

Gwent Regional Partnership Board Population Needs Assessment

Introduction

As set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 local authorities and local Health Boards must produce one population assessment report per local government electoral cycle. The first regional Population Needs Assessment (PNA) was completed by the Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) in April 2016 and aligned to Wellbeing Assessment completed by Public Service Boards as required under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. This PNA report will also align, integrate and cross reference the Gwent Wellbeing Assessment to avoid duplication and create a joint population wellbeing assessment for the region (this section can be read alongside the regional Wellbeing Assessment or as an individual document).

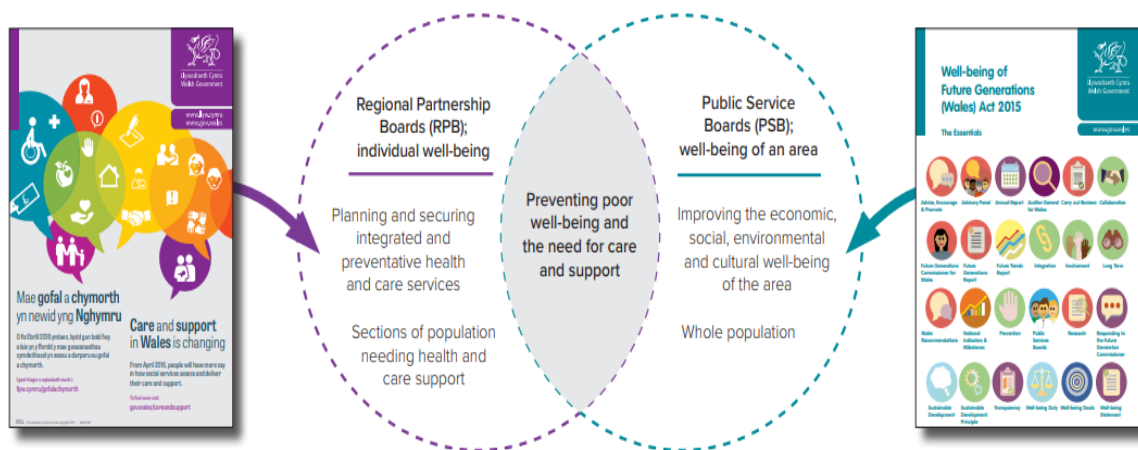


Fig 1: Relationship between RPBs and Public Service Boards.

As set out in Welsh Government's SSWB Act Part 2 Code of Practice, this population assessment comprises of (1) an assessment of need the (2) range and level of services required. It will also jointly assess:

- the extent to which there are people in the area of assessment who need care and support
- the extent to which there are carers in the area of assessment who need support
- the extent to which there are people whose needs for care and support (or, in the case of carers, support) are not being met.

Policy Areas included and within this Population Needs Assessment (PNA).

- National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 and children and young people's plans as required by the Children Act 2004.
- Integrated Medium Term Plans produced by Local Health Boards as required by the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014,
- Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 including local homelessness strategies
- United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nation Principles for Older Persons
- Equality Act 2010 Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

- National Outcomes Framework
- Welsh language strategic framework More than just words
- Socio -Economic Duty

Engagement, Coproduction and Citizen Voice

The voice of citizens, third sector partners and service providers are key to developing this PNA and the guidance on effective citizen engagement, set out in *'National participation Standards, Participation Cymru's National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales'* and the Older People's Commissioner's Best Practice Guidance for *'Engagement and Consultation with Older People on Changes to Community Services in Wales'*, have been considered. Citizen voices have been included in each PNA section and coordinated through the regional Citizen Panel and Chair who sits on the RPB. This also includes populations from the secure estate in order to fulfil the requirements of section 11 of the Act.

(1) CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

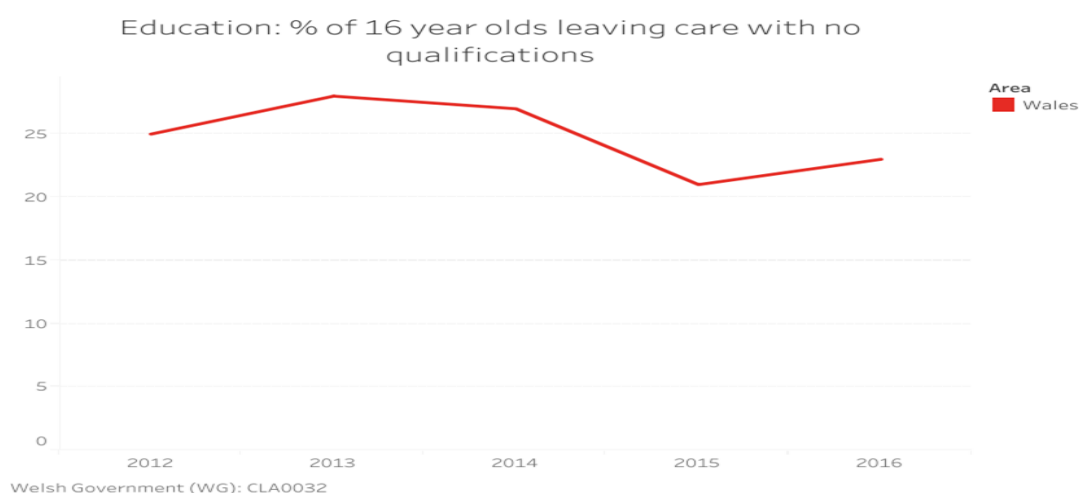
Key themes

- Children with Complex Needs, including seamless transition of care and support needs, for example between Childrens Continuing Care and Continuing NHS Healthcare.
- Safe accommodation for children with complex, high end emotional and behavioural needs. This is a new Welsh Government priority for 2021-22 and aims to both prevent individuals being unnecessarily escalated to, and facilitate de-escalation from, secure or inpatient care.
- Looked After Children and the increasing numbers going into care/adoption (Local Authorities have a specific duty under Section 75 of the Act to ensure they have sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of looked after children).

Policy Areas

- Amendments to Part 9 of the SSWB Act including revisions to the definition of Children and Young People (CYP) with complex needs to include children and young people: with disabilities and/or illness, care experienced, in need of care and support, at risk of becoming looked after, and those with emotional and behavioural needs.
- Children’s Commissioner for Wales ‘No Wrong Door’ recommendations and annual reports.
- Together for Children and Younger People
- National Commissioning Board guidance for Integrated Commissioning of Services for Families, Children and Young People with Complex Needs.
- The NEST (Nurturing, Empowering, Safe, Trusted) Early Help and Enhanced Support National Framework
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

(1.1) Percentage of 16-year-olds leaving care with no qualifications

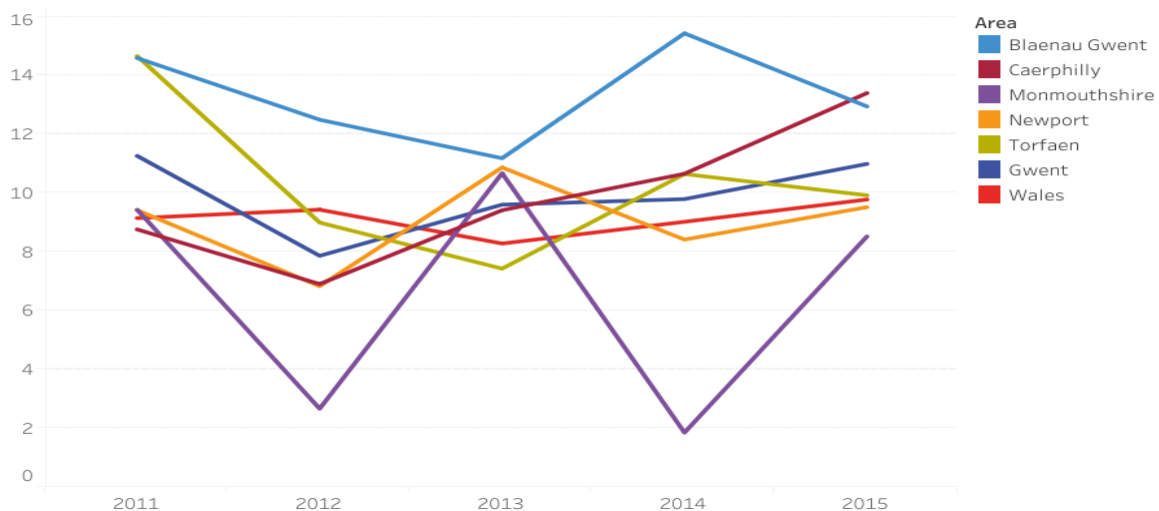


Care leavers will face a large number of personal and emotional challenges when family relationships breakdown and understandably education and aspirations will be affected. Attitudes to school, authority and adults will be indifferent and if a young person feels that they have been ‘given up on’ it will be very easy said young person to give up on their selves.

Schools will closely monitor the number of CLA and treat as vulnerable learners to ensure additional support and understanding are afforded to CLA. The availability of data is not consistent across the region, but the national data is stark with between 1 in 4 to 5 CLA leaving with no qualification which should not be accepted for any group of young people. The RPB includes statutory membership from education colleagues to ensure issues can be discussed and raised as well as planning actions across multi-agency partners and accessing preventative and transformation funding opportunities. Covid-19 has affected schooling for all young people and education achievements and accessing further education with additional emotional support and housing solutions will remain a priority.

(1.2) Looked after Children with 3 or more placements

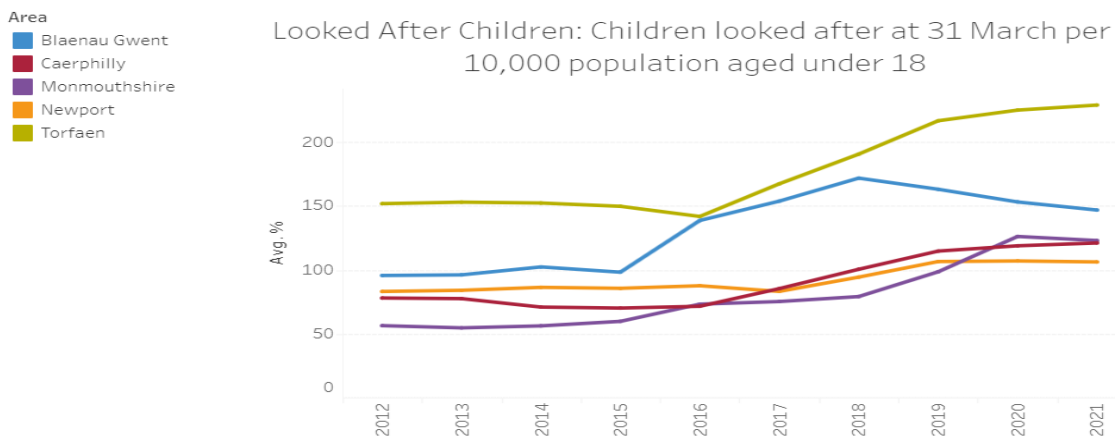
Looked after children: SCC/004 - Looked after children with 3 or more placements (%)



Welsh Government (WG): SCC004

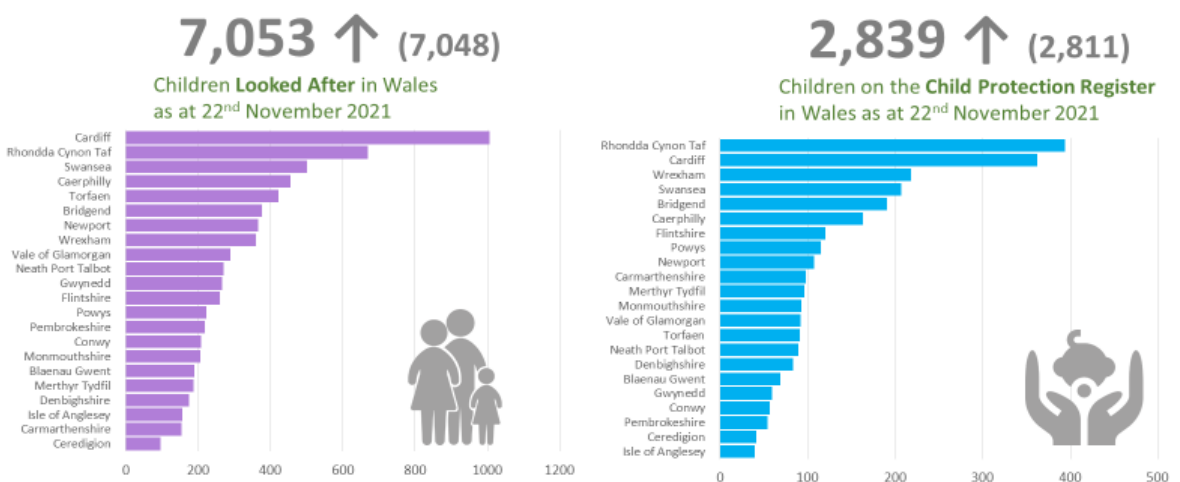
Stability for CLA is key to supporting young people to develop positive relationships, trust, emotional wellbeing and access to education. A change of circumstances can often be unsettling and lead to lack of trust in support organisations as well disengagement, with comments from young people that ‘people have given up on them’. A safe, stable home environment is a priority for any young person but especially CLA and even though the numbers seem relatively low, we know outcomes will be affected with increased number of placements. Partner and third sector organisations prioritise the need for remedial actions to avoid placement breakdown, with respite for carers and children a solution to help secure long-term placements. National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) offer an independent advocacy service for CLA to ensure the voice and views of young people are heard and greater support and working with third sector partners is key to partnership working through RPB. Covid-19 has affected the face-to-face opportunities for advocacy, but online sessions have been facilitated.

