility bills are an issue, with some stark choices being faced in terms of "eating or heating" (Neath Port Talbot).

4.5 There is a need for better opportunities for business start ups (Bridgend). More support for local businesses is needed (although support is good in Torfaen) as well as an increase in apprenticeship places. (Caerphilly). It was felt a lack of premises and poor local skills hinder businesses in the Torfaen area. However, local investment could improve this.

4.6 People living away from the M4 corridor were more likely to suffer becoming economically marginalised as a result of poor access to work through constraints of public transport (Neath Port Talbot).

Better Public Services

4.7 Concerns about access to public transport, lack of integrated transport and inability to access leisure and work opportunities outside of peak travel times (Caerphilly & Carmarthenshire). Car parking at transport hubs was seen as important to make it easier for people to choose public transport (Caerphilly). Opportunities of the Cardiff region was seen as a positive, although public transport access hindered the ability to avail themselves of these facilities for some geographical areas (Caerphilly)

4.8 Improved access to services was important (Carmarthenshire) as well as concerns that accessibility and equality of access could be impacted by austerity cuts (Neath Port Talbot & Caerphilly). There is a need to improve access to GPs, hospitals and mental health services (Carmarthenshire).

My local Community

4.9 The environment was seen as instrumental in all Valleys communities. In particular, landscape, views and green spaces are valued within Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Torfaen. Caerphilly and NPT highlighted the importance of sustainability and renewable energy planning / usage.

4.10 In particular, localised issues were raised as important for example fly tipping, recycling and waste (Bridgend / Blaenau Gwent / Caerphilly / Carmarthenshire / Neath Port Talbot / Swansea / Torfaen). Community centres, leisure centres and libraries were mentioned as community assets (Caerphilly). Volunteering was seen as an excellent means of building well-being (Swansea).

4.11 The availability of social activities and opportunities was deemed important to live well and enjoy life (Blaenau Gwent & Caerphilly), however, there is a perception that a lack of these can lead to anti-social behaviour (Caerphilly).

4.12 Town centres are poor with shop closures, poor standards of maintenance (Neath Port Talbot / Swansea). Caerphilly outlined support for local retail centres which are important as residents value the proximity of local shops to access goods and services. There is however a need for better maintenance of public areas (Torfaen).

4.13 Access to services is a common theme across authorities (Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Torfaen, Carmarthenshire), especially for leisure, heritage and sport opportunities to stay active and healthy (Blaenau Gwent, (eath Port Talbot, Swansea and Torfaen). The need to maintain Welsh Language support was raised (Neath Port Talbot / Carmarthenshire / Swansea).

5. Workshop summaries

5.1 During April 2017, three workshops were held based on priorities identified by the Valleys taskforce on good quality jobs and the skills to do them, better public services and my local community. Each workshop utilised the breadth of current engagement evidence from Valleys communities and looked to drive forward commitments and shape the Valleys high level plan.

5.2 Attendees included Welsh Government officials, members of the Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys and stakeholders from relevant fields. Each workshop was chaired by a representative of the taskforce. Some of the key findings across themes are highlighted below.

Good quality jobs and the skills to do them

5.3 There were three bespoke sessions run on jobs, skills and infrastructure. This included looking at some of the key actions required to help create jobs. It was felt that any jobs approach should aim to create a step change by recognising the need to create fair work and to tackle some of the barriers in relation to accessing employment. Some delegates felt there was a need to see a clear path on how jobs would be created and it was important to strengthen links with the private sector, including existing businesses.

5.4 Considering fair work outcomes was a central theme for discussion, including exploring what government interventions could be put in place where markets have failed. It was suggested that this could include using a fair work tax on local employment and considering how clauses can be built into public contracts. Maximising community benefits to generate local employment and skills from procurement was seen as paramount, some felt that this could be supported by opening access for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to tender through smaller contract awards.

5.5 Empowering the private sector around co-investment to create jobs and accelerate inward investment was felt to be crucial to achieve the jobs target. Some attendees identified that this could be achieved by targeting funding at specific sectors through a demand led approach and others felt that government should be using levers to reduce taxation for businesses. Local jobs could be enhanced by working with anchor and regionally important companies to explore supply chains and identify how spend can be retained locally.

