

# Analysis of data and information for the Wellbeing Assessment for the Public Services Boards of Bridgend and Cwm Taf

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## Introduction and Background

### Introduction

The Wellbeing Assessment is a requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act) and is to be undertaken every 5 years. The first Wellbeing Assessment was undertaken in 2017. The WFG Act enshrines the wellbeing of Wales into legislation requiring public bodies to work in partnership to improve wellbeing in their local communities.

The Wellbeing of Wales is considered through seven wellbeing goals (see further below) which are underpinned by the sustainable development principle of improving economic, social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing. When considering these elements, they cannot be seen in isolation as the themes cut across each other in many ways. This is reflected in the data and analysis within this report.

This Wellbeing Assessment is made up of a suite of supporting documents, these are:

- Data Report (this document)
- Summary sheets – key messages from main report
  - Social – made up of Mental and Physical Wellbeing, Community Cohesion, Housing and Homelessness
  - Economic
  - Environmental
  - Cultural
- Data repository – spreadsheets containing full data
- Engagement Report

This will form the information which will feed into the final Wellbeing Plan due to be published in April 2023.

### Background

#### Public Service Boards

The Public Services Boards (PSBs) are established under the WFG Act and are a collaborative of public bodies. Statutory members of the board are:

- Local Authority
- Local Health Board
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Natural Resources Wales

They are required to fulfil the statutory duties which include publishing an assessment of local wellbeing, preparing local wellbeing plans and providing annual reports on progress of their plans. They work with key bodies and organisations who exercise functions of a public nature<sup>1</sup> who can make a contribution to assist in meeting the PSB's objectives. These bodies include the below who must be invited to participate:

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<sup>1</sup> Public nature - publicly funded, is exercising statutory powers, is taking the place of central government or local authorities or is providing a public service

- Police
- Welsh Ministers
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Body representing the local Voluntary Organisations
- Probation services representative

Across both Bridgend and Cwm Taf PSBs they work with a range of local partners to achieve the statutory requirements of the WFG Act. The current boards both work separately, however this a joint Wellbeing Assessment is a reflection of what matters across both areas leading to the next steps of becoming one PSB across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area.

### Wellbeing Assessment

The Wellbeing Assessment is a collection and analysis of data which includes a range of national and local statistical data and relevant research documents as well as engagement with local communities. The information gathered relates to the WBG (shown below) and is outlined under the four pillars of Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural.



The Wellbeing Assessment provides a picture of the current state of wellbeing for the area as well as considering future needs. This assessment will show what is working well, opportunities to improve and what we need to consider for the future.

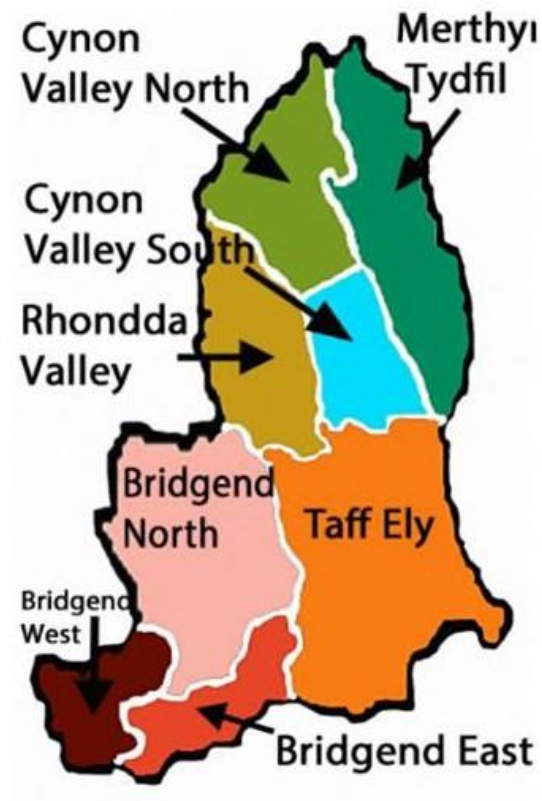
This Wellbeing Assessment is the first part of the process in assessing the wellbeing of the communities, the next steps will be to identify the priorities that we need to consider ensure the wellbeing of communities continues to improve for the next generation.

In developing the assessment there is a requirement to identify 'community areas' which are localities within the areas of Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. It was decided that 7 areas would be identified:

- Bridgend North
- Bridgend West
- Bridgend East
- Rhondda Valley

- Cynon Valley South
- Cynon Valley North
- Merthyr Tydfil

These areas were chosen as they reflected the health board cluster areas which are shown in the map below:



## Methodology

In preparing this assessment we have used a range of data from both national and local sources. We have worked closely with key partners to ensure we have the data required to be able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the information gathered. The data has been gathered taking account of the National Wellbeing Indicators.

The establishment of the Community Assessment Action Group (CAG) brought together key members of the Public Service Board (PSB) and Regional Partnership Board (RPB) to oversee the development of the Wellbeing Assessment and Population Needs Assessment (being undertaken by the RPB). Two subgroups were established to take responsibility for the data and engagement elements of both assessments.

The CAG data group has been consulted and provided guidance and support in the development of the data report. The group met at regular intervals and were provided with information on progress and were helpful in supporting the gathering and provision of data at a local level.

## Data Collection Sources

Data was collected from the following national sources which included:

- Office of National Statistics
- Stats Wales
- Public Health Wales Observatory
- Social Care Wales Data Observatory
- Stats Xplore – data from the Department of Work and Pensions
- Youth Justice Statistics

Information was also gathered from other key organisations:

- Local Authorities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- South Wales Police
- South Wales Fire and Rescue Services
- Natural Resources Wales
- Local Third Sector organisations BAVO, Interlink and VAMT

Data was broken down to the community areas where it was available, where this was not available local authority and health board level data was used. Data gathered has been incorporated into the report where it is possible and is represented in graphics, tables and graphs. Some data has been summarised and is available in separate data repository which will be available under the themes of Social, Cultural, Economic and Environmental.