(1.3) Rate of Children Looked After per 10,000 population



The number of Children Looked After (CLA) and percentage 10,000 still remains high across all local authority areas. We know that CLA face some of the most complex and challenging of circumstances amongst their peers and Welsh Government has prioritised support at a local and regional level through Integrated Care Funding guidance and legislation. Multi-agency partnership approaches under the RPB haven been established such as MYST project and SPACE Wellbeing Panels. However, there have been large costs for emergency and out of county placements incurred across the region which has led to the development of capital projects in Gwent such as Windmill Farm, through ICF capital funding, where savings can be redistributed into preventative programmes. The impact of covid-19 pandemic will have exacerbated circumstances for CLA, and support and prevention will still remain a priority going forward especially the need to develop services and provision that mean young peoples' care and support needs can be met close to home

Children's Social Care - Safeguarding



*One authority was unable to provide data due to issues following WCCIS upgrade

↑↓↔ denotes change from previous week (previous week's figures) Source: Local Authority Covid-19 Data Collections – 24 November 2021

There are additional data graphs relating to young people in the Social Wellbeing section (Baby and children's health and development) of the Wellbeing Assessment including

1. % of low birthweight live single births
2. Teenage conceptions
3. Breastfeeding
4. Flying Start children reaching or exceeding developmental milestones
5. Healthy weight and obesity
6. Immunisations
7. Oral health
8. Adverse Childhood Experiences

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

The most recent Welsh Government data (as of 31 March 2020) shows that there are 16,580 children who receive care and support from children's services across 22 local authorities. Of those children being supported, 7,180 are looked after. Of those children, 17% live with their families or with other family members through kinship care arrangements, 70% live with foster carers, 8% live in residential care, 3% of children are placed for adoption and 2% of older children live independently with support. Welsh Government have prioritized the need for safe accommodation for children with complex, high end emotional and behavioural needs. This is a new Welsh Government priority for 2021-22 and aims to both prevent individuals being unnecessarily escalated to, and facilitate de-escalation from, secure or inpatient care.

(2) OLDER PEOPLE INCLUDING DEMENTIA

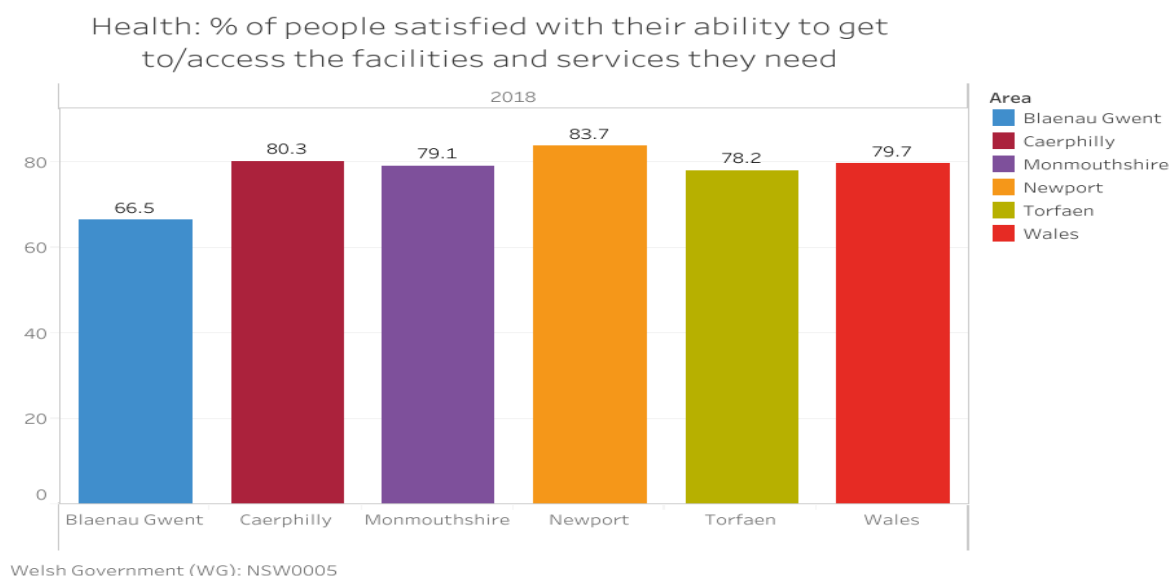
Key Themes

- Improve emotional wellbeing for older people to reduce loneliness and isolation with early intervention
- Improve life outcomes for people living with dementia and their carers.
- Protect the rights for older people as enshrined in the United Nation's Principles for Older Persons, and the SSWB 2014 Act.

Policy Areas

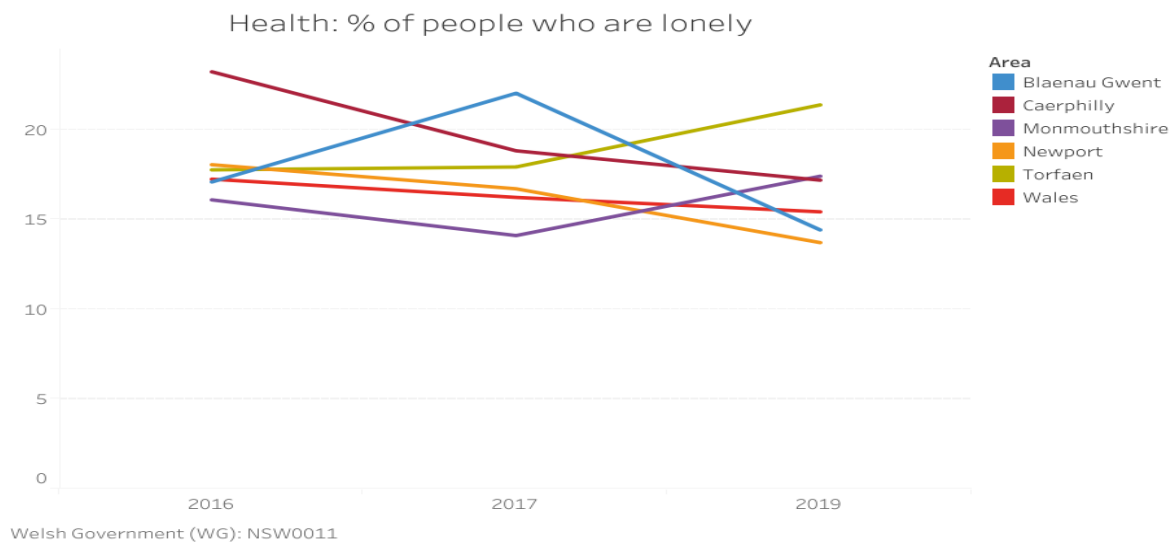
- United Nation's Principles for Older Persons, and the SSWB 2014 Act
- Dementia Action Plan 2018-2022
- Older People's Commissioner 'Making Wales the best place in the world to grow older: Strategy 2019-22
- Strategy for Older People in Wales: Living Longer, Ageing Well. (2013 -2023)

(2.1) Percentage of people satisfied with their ability to get to/access the facilities and services they need



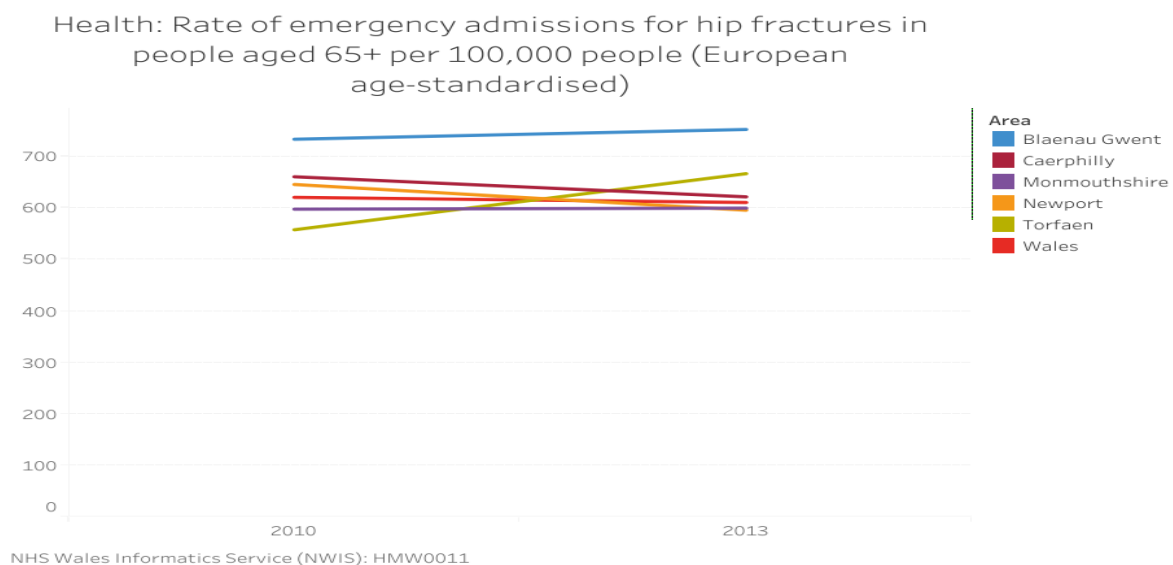
A large percentage of people are generally satisfied with access to facilities across the region. This percentage is within the Wales average for Monmouthshire despite the rurality and access to bus services. This data is from 2018 and Blaenau Gwent figure is quite low in comparison to other local authorities, however since 2018 ABUHB have committed to building a new Health & Wellbeing Centre in Tredegar which was built on the former site of Tredegar General Hospital and Brynmawr Medical Practice has been built to improve access to services. There has been a big shift to digital technologies through the recent Covid-19 pandemic and recognition that a number of people would not have accessed services during lockdown and therefore the RPB will still need to ensure an equitable access to services across the region, especially for older people who may not be confident with the use of technologies.

(2.2) Percentage of people who are lonely



We recognise that loneliness is an issue across all local authority areas and highlighted in the previous PNA; and this will have been exacerbated recently through the Covid-19 pandemic where a number of vulnerable people will have been shielding. The data varies across the region but is generally high and between 15-20% (1 in 5 people) which is a considerable number of people susceptible to poor emotional and mental health and deterioration in physical help. Loneliness may be perceived as an older person's issue – recognised by Older People's Commissioner for Wales – but given that the percentage is approximately 20% it is likely that younger people will be affected too, especially given virtual working arrangements. Solutions are generally low cost/no cost and important for RPB to promote networks, access to information and local groups, particularly through Dewis portal.

(2.3) Rate of emergency admissions for hip fractures in people aged 65 plus per 100,000 people



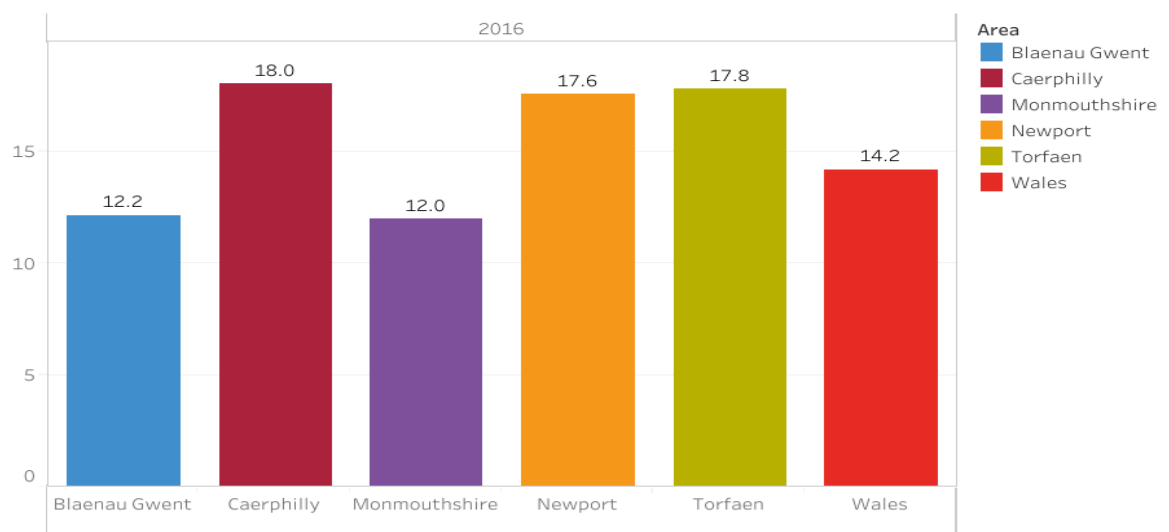
It is widely accepted that falls amongst older people are one of the biggest factors in hospital admissions and calls for ambulance assistance. Hip fractures data can be inferred and indicate level of falls amongst older people and subsequently hospital admissions.