5.6 Current business support was felt to be fragmented across local authorities. There was felt to be a need to analyse where there are particular opportunities to grow existing businesses and to target support through Business Wales. The need to build a supportive ecosystem for business start ups through developing place based proposals was felt to provide a potential way forwards. This could be underpinned through business finance to drive innovation through the Development Bank of Wales and to improve conversation rates from inception to business growth. Encouraging public sector pension funds to invest and takes risk in local businesses as part of a social value approach could provide merits.

5.7 In relation to achieving economic growth, maximising benefits from the city deals in Cardiff and Swansea to generate growth was felt to offer real opportunities. However, it was felt that this should be underpinned through strengthening local place based approaches to grow local economies and to offer more sustainable employment opportunities. This

includes within the foundational economy, including supporting specific sectors such as tourism and social care. It was felt that the foundation economy should be supported because it is not attractive because of low wages, poor conditions and a lack of opportunities to progress.

5.8 There was general support for a strategic hubs based approach to target investment and growth across identified sites across the Valleys. This could include exploring new growth sectors, looking at incubator models. Investment ready properties should be available to enable companies to locate in the Valleys and improvements to existing sites were felt to be required to improve accessibility and infrastructure.

5.9 The need to support and co-ordinate and align a number of employability programmes was felt to be an important outcome. Outcomes should be to remove barriers for individuals not to be a tick box exercise to get them into programmes. This included increasing apprentices using wage subsidies, however, it was felt that payments should be staggered and paid on the basis that people would be given a full time post.

5.10 A future skills profile for the Valleys should look to strengthen links to employers and to put a stronger focus on the role which vocational courses can play. Micro and SME sized Enterprises should be encouraged to support decent work outcomes, possibly by targeting employment programmes at smaller local businesses linked with skills provision.

5.11 Realising the benefits of infrastructure investment to drive employment and job creation was felt to offer opportunities, particularly through the South Wales Metro and the A465. This includes utilising digital infrastructure, including digitally linking transport and putting a focus on flexible and accessible ticketing.

Better Public Services
5.12 There were three bespoke sessions run on housing, education and health. This included looking at specific barriers around services becoming integrated and joined up.

5.13 There was felt to be a need to improve existing housing stock in the Valleys, some of which are not energy efficient and are in poor condition. Consideration is needed to trial a grant to support owner occupier houses beneath a certain standard.

5.14 There are opportunities in the construction sector to provide employment. This includes considering trialling modular housing in specific areas across the Valleys through off-site manufacturing and using timber to support future housing needs, which could offer increased skills and job development. It was felt that this would have a positive impact on supply chains and could be stimulated through investor grants for SMEs.

5.15 Improving educational outcomes and linking education with employment opportunities was felt to provide a positive way forwards. It is vital to build on opportunities to link schools to local employers but also learn business skills for schools. Work experience is important but there is a need to make it as easy as possible for both young people and employers. Careers advice is vital from an early age. Digital skills for young people across the Valleys should be targeted by creating bespoke opportunities and looking for new opportunities.

5.16 Exploring opportunities for schools to become community hubs and breaking down barriers for wider community learning and engagement were identified as important

enablers. This includes maximising 21st Century Schools funding and exploring existing models to support community development.

5.17 The role of modern day health and social services was felt to play a critical role to focus on prevention. Budgets should be focussing on prevention and initiatives to prevent / reduce people accessing primary services, public health and increasing positive messaging.

5.18 Look at existing Welsh good practice in relation to healthcare hubs and develop 'Team around Community' and assets based approaches to test Primary Care Hubs and develop ideas. Links need to be made between GPs and the range of employment services and those exploring skills for local employment, such as the third sector and mental health projects. This includes working across Silos and co-location to allow social prescribing.

5.19 Career pathways in health and social services need to be clear and link to transferrable skills, whilst acknowledging training needs, and wider barriers including transport. Work across the sector should include tackling poor working conditions (zero hour contracting). There is a need to increase awareness with young people about the employment opportunities available in the NHS, by linking with schools, curriculum, role models and work experience.

My Local Community

5.20 There were workshops run which focussed on energy, tourism and regeneration. Discussions were also held around the development of a Valleys Landscape Park as an enabling framework to support delivery, which was generally supported.