1 in 3 people aged 65+ (over 3 million) fall in the UK every year and 1.2 million people are treated in Accident and Emergency Departments (A&E) after a fall, costing the NHS £1.6 billion each year (CSP, 2015; Tinetti, 1988). The Economic Model for Falls Prevention (CSP, 2016) suggests that mild falls (those that don't require any additional treatment on discharge from A&E) represent 47.2% of the total number of falls. Falls account for approximately 10% of 999 emergency calls received via the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST) across Wales (WAST, 2016). There has been an emphasis on preventing falls and dedicated studies, roles and services within the ABUHB as well as wider public information and awareness. Gwent Frailty is a multi-disciplinary service within the Primary Care and Community Services Division in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, centred on providing patients with care and/or treatment closer to home and promoting patient independence; and falls prevention is a core function of the service.

We have seen recently during the pandemic and during the winter periods the impact on WAST and hospitals, falls can have and along with progressed dementia, the predominant factor in 999 calls for ambulances. The data included is a conservative indication of falls given that not all older people will require surgery after an accident. However, the data when totalled is approximately 3000 people during 2013 and will not simply reflect hospital admissions but also the large number of rehabilitation services required and subsequent impact on independent living. Given the impact on health and social care, falls prevention will still remain a priority for RPB consideration.

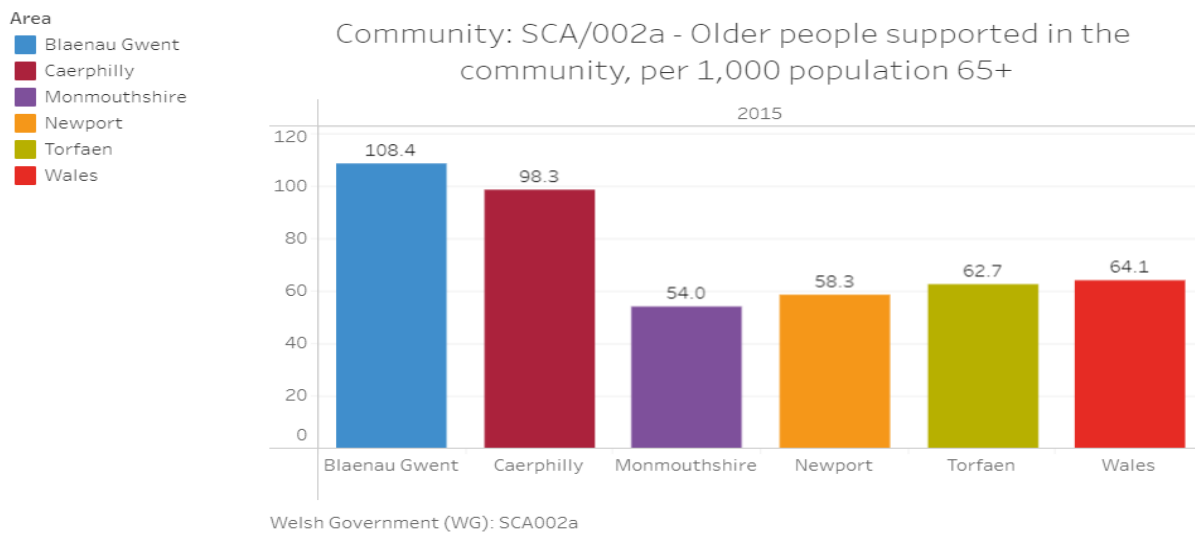
(2.4) Percentage of people who called for an ambulance in the last 12 months

Health: % of people who called for an ambulance in the last 12 months



The data can highlight the acute needs of some local authority areas when compared to the rest of Wales. The 3 areas higher than Wales average are valley communities and could point to wider health detriments in those areas.

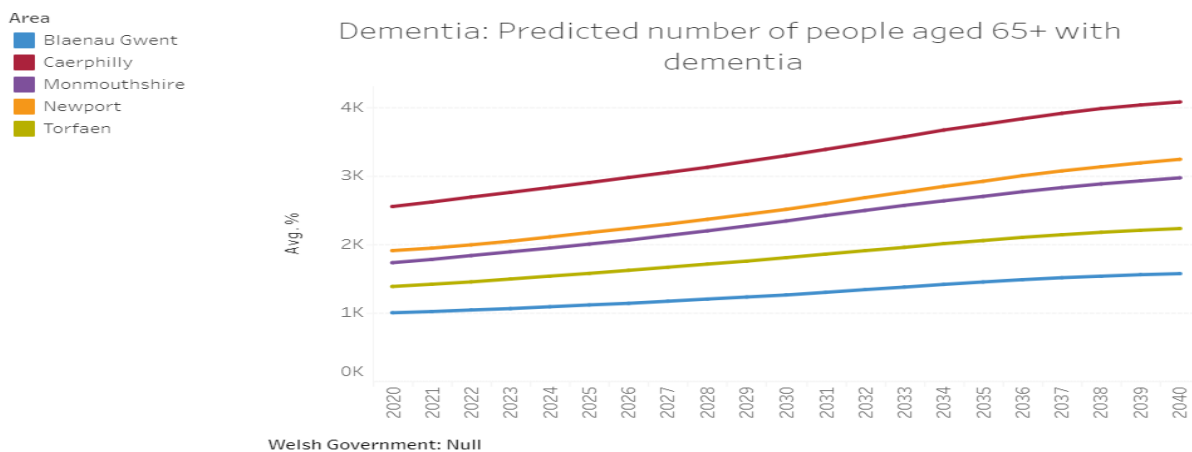
(2.5) Older people supported in the community, per 1,000 population 65+



Remaining at home is at the heart of many peoples view of being independent. People have told us they would like help and support to move around and maintain their own home, go out as they please and not have to depend too much on others. We also know that many older people with long term health conditions are caring for a family member, friend or neighbour and need to be supported to continue to do so. These unpaid carers contribute significantly to the Gwent economy and potential health and social care costs.

Older people need good, timely and accurate information to be able to understand what support is available to them and this can be important to maintaining independence. This also needs to be provided in a range of ways so people can access it. Small things can be quite significant – such as size and type of fonts in leaflets or background colours to aid readability. Information is now often provided digitally and so access to online information for older people is dependent on skills and resources. Greater consideration should be given to supporting older people to develop the necessary skills and confidence to access information online. Public access areas such as GP Surgeries, public transport and community libraries can act as access points for information but in some areas of Wales these are underutilised and overlooked. We have valuable community library resources across Gwent which provide information, advice, and guidance for both older people and those living with dementia.

(2.6) Predicted number of people with dementia 65 plus

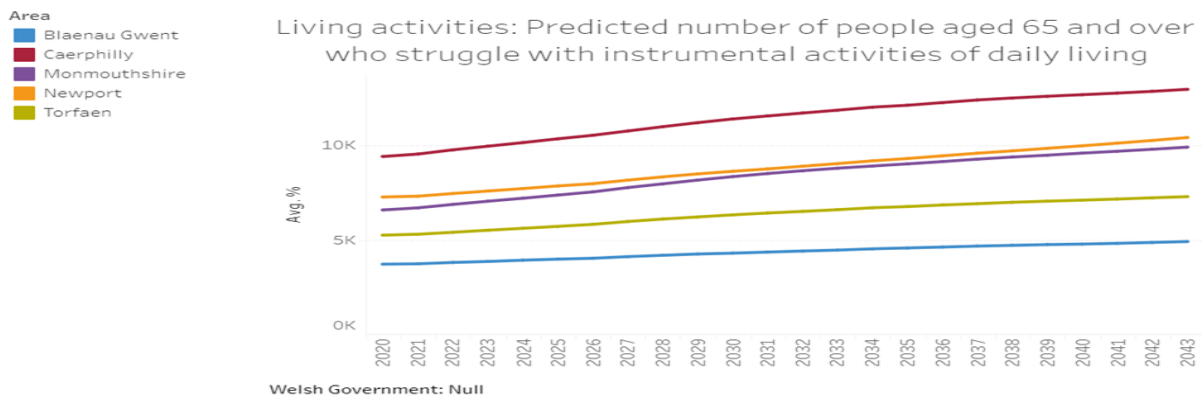


Approximately 42,000 people are living with dementia in Wales, and it is most common in older people, affecting 1 in 20 people over the age of 65 and 1 in 5 over the age of 80. It is predicted that 1 million people in the UK will have dementia by 2025 and this could increase to 2 million by 2050 (Alzheimer’s Research UK). Above figures are from '*Dementia UK: A report into the prevalence and cost of dementia*' prepared by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) at the London School of Economics and the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London, for the Alzheimer's Society, 2007. The prevalence rates have been applied to population projections of the 65 or older population to give estimated numbers of people predicted to have dementia, to 2035.

Across all local authority areas in the Gwent region, an increase in the number of people living with dementia is predicted. The increases range from 62.1% in Blaenau Gwent to 97.1% in Monmouthshire over the period 2013 to 2035. The RPB are working to support more timely diagnosis and are developing a consistent clearly understood diagnosis, care and support pathway which incorporates standards of care and outcome measures. Living with dementia can have a big emotional, social, and psychological impact on a person, their families, and carers. This can affect the relationships a person has with their environment and the support that they receive. It is important to people living with dementia that people develop awareness and understanding of the condition so they can be supported to maintain quality of life. As an RPB we provide development and learning opportunities jointly with our key partners to the workforce and communities to raise awareness, understanding and highlight risk factors and preventative measures. We also work with partners and continue to develop and build on the strengths of our Dementia Friendly Communities, working in collaboration of Age Friendly Community groups.

We are aware of the impact of the pandemic on people living with dementia and professionals within health and social care have been working hard to support people through assistive technology, online support and telephone calls where face to face visits could not be provided. We have also been supporting people living with dementia their family and carers through the Get There Together National project, working with partners to create a series of films aimed to reduce concerns and reassure anyone who is anxious about getting beyond the front door as well as dealing with the stresses of Covid-19.

(2.7) Predicted number of people unable 1 task 65 plus



Healthy life expectancy is increasing over time, which is positive, however when the time comes where the oldest population develop care and support needs, those needs are more intensive and expensive as people live longer. People over the age of 65 are more likely to need extra support to remain independent in their own homes and across all local authorities in Gwent it is predicted there will be an increase in people unable to manage at least one domestic task on their own.

Predicted number of people aged 65 or over that will be unable to manage at least one domestic task on their own (household shopping, wash and dry dishes, clean windows inside, jobs involving climbing, use a vacuum cleaner to clean floors, wash clothing by hand, open screw tops, deal with personal affairs, do practical activities). Figures are taken from *Living in Britain; Results from the 2001 General Household Survey, Supplementary report: People aged 65 and over, table 37, ONS*. The predicted increases range is from 44.9% in Blaenau Gwent to 71.6% in Monmouthshire. As an RPB we have a range multi-disciplinary reablement and care services in place to provide long and short-term support to help people live independently in their own homes. We also have been using grant funding from the Integrated Care Fund to promote digital and mobile assistive technology solutions to support the prevention of falls and manage the risks associated with dementia and other types of cognitive impairment.

What people have told us

Remaining at home is at the heart of many peoples view of being independent. People have told us they would like help and support to move around and maintain their own home, go out as they please and not have to depend too much on others. We also know that many older people with long term health conditions are caring for a family member, friend or neighbour and need to be supported to continue to do so. These unpaid carers contribute significantly to the Gwent economy and potential health and social care costs.

“I want to remain in my own home for as long as I can. It’s where all my memories are”.

“I am scared of being in contact with people as don’t want to get covid, but I am also isolated so feel really down. It’s confusing!”.

There are additional data graphs relating to adults in the Social Wellbeing section of the Wellbeing Assessment including

1. Life expectancy and health inequalities
2. Cancer registrations
3. Deaths due to cancer
4. Deaths due to cardiovascular disease
5. Delayed transfers of care

Healthy lifestyles including

6. Physical activity
7. Healthy diet
8. Alcohol
9. Smoking
10. Individuals who are overweight or obese
11. Overweight/obesity
12. Diabetes

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

Wales has an ageing population and many people stay healthy, independent, and well into old age, however as people age, they are more likely to live with complex co-morbidities, frailty, and disability. By 2030 it is projected that there will be over 1,008,000 older people in Wales (33% of the population) (ONS 2017/2018). Older people have lots of skills, knowledge, and experience to contribute to society and are a valuable resource to us in Gwent, with many volunteering and sharing their skills in communities. A whole system approach is needed between health and social care and other partners to help people remain independent and as healthy as possible so they can continue to live at home.