5.21 The use of energy and the need to draw upon the natural landscape across the Valleys was discussed, particularly exploring opportunities to support initiatives around tackling fuel poverty and maximising opportunities through innovation. This includes exploring where there are any existing energy schemes which have stalled and to look at approaches to simplify planning and encourage private sector investment. Maximising benefits from community assets was also thought to play an important role to enhance community wellbeing.

5.22 Tourism was felt to provide a real opportunity to draw upon the natural landscape and rich historical tourist attractions located across the area. This would have a dual purpose to grow local economies and to maximise opportunities for local people to increase access to countryside and woodland. Some suggestions included, making use of successful and iconic people in the Valleys to market the Valleys through Visit Wales, to increase accessibility to sites and to align tourism and public health initiatives. It was felt that local authorities work in silos around the tourism agenda and there needs to be a clear regional vision to drive a coherent Valleys brand.

5.23 Regeneration should be focussed on growing local economies and enhancing jobs and skills, this includes putting a focus on future proofing to embed a community driven approach to agree how land and resources are maximised. Wales-wide projects have to drive a harder bargain to get more from private sector and it was considered that there is a need to move away from pots of funding to focus budgets on clearer Valleys outcomes.

5.24 Many town centres in the Valleys were considered to be unviable and there needs to be a fundamental rethink, where vacant space should be used for non-retail as well as retail to increase footfall and make communities more vibrant. Enhancing businesses to relocate in town centres by reducing rates and using empty premises as pop up shops were felt to be good ideas.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The evidence paper will continue to be built upon through the development of deliverables and milestones through the plan. This will include close alignment with city deals and forthcoming Wellbeing Plans, which will help to support a holistic, evidence driven deliver approach. The development of milestones and indicators through the delivery plan will be published in Autumn 2017. Furthermore, the supporting range of impact assessments also draw upon specific evidence.

Annex A - Detailed review of Well-being Assessment engagement themes

Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent's draft assessment has been informed to date by data, available research and feedback provided through Phase 1 of the "Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement" roadshows conducted with partners across the Borough in the summer of 2016. Three main questions were asked including 'What is special about Blaenau Gwent', 'What things are important to you to live well and enjoy your life?', and 'What would make Blaenau Gwent a better place?' Headline findings highlighted the following top themes and topics for each question.

Question	Top 5 Themes *(By the percentage of people that said it)*	Top 5 Topics *(By the percentage of people that said it)*
What is special about Blaenau Gwent?	Environment (73%) Community (44%) Heritage (19%) Education & Skills (18%) Social Activities (13%)	Landscape (52%) Parks (34%) Community Spirit (27%) Schools (14%) Quality of Exercise Facilities (11%)
What things are important to you to live well and enjoy your life?	Employment & Income (36%) Social Activities (34%) Community (34%) Transport (32%) Environment (29%)	Family & Friends (27%) Availability of Employment & Income (21%) Availability of Social Activities (20%) Transport Infrastructure (20%) Tidy, clean streets (10%)
What would make Blaenau Gwent a better place?	Environment (33%) Employment & Income (18%) Safety (17%) Regeneration (16%) Social Activities (14%)	Tidy, clean streets (18%) Availability of Social Activities (9%) Availability of Employment & Income (8%) Police Presence (8%) Waste & Recycling (8%)

Bridgend

A consultation reviewing Bridgend Public Services Board's well-being assessment was undertaken over a four week period between February and March 2017. The survey received 506 interactions from a combination of survey responses, local event attendees, social media and email responses.

In total, there were eight questions regarding the four well-being themes. Based upon the respondents' answers, additional questions were asked to allow the respondent to elaborate on their selection. All questions in the survey were optional.

All of the four well-being findings were supported by the majority of respondents. Environmental well-being (91%), social well-being (78%), cultural well-being (77%), and economic well-being (71%).

Respondents who did not select agree to the economic well-being findings, there's 'good opportunities for business start ups' (21%) and 'high rates of employment (21%) were the most disputed strengths/challenges. The most supported change was to introduce a focus on supporting youth (16%).

For the one in ten (10%) who did not agree with the environmental well-being findings, one in five (19%) mentioned Maesteg should not be the only town mentioned regarding flood protection. The most supported change was to introduce specifics regarding reducing 'litter/fly tipping' (24%).