What are the gaps in understanding of well-being?

The number of older people with unmet care and support needs is increasing substantially due to challenges in the health and care system. Effective solutions are needed to address these needs including addressing delayed discharges in hospitals that can lead to worsening health outcomes and complications around care and support needs. It is clear that most people desire to cope with their illnesses and remain independent at home and care models need to reflect the needs of the person as part of their care and support.

The public health restrictions put in place to keep people safe during the pandemic, meant that older people saw big changes to their normal activities and routines. It also meant spending time apart from family, friends, volunteering roles, jobs and communities and creating loneliness and isolation. These changes have meant some people are nervous and anxious to return to normality and are unsure of what the future holds.

Connecting through digital platforms became a valuable resource to many people in Gwent so they could stay in touch with family and friends, access health services, shopping, advice, guidance, and entertainment. However digital exclusion still remains across Wales where some older people have a number of barriers to getting connected such as lack of confidence in using digital technology, financial barriers, costs of broadband services or lack of broadband

due to rurality of area. Some people also said that healthcare appointment had been cancelled and they were now struggling as had to wait for health procedures and were unsure of how long they would have to wait. This will impact future waiting lists for procedures and appointments.

The pandemic has also brought to light positives about life in Gwent, with communities coming together to support each other, people volunteering and responding to calls for help. There has been a wave of solidarity during this time and the commitment and dedication of our health and social care workforce during this time and continues to be incredible. Also:

- We have key assets in Gwent such as our network of unpaid carers and volunteers and a passionate multi-agency workforce. We also have a very good relationship with our independent/third sector partners and Dementia Supportive Communities.
- There are roughly four million unpaid carers (for all service user groups), of whom one quarter provide more than 50 hours a week of care, giving practical help, companionship, and general supervision. Nearly 90% of older people with dependency problems receive some informal care (some alongside formal care). There is likely to be a fall in the future supply of such carers, arising from changes in the population age structure, rising divorce rates, decline in family size, rising childlessness, growing employment among married women, changing household composition of older people, and changing preferences of older people. (SCIE)
- Volunteers also play a major part in providing social care. It has been estimated that their contribution represents the equivalent of 221,000 full-time employees, or roughly one in every five hours of formal caring. Many such volunteers are older people themselves.
- There are pressures on social care services arising from the needs and preferences of older people increasing.
- Recruitment and retention of employees is challenging for services for older people. High levels of stress and dissatisfaction are reported by staff, and although low pay is an issue, the introduction of the national minimum 4 wage should have eased recruitment. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

(3) HEALTH / PHYSICAL DISABILITIES & SENSORY IMPAIRMENT

A person with a 'health or physical disability including sensory impairment', may have difficulty carrying out everyday activities, as their movement and senses may be limited. Sensory impairment is reduced or loss of sight, hearing, or both. Those included are the blind, partially sighted, deaf, and hard of hearing. A disability may be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime. Health disabilities can include chronic conditions such as obesity or an individual might have had a stroke and have long term effects with movement, speech, hearing, and sight. Equipment and adaptations can help a person to live more independently and confidently at home. Prevention, early identification and providing practical and emotional support and easier accessibility to services can have a real positive impact on life outcomes.

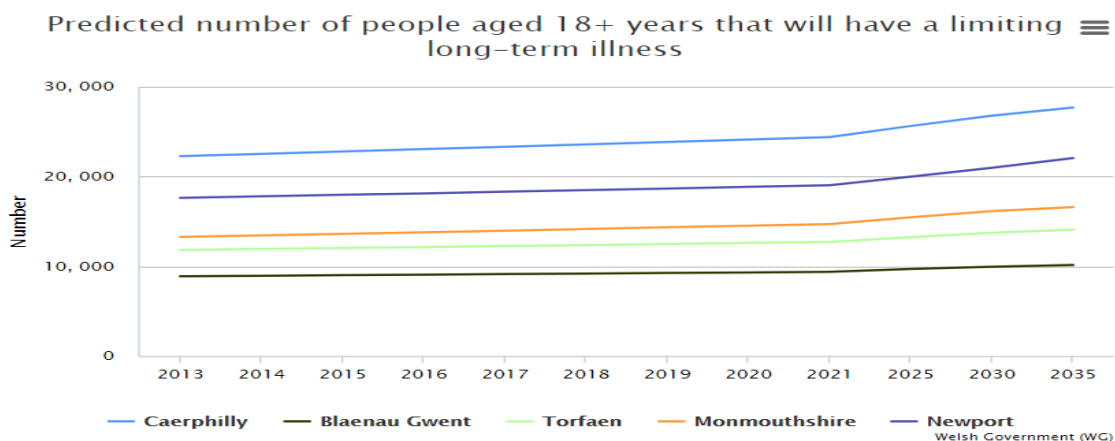
Key Themes

- Supporting disabled people through an all-age approach to live independently in appropriate accommodation
- Support access to community-based services, including transport.
- Help people reduce the risk of poor health and well-being through earlier intervention and community support.
- Ensure people are supported through access to accurate, timely information and assistance and 'rehabilitation' where required.
- Improve emotional well-being particularly through peer-to-peer support.

Policy Areas

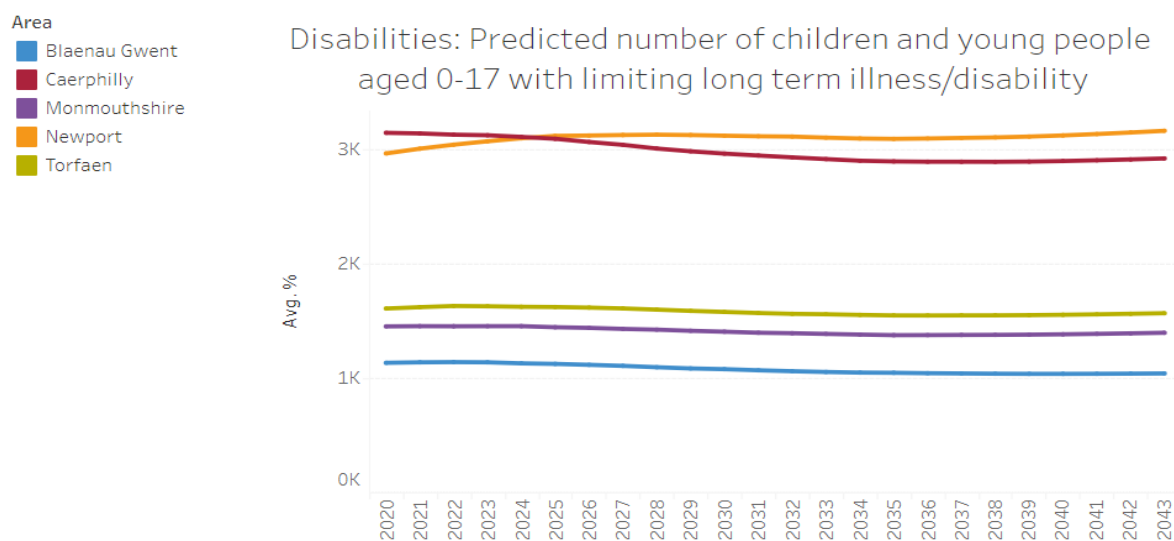
- Welsh Government's Disability Equality Forum Impact of Covid-19 on disabled people in Wales and 'Action on Disability' framework
- Wales Council of the Blind. Rehabilitation Officers for Visual Impairment, Addressing a workforce crisis in Wales
- All Wales Deaf Mental Health and Wellbeing Group. Deaf People Wales: Hidden Inequality.

(3.1) Predicted number of people aged 18+ years with a limiting long-term illness



The impact of chronic conditions on peoples lives and services in Wales is of growing concern. Wales has the highest rates of long-term limiting illness in the UK, accounting for a large proportion of unnecessary emergency hospital admissions (NHS Wales). Figures are taken from the *Welsh Health Survey 2012, table 3.11 Adults who reported having illnesses, or being limited by a health problem/disability, by age and sex*. Adults who reported having a limiting long-term illness were asked to specify the illness which was the main cause of their limitation. All local authority areas across the Gwent region are predicted to see an increase in the number. The predicted increases range from 14.1% in Blaenau Gwent to 25.1% in Newport

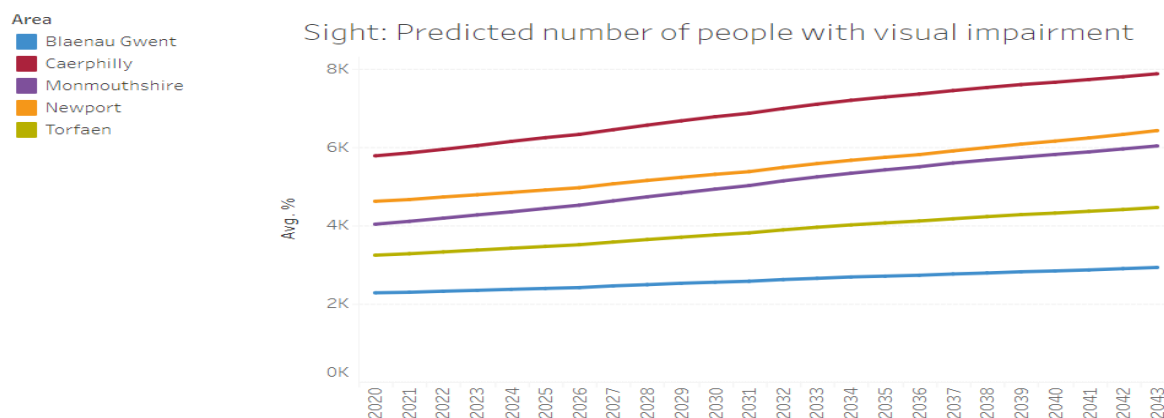
(3.2) Predicted number of people aged 0 - 17 that will have a disability according to Disability Discrimination Act definitions 2035



This figure is taken from the study *Prevalence of childhood disability and the characteristics and circumstances of disabled children in the UK, Blackburn et al, BMC Paediatrics 2010*. Children were defined as disabled if they met the Disability Discrimination Act criteria for a disabled person. Disability Discrimination Act definitions mean that the child has significant difficulties with any of the following areas: mobility, lifting/carrying, manual dexterity, continence, communication (speech, hearing, eyesight), memory/ability to concentrate or understand, recognise if in physical danger, physical coordination, or other problem or disability.

The number of young people living with a disability is predicted to be relatively stable over the next 10 years but will still remain significant in terms of multi-agency partnership support required to ensure outcomes. Transition arrangements between primary and secondary education is key to ensuring outcomes as well as effective planning between partners. Parents often highlight the number of different partners requesting information and the RPB has invested in an Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs (ISCAN) to coordinate services for children and families in one place. ISCAN has been key to reducing multiple ‘hand offs’ to partners and supported parents with caring of children with disabilities especially during Covid-19 pandemic.

(3.3) Number of sight impaired people 65 plus



The above data has been taken from the registers of people with physical or sensory disabilities, data includes all persons registered under Section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948. However, registration is voluntary, and figures may therefore be an underestimate of the numbers of people with physical or sensory disabilities. Registration of severe sight impairment is, however, a pre-condition for the receipt of certain financial benefits and the number of people in this category may therefore be more reliable than those for partial sight impairment or other disabilities. These factors alongside the uncertainties about the regularity with which local authorities review and update their records, mean that the reliability of this information is difficult to determine and so it cannot be thought of as a definitive number of people with disabilities. People with sight impairment are registered by local authorities following certification of their sight impairment by a consultant ophthalmologist. The Certificate of Vision Impairment (Wales) formally certifies someone as partially sighted or as blind (now using the preferred terminology 'sight impaired' or 'severely sight impaired', respectively) so that the local authority can register him/her. Registration is voluntary and access to various, or to some, benefits and social services is not dependent on registration. If the person is not known to social services as someone with needs arising from their visual impairment, registration also acts as a referral for a social care assessment.

The majority of local authority areas in the Gwent region have experienced a decrease however this data will need to be explored further to ascertain if this is a registration issue and if people are aware of services.

Rehabilitation Officers for Visual Impairment (ROVI) provide early intervention support, helping people to remain independent and contribute to their community. There is a concern that in some areas some people are being signposted away from this support however we don't have the full data on this. The role has been identified across Wales as needing a clear pathway for referral to address unmet need and further promotion of the role which has been taken forward in Torfaen. The RPB work closely with third sector partners and will continue to support people with sight impairment through multi-agency partnership approaches and access to new technologies.