For social well-being, those who disagreed with the findings selected smoking / alcohol and drugs being below national average (52%) and low crime rates (28%) as the most disagreeable statements. Improving police presence (17%) was the only suggestion for updating the statements to receive more than one in ten support. Nearly one in five (18%) who did not agree to the challenges for social well-being around burglary, vehicle theft and anti-social behaviour (26%), strong sense of community (22%) and childhood obesity decreasing (18%).

For cultural well-being, of the respondents who did not select agree to the findings, Welsh language (30%) and Welsh culture (23%) were the most disagreeable findings. One in three who disagreed to the challenges for cultural well-being wanted Welsh language to be removed entirely.

Caerphilly

Within Caerphilly, several forms of engagement were used (direct engagement events, indirect engagement events and social media and questionnaires).

To bring some consistency to the responses individuals were asked to consider four key questions:
- What are the positive aspects of where you live?
- What are the negative aspects of where you live?
- What would you like the county borough to be like in 25 years?
- What issues do you think public services should prioritise?

Common themes from the events held included:
- the need for well paid local employment that gives young people the ability to train and work locally.
- business needs were seen as more support for local businesses and an increase in apprenticeship places.
- support for local retail centres was seen as important as residents value the proximity of local shops to access goods and services.
- Schools and education were seen as good in communities, although mention was made of the appropriateness of the curriculum to equip young people for life.
- communities were also concerned about access to public transport with some areas of the county borough responding that they were well-served, with others noting the lack of integrated transport and inability to access leisure and work opportunities outside of peak travel times.
- active travel and the lack of cycle networks in some parts of the borough were also seen as important, particularly for younger people without access to cars.
- traffic congestion was seen as a problem in some parts of the county borough.
- car parking at transport hubs was seen as important to make it easier for people to choose public transport.

- the importance of neighbourliness and community spirit was a recurring theme, with some respondents valuing the closeness of local communities, while others felt that this was deteriorating among the younger generation.
- community centres, leisure centres and libraries were mentioned as community assets.
- in all cases respondents felt very strongly that the area is blessed with a beautiful natural environment. They valued their green spaces and the pleasant aspect of living in a semi rural area. References were frequently made to parks, play spaces and natural attractions such as country parks.
- the historic built environment and local arts centres were seen as assets that need protection.
- environmental concerns centred on littering, fly tipping and dog fouling.
- housing was seen as good but some areas of social housing are associated with problem tenants.
- sufficient resources and efficient transport for new housing was mentioned in some areas of the borough.
- inward migration from Cardiff was seen as causing an increase in house prices, potentially squeezing out local first time buyers.
- the environmental sustainability of new buildings and developments was seen as important.
- references were made to planning for renewal energy usage.
- the proximity to the retail, leisure and work opportunities of the Cardiff region was seen as a positive, although public transport access hindered the ability to avail themselves of these facilities for some geographical areas.
- the ageing demographic was a concern with issues raised around accessibility of services and equality of access a particular concern. People were concerned about the ability of public services to cope with an ageing demographic.
- the ability to remain living in local communities was highlighted as important, with greater emphasis needed on improved intergenerational relationships and support.
- community safety and public perception varied across the borough, with some residents having a positive view of police and associated services.
- others noted the lack of activities and opportunities for young people with a perception that this can lead to anti-social behaviour. No areas reported significant crime concerns.
- interestingly people very rarely considered their own health, or the health of their communities, as an issue despite the data indicting otherwise.
- a common refrain was the inability to access health services and GP appointments in particular, and the perceived lack of hospital services in the area. Notably mental health services emerged as a theme.
- Support for the Welsh language in the job market and retail sector was considered to be important.

Carmarthenshire

Public Service Boards of Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire took the decision to work together on their wellbeing assessments and the engagement surrounding it. Whilst these areas are predominately outside of the Valleys Taskforce boundary, findings have still been included.

The key components of the regional approach included a survey directed at residents and an agreed toolkit for undertaking direct engagement work through focus groups or in less formal settings across the region.

The approach taken as part of the survey in Carmarthenshire was to develop a campaign, targeting potential respondents through random sample houses, mail-shots to citizen panels, using social media and partners (i.e. schools) to publicise the survey and create postcards featuring survey QR codes for high footfall areas (i.e. GP centres, service centres and libraries). A total of 2582 Carmarthenshire residents responded to the regional well-being survey.