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

More than **600,000** people in Wales have hearing or sight loss (NHSWales2015) with the number increasing due to demographic trends and increases in chronic health conditions, amongst other causes. The effects of living with multiple health conditions can be profound, affecting quality of life, daily activities, poor physical and mental wellbeing and finding and maintaining employment, leading to financial hardship. This can then exacerbate inequalities, with loss of income and worklessness contributing to further declines in health. There is a danger that, without action, worsening socioeconomic inequalities will further concentrate this trend among the most disadvantaged.

Disability is extremely diverse and although some people might have extensive health care needs others might not, however all people with a disability need to access mainstream healthcare services. Almost everyone is likely to experience some form of disability during their lifetime, which could be temporary or permanent, having a dramatic impact on quality of life. There have been many improvements through the years, however the UK Disability Survey (2021) identified that public perception of disabled people is still a significant barrier to participation in areas, including employment and education and unhelpful perceptions and stigma.

People living with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. They have had potentially higher risk of catching the virus due to underlying health conditions and had difficulty in engaging in preventative measures and experienced disruptions to health services they usually rely on. People with sensory loss have found it extremely challenging as their communication needs have not been met leaving them increasingly isolated. Although health and social care have worked hard across Gwent to reach out and support people during this time, we need more specific actions going forward, to recognise the impact there has been for people with health, physical and sensory disabilities.

There is an urgent need to improve the data we collect on disability, to further improve equality for disabled people and increase emotional wellbeing within health and social care.

What are the gaps in understanding of well-being?

Adults and children with disabilities have struggled both physically and mentally throughout the pandemic with the loss of services and support during this time. Some people previously found comfort in their daily routines which were removed with cancelled appointments and lockdown of education and activities.

Some people who are blind and visually impaired felt lonely prior to the pandemic but during this challenging time they have had to face more physical and psychological barriers. Social distancing rules have been difficult, as this cannot be observed along with directional arrows, screens etc. In community settings and trying to follow the rules has caused anxiety, stress, and exhaustion. Rehabilitation in sight loss is key in preventative approaches to support new ways to accomplish essential tasks and to introduce a range of equipment and techniques to avoid injuries and falls and mitigate or defer the need for longer term care. There is a scarcity of ROVIs which needs to be anticipated and addressed in the Gwent area to support eye conditions, orientation and mobility, independent living and communication skills. During the pandemic the ROVI in Torfaen has provided training to social care colleagues on the ROVI role and referral pathways and the benefits they bring. This has resulted in more referrals.

Visual impairment is strongly associated with falls and hip fractures. The rate of falls in older people with visual impairment is 1.7 times higher than other older people of the same age, with hip fractures 1.3 - 1.9 times higher

The new normal is for people to wear facemasks to prevent transmission of disease. As a result of this deaf and hearing-impaired people feel excluded from the world. Deaf people who rely on sign language still need facial expressions for full communication, so this has been difficult.

What people have told us

Some people feel isolated and excluded and have been struggling with mental and physical health. Some people feel there is lack of multi-agency support and they don't always know who to contact. Some people also struggle with accessibility of certain buildings, pavements and using public transport.

“I have just applied for a guide dog and am on the ‘awaiting training list’ I can’t wait to get my confidence back and be able to go out and have my independence back”.

Some people have hidden disabilities which are not visible but are just as challenging. They have faced discrimination as their disability can't be seen. There needs to be more positive attitudes towards disabled people. It is important for us to have a more inclusive future that focuses on our strengths.

- People are living longer; however future trends indicate that on average a quarter of people after age 65 will live with some form of health disability. This needs to be considered when developing service models with a particular focus on effective prevention interventions. There are estimated to be about 9 million deaf and hard of hearing adults in the UK, that is about 18% of the total population. About 640,000 of these are profoundly or severely deaf. As people grow older the chances of becoming deaf increase: 7 out of 10 people over 70 will have developed a significant hearing loss. This could have a significant impact on health and social care services.
- Sensory impairment can be a significant life limiting condition and its incidence increases with age. This means the challenges associated with the condition are likely to grow over coming decades. People with sensory impairment have a range of care and support needs. There is a scarcity of ROVI workers who can provide the necessary assessment and delivery of interventions including a lack of adequate supervision to support the workforce which also needs addressing.
- Early identification is vital, as is prevention, support to reduce loneliness, isolation and promote mental health and well-being. Offering effective care and support is likely to reduce other risks associated with age and frailty, such as falls. A focus is needed on further development of generic and specialist services and improving the access to other services for people with a sensory impairment. This will require a multi-agency approach.

- The prevalence of physical disability is much wider than those who need or want help from social care however this could change in the future if needs increase.
- Sight loss in the UK is estimated to double over the next 40 years, which will have a significant impact on the UK's health and social care system and damage the quality of life for millions of people. (RNIB 2009)
- Hearing loss is a common health issue in the armed forces. Many veterans will have had prolonged exposure to loud noise from small arms fire, artillery, engines, and other machinery during service, causing permanent hearing damage. The Veterans Gateway website provides information, advice and support for Veterans and their families on support and services currently available.

(4) LEARNING DISABILITIES

There are approximately 54,000 people in Wales living with a learning disability (ONS, 2019). A learning disability affects the way a person learns new skills throughout their lifetime. This can affect communication, understanding new or complex information and coping independently. A learning disability can be mild, moderate, or severe. Some people with a mild learning disability might be able to communicate well and look after themselves independently but might need a bit longer to embrace new skills. Other people might not be able to communicate and have more complex needs, needing further support. It very much depends on the persons abilities and the level of care and support they receive.

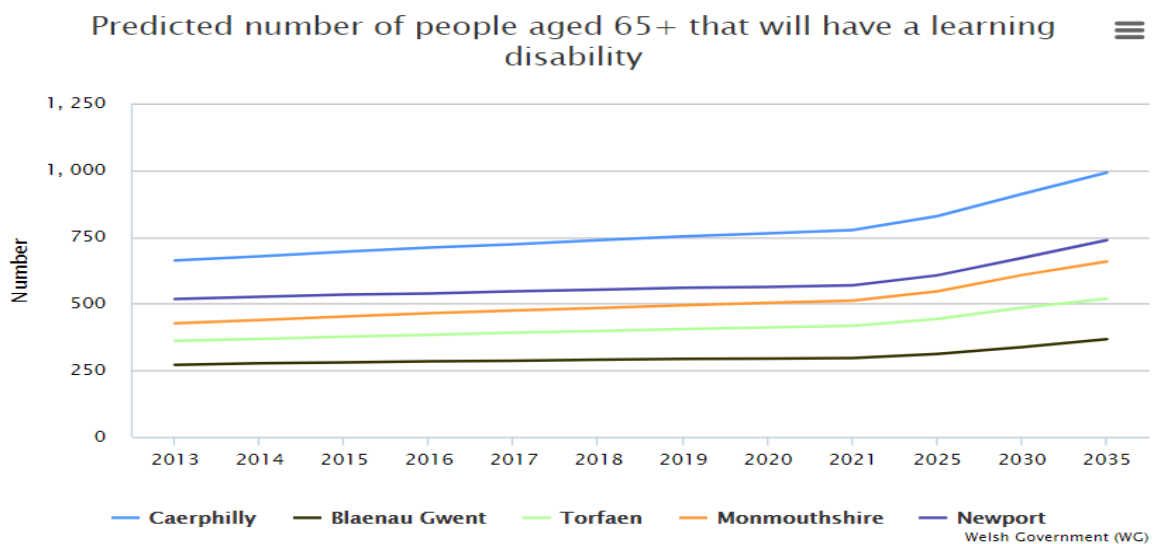
Key Themes

- Support people with learning disabilities to live independently with access to early intervention services in the community.
- Provide greater public awareness and understanding of people with learning disabilities needs.

Policy Areas

- Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme
- Children’s Commissioner Report ‘No Wrong Door’ in relation to adult services for children with learning disabilities.

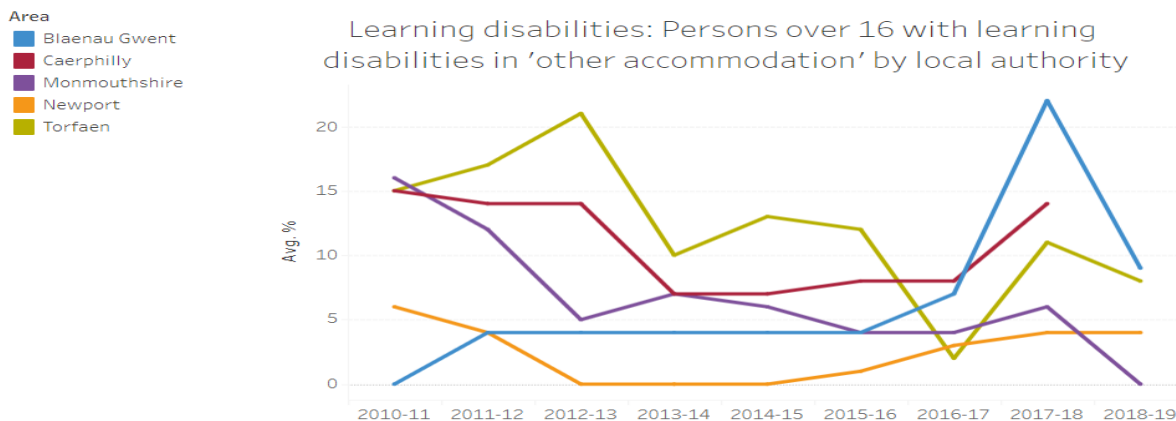
(4.1) Predicted number of people 65 plus with Learning Disabilities



The data is taken from the Register of persons with learning disabilities (SSDA901). The data may be an underestimate of the total number of people with learning disabilities as registration is voluntary. Local authorities submit numbers of those identified as having a learning disability currently known to the authority and included in a register for the purpose of planning or providing services.

All local authority areas across the region are predicted to see an increase in the number. The predicted increases range from 35.4% in Blaenau Gwent to 54.5% in Monmouthshire.

(4.2) Number of placements for persons aged 16 years or older with learning disabilities



Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

The impact of the pandemic has had a negative impact on people with a learning disability, where they have felt isolated at being separated from family and friends and daily routines disrupted. People have said that stress, anxiety, feeling isolated and changes to their normal routine has had a negative impact on mental health. Also, some people felt their health had deteriorated as they weren't as active and had put on weight due to not going out and about.

Communication and information was felt to be confusing surrounding Covid-19 which saw lots of organisations adapting the way they worked and providing more innovative ways to support people. Social media, websites and online platforms were used so people could connect and also telephone support calls as well as easy read resources so people could feel informed.

A reduction in community-based support due to restrictions has left some people feeling unsupported which has had a detrimental impact on mental health and physical wellbeing. There was also confusion over Government guidelines with people needing further advice and reassurance, which saw lots of people not wanting to visit a health professional even if this was needed. Organisations across Gwent adapted the way they worked and provided more innovative ways to support people. This was done through providing activities and services through social media, websites, and online platforms, so people could connect. Telephone check in calls were also provided by some organisations to help people stay connected, as well as easy read resources so people could keep informed.

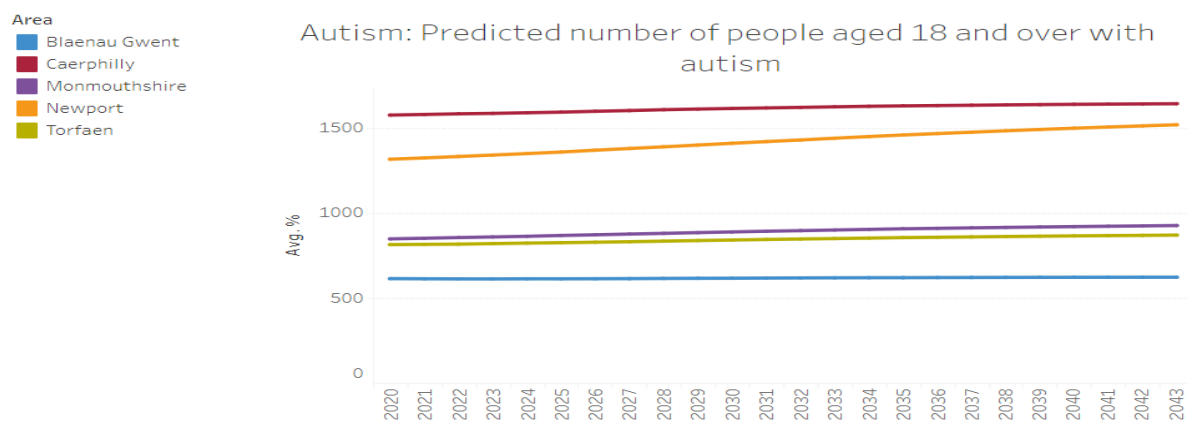
(5) AUTISM

Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autistic spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK (NAS). Each person living with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges and the way in which people learn with autism can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Autism means that the way a person thinks about and experiences the world is different to most people. Autism is different for everyone and some autistic people need little or no support. Others may need help from a parent or carer on a daily basis. These figures are taken from the study Prevalence of disorders of the autism spectrum in a population cohort of children in South Thames: The Special Needs and Autism Project (SNAP), Baird et al, the Lancet, 2006.