The toolkit was utilised for over twenty engagement events with groups including Carer's Forum, Health drop-in sessions, youth forums etc.

Key findings from the engagement included:

- Improved access to services and better public transport were two topics people felt would make them happier.
- Younger respondents were more likely to say that a more reliable mobile network and better access to the internet would improve their happiness. 65% of 16-64 year olds said better access to the internet would improve happiness, as did 61% of under 16s. The compares to 51% of respondents of pensionable age.
- Respondents remarked that better access to public toilets; cycle routes; a healthier retail environment (featuring a mix of national chains, independent stores and fewer charity shops); more cultural and leisure opportunities (together with better advertising of local events) and improved access to GPs, hospitals and mental health services would make them happier.
- The landscape/views of Carmarthenshire are valued most by those that reside there two in five (42%) respondents that live in the county said they valued this intrinsic feature. Peace and quiet came a close second with 38% of responses, while places to walk/cycle (34%) and clean air (33%) are ranked as the third and fourth most valued features.
- Carmarthenshire respondents are most concerned about localised environmental issues such as littering, fly tipping and recycling.
- 21% of respondents 'agreed' (4% strongly agree and 17% agree) that there were suitable employment opportunities for them in their local area. 27% 'disagreed' (9% strongly disagree and 18% disagree). 11% neither agreed or disagreed, and 34% said the question was not applicable and 5% didn't know.
- Within the employment questions, feeling valued was an important aspect, followed by security of employment and sense of achievement.
- There were two clear priority areas central to respondents' happiness, contentment and life satisfaction. A quarter of survey respondents said that good health was important to them both now (79%) and in the future (61%). Secondly, nearly seven in ten (68%) remarked that having enough money for the essentials (bills and goods/services etc.) was important now, and over half (52%) said in the future.

Cwm Taf (RCT and Merthyr)

The engagement undertaken with communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil (Cwm Taf) helped to inform both the Cwm Taf Population Assessment and the Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment.

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

They used several mechanisms of engagement including using existing information from a range of stakeholders, traditional methods (questionnaires/surveys), existing mechanisms for stakeholder involvement, community events, bespoke and targeted activities, service user stories and case studies as well as use of a Citizens' Panel.

There is no real detail provided surrounding the key findings of the engagement. However the Wellbeing Assessment recognises the need for further engagement as the Wellbeing Plan develops.

Neath Port Talbot

Neath Port Talbot undertook several avenues of engagement including:
- An online survey which achieved 229 responses from people who live in the Neath Port Talbot Country Borough Council area;
- Six workshops with 25 attendees;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Secondary review of literature and evidence; and
- Four focus groups with groups with a specific interest, two secondary schools, one primary school and one additional learning needs school.

Findings were themed into the following four areas, Cultural, Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing.

Cultural well-being – Comprised of arts, theatre and cinema, Welsh history and language, and sport. For older residents in particular, a sense of place and access to Welsh history and culture were extremely important for cultural well-being, whilst support for the Welsh language was widespread across all ages.

Economic well-being – Utility bills are an issue, with some stark choices being faced in terms of "eating or heating". People living away from the M4 corridor were more likely to suffer becoming economically marginalised as a result of poor access to work through constraints of public transport. Finding employment was seen as key to financial sufficiency.

Environmental well-being – The quality of landscape is a key, with access to coastline, forestry, rivers, hills or parkland providing a significant boost to well-being. Many of the town centres and the built environment in particular fail to match these standards and many stakeholders felt unable to be proud of their local towns as they stand, with shop closures, poor standards of maintenance and excessive traffic. In terms of wider environmental

issues, there was a willingness to promote recycling further. Littering and fly tipping is an issue with a desire to see stronger penalties for those who offend in this way. Renewable energy is also supported, with some exceptions in areas where wind farms are being built at present.

Social well-being – Friends and family underpin social well-being for the majority, but for those living alone, especially the elderly, social networks and clubs are very important. Issues around public transport were frequently mentioned in relation to fostering social well-being, as poor transport underpinned barriers to accessing services and places. Access to services is a common theme, especially for leisure and sport to stay active and healthy. Many residents are concerned that austerity cuts will result in services being withdrawn. Accessing health services was an issue for many residents, with reports of long waiting lists to see specialists and difficulties seeing a GP.