Policy Areas

- Part 2 of the Code of Practice within the SSWB Act
- Autism Delivery Plan 2021-2022

(5.1) Predicted number of people aged 0-17 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



Across local authorities in the Gwent region, with the exception of Blaenau Gwent, all local authority areas are predicted to see an increase in the number. Across the remaining local authority areas in the Gwent region predicted increases range from 2.1% in Monmouthshire to 17.7% in Newport. Autistic people often have difficulty in accessing community activities, leisure facilities and other services. The RPB has supported the embedding of the Integrated Autism Service and raising awareness of autism in schools through a children's story book – 'Moli the Cow who Moo she was Different'.

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

What people have told us

People want help to plan their life the way they want with the right support and services to help. Person centred planning can help people to make their own choices and achieve life goals so people can reach their potential.

There is also a need for more meaningful activities that are fun but also help people to grow and learn. Although volunteering is considered important to learn new skills, more opportunities are needed for paid employment, training, and education. Organisations adapted through the pandemic with some activities being held on Zoom. This created barriers for some organisations to join, due to data protection laws. Many people appreciated the online support and to have options to connect on zoom but have now said they have 'zoom fatigue'.

Independent living is important and the opportunity to live in suitable housing, in a suitable location with the right individual support. One size does not fit all. Some people with autism said they felt that some professionals did not know enough about autism and had a very 'stereotypical view' and felt more training was needed for not just awareness but acceptance of difference.

"My autism is unique to me. I want people to have not just a greater awareness of autism, but also an acceptance of it. My brain works differently to other people, but I have my own unique skills to offer so don't see my diagnosis, see me".

- People have felt isolated and feel nervous so could need emotional and practical support to return to normality.
- Children and young people with a disability need an improved transition support programme to improve outcomes.
- There have been difficulties with some people accessing suitable health provision so this need addressing for effective future support.
- Improved post diagnostic support is needed for adults as some feel since having their diagnosis they are left "to get on with it".
- People with autism have struggled through the pandemic with loneliness and want more meaningful activities that inspire and support learning.
- Increased Autism Awareness training for the workforce and communities and how each person is unique with their own strengths and abilities.

(6) MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health affects everyone as it includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make life choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through to adulthood. A quarter of people will experience mental health issues or illness at some point during their lifetime, often facing discrimination and stigma and affecting the people around them.

- 1 in 10 children between the ages of 5 and 16 have a mental health problem and many more have behavioural issues. There is evidence this is increasing.
- Approximately 50% of people with enduring mental health problems will have symptoms by the time they are 14 and many at a much younger age, demonstrating that mental illness can affect people across the course of their lives.
- Between 1 in 10 and 1 in 15 new mothers experience post-natal depression.
- 1 in 16 people over 65, and 1 in 6 over the age of 80, will be affected by dementia. Current estimates are that approximately 43,000 people in Wales are experiencing dementia and this is predicted to increase by over 30% in the next 10 years.
- 9 in 10 prisoners have a diagnosable mental health and/or substance misuse problem
- 295 people took their own life in Wales in 2020 (Samaritans)

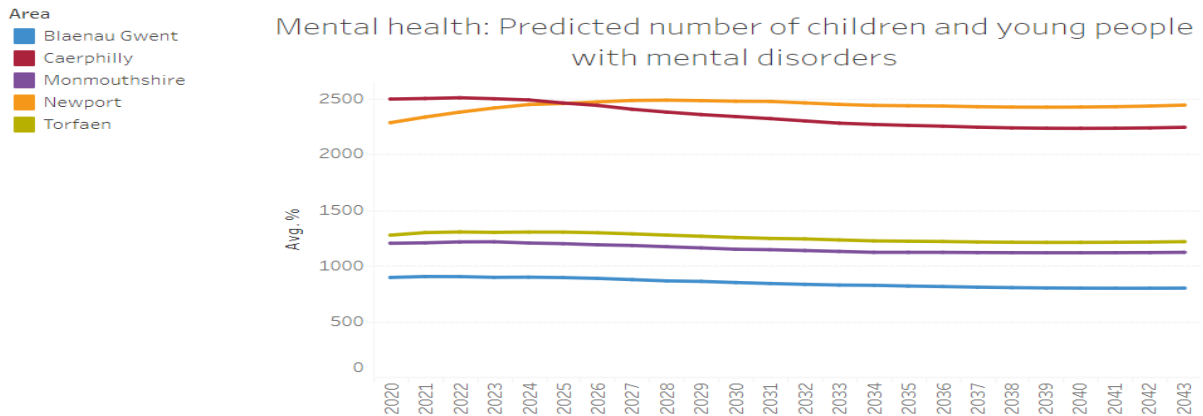
Key Themes

- Increased understanding and awareness of mental health amongst the public to reduce stigma.
- Improved interventions to help people to seek support earlier.
- To improve emotional well-being and mental health for adults and children through early intervention and community support.

Policy Areas

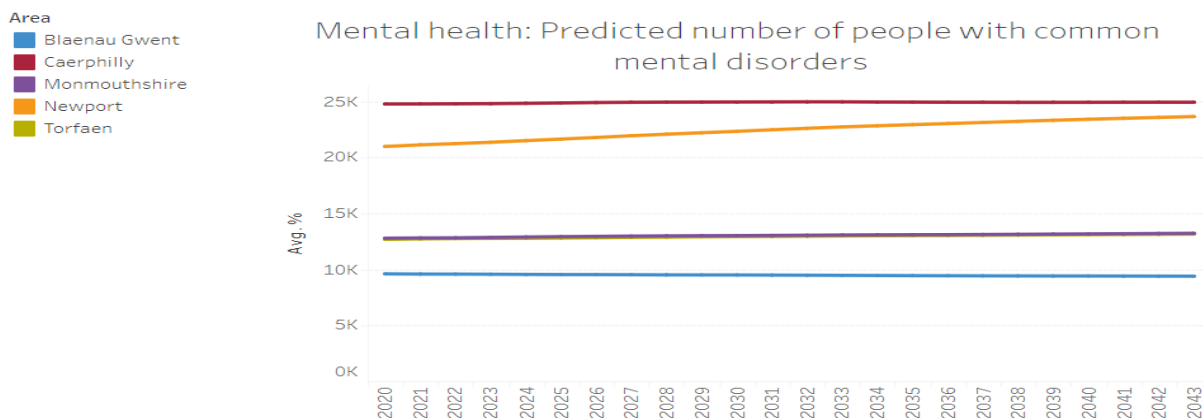
- Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022
- Together for Children and Young People Plan Together for Children and Young People, NHS Wales Health Collaborative
- Covid-19 in Wales: 'the mental health and wellbeing impact' by Cardiff University
- Talk to Me 2, Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy for Wales 2015-2020 [talk-to-me-2-suicide-and-self-harm-prevention-strategy-for-wales-2015-2020](#)
- National Mental Health Covid survey

(6.1) Predicted number of people aged 5-15 that will have a mental disorders



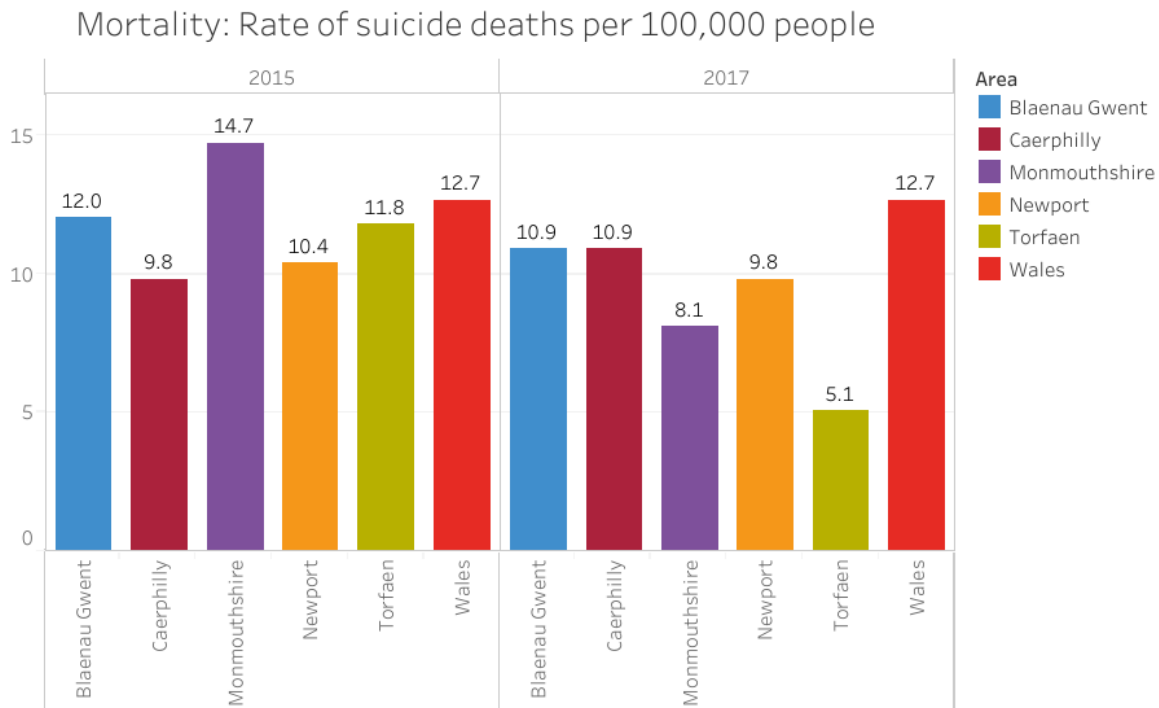
The percentage ranged from 66% in Blaenau Gwent to 78% in Monmouthshire. This compares with 72% of people aged 16 years or older free from a common mental disorder for Gwent and 74% for Wales.

(6.2) Number of people aged 16 plus free from a common mental disorder



Across the local authority areas in the Gwent region both Torfaen and Newport are predicted to see increases of 0.4% and 16.6% in the number of people aged 5 - 15 with a mental health problem. The other local authority areas are all predicted to see decreases over the same period

(6.3) Rate of suicide deaths per 100,000 people.



Office for National Statistics (ONS): SUI0003

Suicide is a major cause of death amongst the 15 to 44 age group. In Wales over the period 2010 – 2012 it accounted for almost one in five deaths in males aged 15 to 24 years and just over one in ten deaths amongst women of that age. Suicide (intentional self-harm and events of undetermined intent) accounted for 27% of external causes of death (transport accident, suicide, other accidental 9 injury, other external causes) in all ages (15 and over) between 2010 and 2012. This exceeded deaths from road traffic accidents which account for 9.1% (an average of 107 per year) in the same age group and time period.

Research was completed in 2020/2021 by a range of partners from ABUHB, Swansea and Cardiff University, *'The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental wellbeing and psychological distress: A comparison across time'*. This research highlighted the impact the pandemic has likely had on psychological wellbeing and the mental health of many people. It was found that there was an increase in clinically significant levels of psychological distress in Wales, particularly in younger adults, women, and those from areas of greater deprivation. These findings can be used to prepare and plan for the wave of psychological distress that has been predicted to hit mental health support services due to the pandemic. 'There is a need to balance the efforts to stop the spread of the virus against the mental health problems being caused by the virus'.

In Gwent we have established the multi-agency Gwent Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Steering group to develop our local plan to be responsive to the needs of the population. We hold biannual workshops to ensure we engage and take account of evidence and local data. Suicide and self-harm prevention are everyone's business and requires a collaborative approach and we have a passionate proactive partnership to take this work forward. The Gwent Suicide and Self-Harm prevention plan reflects the national Talk to Me 2 strategy,

setting our aims and objectives to prevent and reduce suicide and self-harm in Gwent and the workshops are used to discuss priorities for the year ahead.

There are additional data graphs relating to adults in the Social Wellbeing section of the Wellbeing Assessment including

1. Mental health
2. Loneliness
3. Suicide and self-harm

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

- Poor mental health and mental illness have a significant impact on individuals, society, and the economy overall. To respond to the mental health emergency, we need to work collaboratively to support more preventative and early interventions and encourage inclusivity.
- We need to promote the mental wellbeing of people in Gwent and ensure that the workforce is supported to be able to provide people with the support they need at the right time.
- Although progress has been made through previous strategies there is still work to do to improve life outcomes for people and address stigma.
- We need to improve information available to the public, to create more understanding of mental health and encourage people to talk to gain early support. It is also crucial we meet the needs of Welsh language, other languages, Easy Read and Braille; and other accessible formats so mental health information is accessible to all.
- There is a need for more meaningful activities to promote wellbeing and improve life outcomes.
- There is a need to tackle loneliness and isolation.
- In Gwent we need to look at ways of improving job opportunities for people with mental health issues to get people into work and out of poverty.