Swansea

The consultation in Swansea was split into two parts. Firstly a survey ran throughout Swansea which received 159 individual responses and 10 organisation responses. In addition an independent assessment into the well-being of people in the City and County of Swansea was carried out. Miller Research was commissioned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, on behalf of Bridgend CBC, Neath Port Talbot CBC, the City & County of Swansea and ABMU Health Board to carry out this work. Data collection was undertaken through a series of workshops / focus groups, one-to-one interviews with stakeholders, and a large-scale survey. 239 surveys were completed by residents of Swansea.

Findings were themed into the following four areas, Cultural, Economic, Environmental and Social Wellbeing.

Cultural Well-being – Cultural well-being focused on access to arts, theatre, cinema and sport. Volunteering was seen as an excellent means of building well-being. Support for the Welsh language was mixed, but with great strength in some communities.

Economic Well-being – In general terms, the people who engaged with the assessment indicated that an individual's economic well-being was primarily concerned with sufficiency and the ability to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Financial security was a key pressure for those on low incomes, in portfolio work, or unemployed. Employees were concerned about erosion of living standards, as some had not seen a pay increase for many years and others had gradually moved into lower-skilled, less well paid jobs.

Environmental Well-being – The quality of landscape is a key influence on environmental well-being, with access to the Gower Coast, rivers, open land or parks providing a significant boost to well-being. Walking and cycling along the coast, in parks or on the hills were all valued in terms of their well-being contribution. Unfortunately, the built environment in many areas of the City and town centres in the area fail to match these standards and many stakeholders felt unable to be proud of their local towns as they stand, with shop closures, poor standards of maintenance and excessive traffic. Littering and fly tipping in the area is seen as a problem and there was a desire to see stronger penalties for those who offend in this way. From the perspective of survey respondents, environmental well-being was primarily concerned with having a 'clean' environment (26 per cent of

respondents16) and being able to access the 'outdoor'. Nearly one quarter (23 per cent) of respondents made reference to cleaner or tidier streets17 (with one in ten referring to 'litter') as being necessary to improve environmental well-being.

Social Well-being – Much of the strength of social well-being stems from friends and family, with slightly less emphasis on community than in some other areas. Work-life balance was a challenge for many people in work and this presented a barrier to social well-being in some cases. For those living alone, especially the elderly, social networks and clubs are very important. Issues around public transport were frequently mentioned in relation to fostering social well-being, as poor transport underpinned barriers to accessing services and places. Many referenced to there being more / better access to (affordable) leisure facilities, having more time (away from work) and more money to facilitate access to leisure activities.

Torfaen

The Torfaen Well-Being Questionnaire was circulated late summer/early autumn of 2016 and 1042 returns were received from individuals and 31 returns were received from businesses within Torfaen. The survey sought views of residents in Torfaen on four questions to help us understand what people believe is good in Torfaen and what they want the future to look like. It also sought views of businesses in Torfaen on four questions to help us understand what they believe is good about being a business in Torfaen and how they see businesses developing in the future.

Findings from individuals:

What's good about your community?	What's not so good about your community?	What one thing would you change about your community to make it a better place?	What do you want the future of your community to be?
Public amenities (360)	ASB (385)	Better maintenance of public areas (282)	Community Spirit (390)
Neighbourliness (338)	Maintenance of public areas (355)	Waste Management (116)	Community Safety (316)
Green Spaces (291)	Littering (305)	Social Activities (98)	Better maintenance of public areas (261)
Community Spirit (116)	Social Activities (33)	Public amenities (75)	Social Activities (23)
Quiet (20)	Street Lighting (11)	Leisure Facilities (32)	Prosperous (13)
Maintenance of public areas (18)	Traffic Management (8)	Policing (20)	
Leisure Facilities (10)	Parking (6)	Improve parking (15)	
Social Activities (10)		Traffic Management (13)	
		Green Spaces (10)	

		Less ASB (6)	
		Littering (6)	
		Street Lighting (5)	
		Better collaboration between community and public services (4)	
		Regeneration (4)	