What are the gaps in understanding of wellbeing?

There are signs that the pandemic is driving a worrying rise in mental health in Wales. Two thirds of people in Wales have said the pandemic has had a negative impact on their wellbeing. People have gone through adverse experiences such as losing their jobs, falling into debt, worrying about their health, and been isolated from friends and families. For most people, the symptoms of Covid-19 pass within a few days or weeks, but for some people the effects can last for weeks or months. This condition is called long Covid and can impact mental health causing depression and anxiety as well as sleep issues, extreme tiredness and a range of other debilitating symptoms.

Research was completed in 2020/2021 by a range of partners from ABUHB, Swansea and Cardiff University, 'The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental wellbeing and psychological distress: A comparison across time'. This research highlighted the impact the pandemic has likely had on psychological wellbeing and the mental health of many people. It was found that there was an increase in clinically significant levels of psychological distress in

Wales, particularly in younger adults, women, and those from areas of greater deprivation. These findings can be used to prepare and plan for the wave of psychological distress that has been predicted to hit mental health support services due to the pandemic. 'There is a need to balance the efforts to stop the spread of the virus against the mental health problems being caused by the virus'.

What people have told us

People have said they are struggling with poor mental health due to their early life experiences, financial issues, housing, long term illness, family worries, employment issues, bereavement or feeling burnt out from workloads and caring roles. Many people feel worse emotionally since the pandemic however it is worth noting that some people in Gwent also said they feel more relaxed in some ways; as life has slowed down for them and they don't have to go out of the house to access some services.

Some people felt they had to fight for support and had been pushed into financial difficulty as they had to give up work as unable to cope. Also, people from BAME communities said their mental health had been affected by racism, inequalities, and mental health stigma with added stress of the challenges of accessing services. There can also be language barriers and not knowing where to turn for help.

Waiting lists for mental health services can be lengthy due to the level of need and during this time an individual's emotional wellbeing can decline further. Some people also felt that there was not enough crisis support.

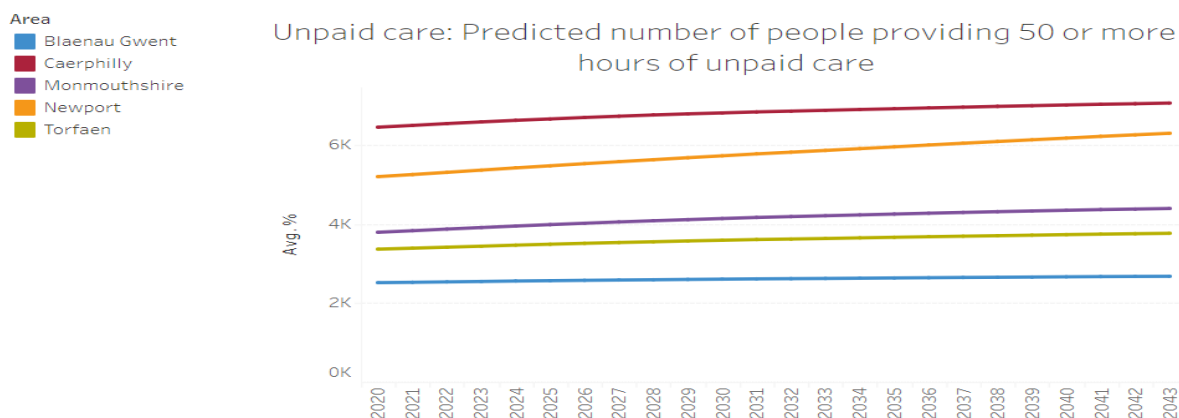
"I wish people viewed mental health differently I used to work but had to give up as I was not emotionally well enough and started having physical problems. That could happen to anyone at any time, People still judge and there is still a stigma to mental health".

(7) CARERS WHO NEED SUPPORT

Policy Area

- Welsh Government's Strategy for Unpaid Carers

(7.1) Predicted number of people providing 50+ hours of unpaid care



Figures are taken from the Census 2011 reference CT0224 - Sex by age by provision of unpaid care by general health. This dataset provides estimates that classify usual residents of England and Wales by provision of unpaid care and by age and by general health. All local authority areas across the Gwent region are predicted to see an increase in the number. The predicted increases range from 35.6% in Blaenau Gwent to 58.9% in Monmouthshire over the period

(7.2) Number of young carers known to Social Services during the year 2016

Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen
17	45	38	51	49

(7.3) Number of young carers known to Social Services who were provided with a service during the year 2016

Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen
5	45	38	34	28

Number of young carers known to Social Services who were provided with a service during the year. A young carer is someone aged under 18 who takes responsibility for someone who is ill, disabled, elderly, experiencing mental distress or affected by substance misuse, or has substantial responsibility for caring for a sibling. A young carer may be from any family. They may be the person providing all of the care but may also help someone else to provide the care.

(7.4) Predicted number of people aged 16 - 24 that will provide 1 - 19 hours of unpaid care in 2035

Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen
266	904	236	740	464

Figures are taken from the Welsh Health Survey 2008: Health of Carers. The prevalence rates have been applied to population projections to give estimated numbers predicted to provide unpaid care, to 2035.

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

What Carers have told us?

State of Caring 2021 in Wales: each year, Carers UK carries out a survey of carers to understand the current state of caring in the UK. This report contains a snapshot of what caring in Wales is like in 2021, capturing the impact that caring has on carers' lives and evidencing the policy recommendations that would improve this.

Finances: caring often brings with it additional costs, from equipment and care costs to increased expenditure on fuel and transportation. When asked to describe their current financial situation, 36% of carers in Wales said they were struggling to make ends meet. A further 23% are or have been in debt as a result of caring and 8% cannot afford utility bills such as electricity, gas, water or telephone bills. When asked about how their financial situation had changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 36% of carers said that their financial situation had got worse since the start of the pandemic. Caring can be expensive and 65% of carers are spending their own money on care, support services or products for the person they care for. The average monthly spend for carers in Wales is £109.75 and with high rates of inflation and a rising cost of living, this extra spend is likely to further disadvantage carers financially.

Support and Services: carers often need practical and emotional support to enable them to care safely for people with complex needs, and too often they struggle to get the support they need. When asked about barriers to accessing support, the largest issue for Welsh carers was that they did not know what services were available in their area with 40% of carers reporting this as a barrier. In addition, 30% of carers were concerned about the risk of catching COVID-19 and 32% say that the care and support services did not meet their needs. Considering the future of services, 51% of carers were uncertain about what practical support they may be able to access in the next twelve months and 66% were worried that services will be reduced.

Health: Caring can have a detrimental impact on someone's physical and mental health. 26% of carers described their physical health as bad or very bad. 34% of carers rated their mental health as bad or very bad. Looking at wider indicators of wellbeing, 36% of carers reported that they are often or always lonely, otherwise known as being 'chronically lonely'. Carers

also rated their overall satisfaction with life at an average of 4 out of 10 and their level of anxiety at 6 out of 10. Carer's assessments The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 gives Welsh carers the right to a carer's needs assessment. Despite carers' rights to assessments only 21% of Welsh carers reported having an assessment in the last 12 months. Of those, 28% waited more than six months for their assessment. Of those who hadn't requested a carer's assessment, 37% stated that this was because they didn't know what it was and 20% stated it was because they didn't think it would be beneficial. 10% of carers said their assessment had been postponed or they were still waiting.

Technology: When asked about their current use of digital technology, remote healthcare such as online GP appointments was the most popular technology listed with 37% of carers stating that this made their caring role easier. Looking to the future, 31% of Welsh carers would like to continue accessing support services digitally in the future and 44% stating they would like to continue accessing health and social care services digitally.

Work: Working carers represent a significant proportion of the working population and 196 respondents were in paid work. The pandemic is continuing to have an impact on working experiences, with 51% of working carers are working from home part or full time. The limited return of services continues to have an impact. 30% of working carers in Wales stated that if care services did not return, they would either need to reduce their working hours or give up work entirely.

Respite is continually highlighted as the highest support need for carers across Gwent.

(8) HOUSING

Housing needs include specialist housing and accommodation needs of the core priority groups, including supported accommodation, such as extra care housing, supported living for adults with a disability, and small unit residential care for children with higher needs. Also included are additional investment in adaptations to support people in the priority groups to continue to live independently and safely in their own home.

Policy Areas

- Programme Plans and Objectives (PPO) being undertaken for the ICF Capital Funding programme.
- Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMAs)
- Welsh Government Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness
- Ending Homelessness in Wales: A high level action plan 2021-2026

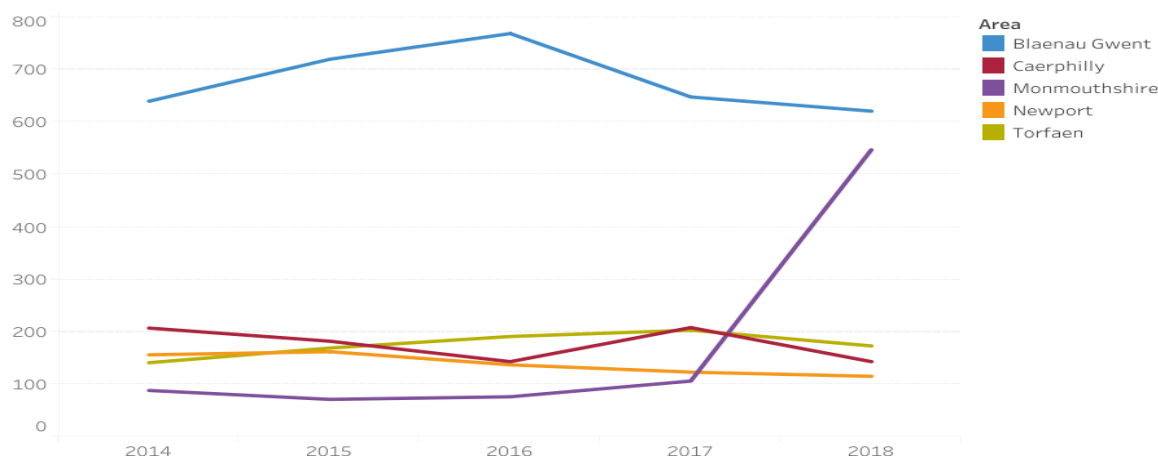
(8.1) Rate of all other accommodation for persons aged 16+ with a learning disability per 10,000 population

Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen
3.8	6.6	9.4	7.6	5.1

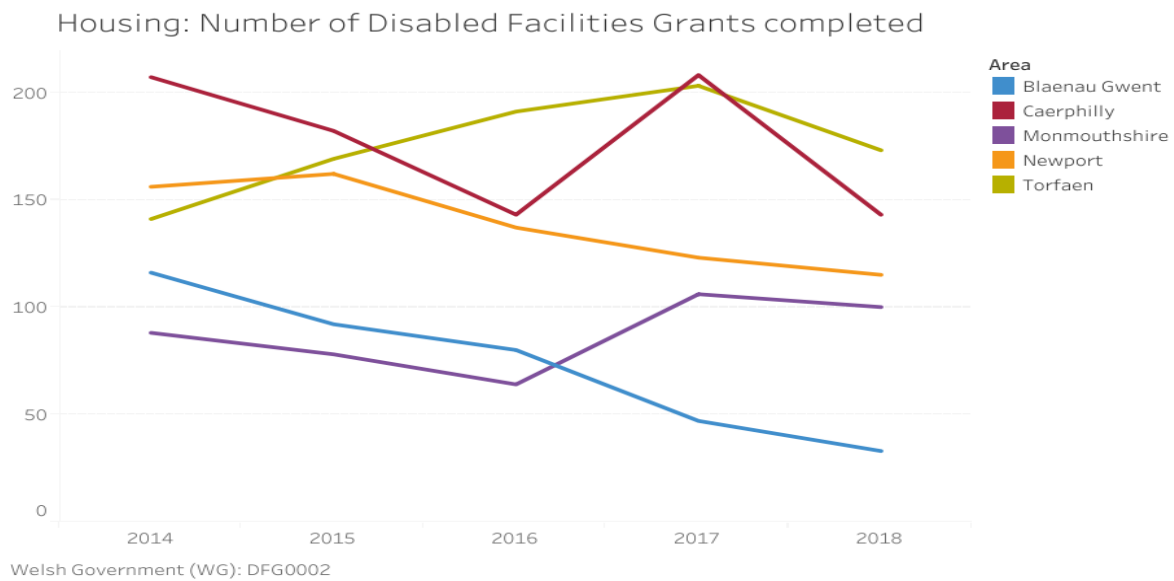
The data is taken from the Register of persons with learning disabilities (SSDA901). The data may be an underestimate of the total number of people with learning disabilities as registration is voluntary. Local authorities submit numbers of those identified as having a learning disability currently known to the authority and included in a register for the purpose of planning or providing services.

(8.2) Number of dwellings improved through Disabled Facilities Grant

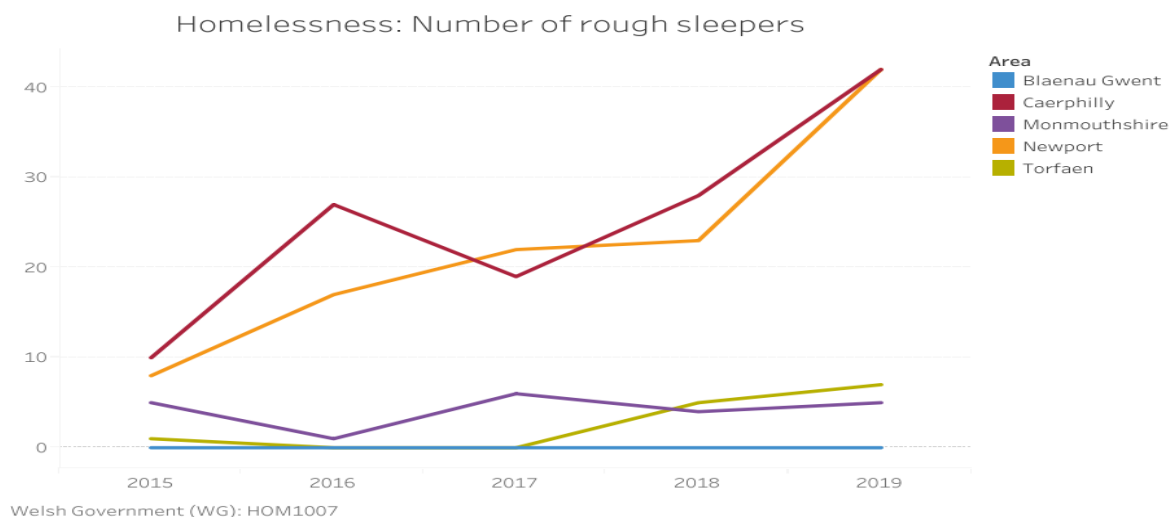
Housing: Number of dwellings improved through Disabled Facilities Grants



(8.3) Number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed



(8.4) Number of rough sleepers

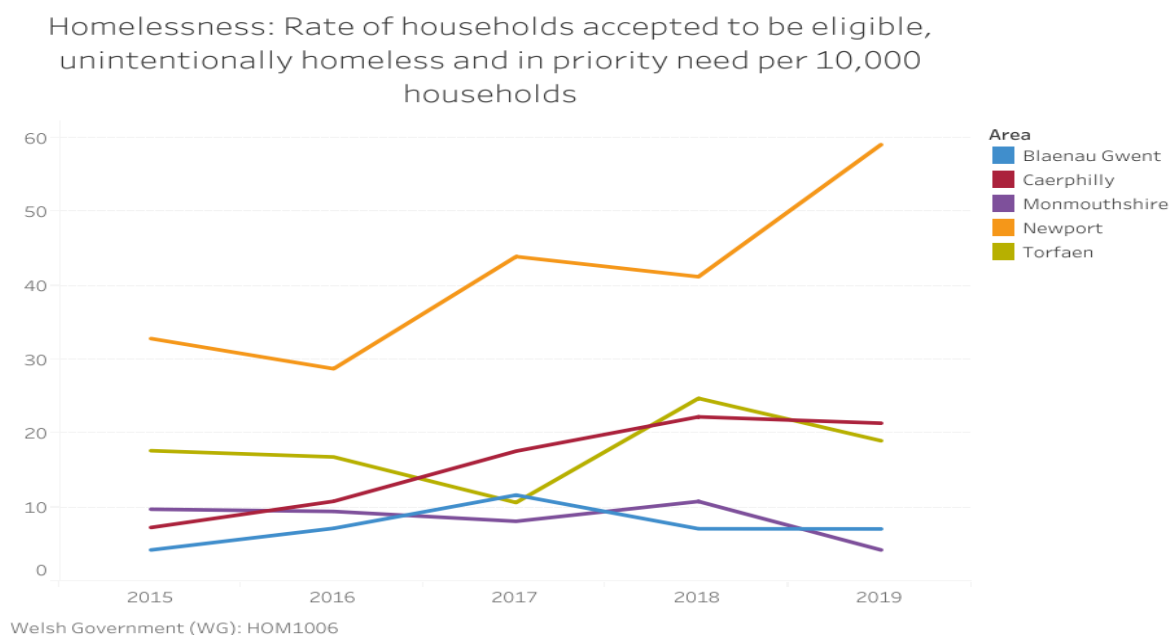


Implementation of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 by local authorities across Wales has done much to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless – over 23,673 households since 2015. However, whilst prevention rates remain high at 68% in 2018-19,

there are still far too many whose homelessness is not prevented and who are falling through the net. The demand on local authority services under the 2014 Act duties is increasing. In 2018-19 over 10,000 households presented to local authorities as at risk and a further 11,500+ presented as homeless and owed a duty.

Homelessness is where a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure. Rough sleeping is the most visible and acute end of the homelessness spectrum, but homelessness includes anyone who has no accommodation, cannot gain access to their accommodation or where it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy accommodation. This would include overcrowding, 'sofa surfing', victims of abuse and many more scenarios. A person is also homeless if their accommodation is a moveable structure and there is no place where it can be placed. Homelessness, or the risk of it, can have a devastating effect on individuals and families. It affects people's physical and mental health and well-being, and childrens' development and education, and risks individuals falling into a downward spiral toward the more acute forms of homelessness. The impacts can be particularly devastating if a stable, affordable, housing solution isn't achieved and people end up having to move frequently.

(8.5) Rate of households accepted to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need per 10,000 households.



At the start of the first lockdown in March 2020, an emergency homelessness response was put in place. This involved additional funding, together with both statutory and non-statutory guidance to ensure that no-one was left without accommodation, together with the support they need, to stay safe during the pandemic. The inclusive 'no-one left out' approach has been in place continuously since then and to date has resulted in local authorities and their partners supporting over 15,300 people into temporary accommodation since March 2020. Latest data shows there were 6,935 people in temporary accommodation at the end of September 2021, of which 1,742 were dependent children.

Rough sleeper numbers in Wales are estimated to be 128 in September 2021, with numbers increasing slightly over the summer period. The data available is more accurate and current than it has ever been and provides a clearer understanding of all forms of homelessness in Wales, which would otherwise be masked through sofa surfing, living in overcrowded homes or unconventional types of dwellings.

Whilst the pressure on homelessness services remains high, with around 1,000 people presenting a month, understanding the true scale of homelessness presents us with a unique opportunity to make the radical change required to address it. It increases the urgency and importance of preventative work to stop people ever experiencing the destabilising impact of homelessness. It increases the urgency and understanding of the housing capacity required, both in the social and private sector, to make the transformational shift required to end homelessness.

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

Each year local authority Housing Support Grant teams will distribute a Gwent Housing Support annual service user survey and the survey has become an important and established element of the needs mapping process. It is the responsibility of the local authorities in the region to ensure that engagement is undertaken with those who have used services. Those who have needed to use services funded through the Housing Support Grant come from a wide range of backgrounds and receive support on a range of different issues; the support they receive is person centred and aims to help people to secure and maintain sustainable housing and to develop the skills needed to help them thrive.

During 2020/21, a total of 262 responses were received to the questionnaire with engagement in the consultation exercise across all Gwent Local Authorities. There are approximately 7000 people receiving support across Gwent at any one time from services funded through the Housing Support Grant; finding ways to encourage people to engage in the survey continues to be an important consideration going forward. A number of key messages were highlighted through the survey and included

- access to technology as part of the support planning process
- closer links need to be made with digital inclusion projects delivered across the region
- access to digital inclusion services and projects to improve their skills and develop their learning in this area and this should be clearly identified in their support plan.

A stakeholder survey is also shared with the service user questionnaire and 31 partners provided feedback and includes

- Scope out exactly what is available
- Long term planning, partnership working and communication is key
- Develop assessments of need
- Lack of suitable affordable accommodation and not enough single units as there are not the properties available and we need to develop and bring online more accommodation
- Young people being placed in accommodation that does not meet their needs
- Great vision but stock needs to be there in order for it to be successful

Homelessness

There are a number of principles that underpin the approach to homelessness prevention and underpin the work of our delivery partners and to be reflected across public services;

- The earliest preventions are most effective and most cost effective and should always be the interventions of first choice.
- Tackling and preventing homelessness is a public services matter – rather than a ‘housing matter’.
- All services should place the individual at the centre and work together in a trauma informed way.
- The duties in Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 should be the last line of defence – not the first - and all services should work to the spirit not simply the letter of the law.
- Policy, service delivery and practice should be informed and shaped in a coproductive manner and by those with lived experience.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)

Domestic violence and abuse is a serious health and social care issue and has escalated through the pandemic, with access to services curtailed due to the covid 19 outbreak. It impacts on all services including adult and children’s social service, health services, housing, criminal justice, education, police, and voluntary and community organisations; so, needs a collaborative approach. Anyone can be affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence including women, men, children, and young people. This can happen regarding of sex, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or belief, income, geography, or lifestyle. A significant number of people who experience VAWDASV will have one or more ‘protected characteristic’ under the Equality Act 2010 and will face additional vulnerabilities and have increased barriers to support.

Gwent has been working in partnership as the first region in Wales for strategic coordination of VAWDASV services, where we pioneer new ways of working. We have a range of early intervention and prevention services through Supporting People, Flying Start, Families First and also specialist sector services, recognising that survivors are the experts.

Emerging Themes, Future trends, and challenges

The pandemic has highlighted the dangers faced by victims and survivors. In Wales during the lockdown period calls to the Wales national helpline Live Fear Free, rose by 49% and call times trebled with those contacting the helpline often reporting more frequent abuse with shorter escalation periods. (Social Care Wales 2021) There has also been a surge in calls and website visits to specialist domestic violence services and emergency services have experienced an overstretched workforce tackling the pandemic.

As lockdown restrictions ease it is expected there will be a demand in services as individuals and families look for support. We need to build back better, investing in prevention and early intervention so people can access the right support at the right time. We also need to deliver a whole system approach to tackling abuse and ensuring the safety of both young people and adults through access to safe, effective, trauma informed support.

"I have spent most of the pandemic living with daily anxiety for fear something will kick off and have been trying to avoid conflict at all costs with my partner. It has been a scary depressing time for me, and I have felt like I can't breathe".

Social - What are people telling us?

Opportunities for Young People - "The more options and opportunities for children in particular can only better the community as a whole"

Residents expressed how in the future they would like to see more opportunities for local communities to help improve their wellbeing. Residents express how there is a lack of opportunities available to engage as a community, such as community hubs or local halls that could be used for regular community gatherings.

Communities also expressed the need for more opportunities for young people, residents felt that there is a lack of activities catered to young people, such as sporting facilities, which is reducing their want to engage with their local communities. This was especially prevalent within more rural areas such as Monmouthshire. Similarly, the same issues were raised in regard to older people, in which isolation and loneliness was presented as a major issue across Gwent

In order to improve for the future, some residents suggest that the introduction of community halls or events that are accessible to all would not only encourage an increased volume of community spirit but it would also help promote intergenerational cohesion for the future of the region, therefore taking steps towards improving core issues presented by residents across Gwent such as isolation and lack of opportunities.

Social Care – "Affordable social care and good support for carers"

The need for increased social care provision was a regular theme that emerged from our survey, especially in regard to providing adequate social care for older people.

Local Authorities - "The Council is doing more to help residents than ever"

There is a mixed view on the local authorities across Gwent from residents. Many commented that their local council has provided more support than ever during the pandemic whereas other residents have expressed concern regarding a lack of involvement from their local council, finding difficulties in knowing what is available within their community as a result of this.

When asked what we could do to help improve on this, one resident noted how we could introduce well-being ambassadors to help improve cohesion between local communities and their council.

Health – "Fair and equal access to support when needed"

Health and wellbeing are important to residents across Gwent and many individuals commented on the importance of mental health services and improving access to them for both adults and children. Residents commented on the importance of exercise and the ability

to maintain a healthy lifestyle, access to sports centres and green spaces were felt to be key to this.

There were multiple positive comments on health services in the region however a number of residents noted the importance of having access to face to face appointments with their local GP. Difficulties in being able to access appointments for dentists and GPs were raised. Residents also highlighted the importance of given local communities the skills to be able to manage their own health and wellbeing so that there isn't as much need for services.

Schools – “There is a sense of community- good schools and facilities”

Many residents highlighted schools as being what makes their community special across Gwent. Residents from more rural areas expressed the difficulty in accessing schools due to the need to travel to the nearest school.

Throughout the feedback on what we can do to improve wellbeing in Gwent in the future, schools are highlighted as a tool that can be utilised by local communities for groups to meet and more community classes to be held. Schools are very much seen as a positive way to engage with our local residents too.