## Engaging key partners

To ensure the data and analysis was supported by local service information meetings were held with key services and groups. This enabled further discussion and testing of analysis of data as well as gathering information about what was being delivered in the localities. Meetings were held services which included the below:

- RCT Community Services – included library and Welsh language services



- Community Safety Partnership group
- Supporting People and Housing services Bridgend
- Public Health Wales
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Planning and Commissioning
- Awen
- Mental Health Matters

## **CAG Data Group**

As mentioned above the group met to discuss the data relating to Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural and was made up of a range of individuals from relevant services. Membership of the group was to include those who were responsible for data within their respective services. Members were asked to provide information on data they collected as well as help in identifying any data where there were gaps.

The group were able to provide a range of information to support the development of the Wellbeing Assessment and some were instrumental in gathering information from their organisations that was not freely available through national statistics.

## **Analysis and Findings**

As data was gathered it was analysed and interpreted to produce this report. Charts, maps and tables reflect the findings from the data and other information gathered from the various key stakeholders.

Data has been analysed and checked with relevant services where that was possible. The Environment section has had a significant level of input from Natural Resources Wales who were able to provide a significant amount of data and knowledge to inform the analysis. The section relating community safety has been provided from work between South Wales Police and the Community Safety Partnership who provided data and analysis.

## Wellbeing Goals

As stated above there is crossover between the WBG and the sustainable development principles which run through this Wellbeing Assessment, Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural. The below matrix shows the cross-cutting themes.

There are 7 connected wellbeing goals for Wales. They are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of more cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

| 1<br>Prosperous | 2<br>Resilient | 3<br>Healthier | 4<br>More Equal | 5<br>Cohesive | 6<br>Culture | 7<br>Global |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|

|                                     | Sustainable Development Principles |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                     | 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| <b>The Social Pillar</b>            |                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Adults                              |                                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| Children and Families               |                                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| Community Cohesion                  |                                    |   |   |   | 5 |   |   |
| Health                              | 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <b>Economic Pillar</b>              |                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Employment and Income               | 1                                  |   |   | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation | 1                                  |   | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| Absolute Low Income                 | 1                                  |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |
| Foodbank Use                        | 1                                  |   | 3 | 4 |   |   |   |
| Single Households                   | 1                                  |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |
| Education and Employment            | 1                                  | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |
| Economic Inactivity                 | 1                                  |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |
| Universal Credit                    | 1                                  |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |
| Business                            | 1                                  | 2 |   | 4 |   |   |   |
| <b>Environmental</b>                |                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Access and Recreation               | 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 |   | 6 |   |
| Air Quality                         | 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   | 7 |
| Soundscapes and Noise Pollution     |                                    | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   |   |
| Flooding                            | 1                                  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 |
| Water Health                        |                                    | 2 | 3 | 4 |   |   | 7 |
| Wildfires                           |                                    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |   | 7 |
| Biodiversity                        |                                    | 2 |   | 4 | 5 |   | 7 |
| Resources                           |                                    | 2 | 3 |   |   |   | 7 |
| Fly Tipping                         |                                    | 2 | 3 |   | 5 |   |   |

|  |                       |       |        |     |     |        |      |  |
|--|-----------------------|-------|--------|-----|-----|--------|------|--|
|  | Landslips             |       | Orange |     |     |        | Blue |  |
|  | <b>Cultural</b>       |       |        |     |     |        |      |  |
|  | Welsh Language        | Green |        |     | Red | Purple | Blue |  |
|  | Heritage              | Green | Yellow |     | Red | Purple | Blue |  |
|  | Libraries             |       |        | Red | Red | Purple | Blue |  |
|  | Volunteering          | Green |        | Red | Red | Purple | Blue |  |
|  | Arts and Theatre      | Green |        | Red | Red | Purple | Blue |  |
|  | Sports and Recreation | Green |        | Red | Red | Purple | Blue |  |

## Covid-19 Impact

### What has the pandemic told us about our region?

In this wellbeing assessment we wanted to reflect on the response to the pandemic, the role of partner organisations and public services, how people responded, and what we can learn for the future.

The introduction of the first set of restrictions in March 2020 saw public services respond quickly to the challenge of ensuring that people were kept safe, where people could access advice and assistance, and respond to the individual financial concerns such as council tax and benefits.

As a region we were faced with other significant challenges at the time the pandemic hit our communities. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we were dealing with the aftermath of the floods with many people unable to remain in their homes – homelessness, significant wellbeing issues were already, and continue to be felt.

### Public services and partners working together

The Community Impact Assessment of the impact of and response to Covid across the region highlighted not only the challenges but also the way that organisations worked together to support local people, jobs and services. The challenges were multi-faceted, and included:

- Increased business uncertainty and the risk of unemployment, with tens of thousands of workers furloughed across the region; 31% of all eligible employments.
- People facing financial hardship and £1.8 million in emergency assistance payments (EAP) and individual assistance payments (IAP) were made in Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.
- An increase in the number of people, especially the older population, facing loneliness and isolation, with the region seeing self-reported mild or severe depression doubled during lockdown.
- A significant increase in the number of people working from home, at the same time as providing home schooling to their children, where 68% of parents and carers of children with special educational needs reported that they struggled to educate their children at home.
- Schools having to change how they engaged with pupils and despite the efforts of staff, only 28% of parents and carers felt their school provided a good level of support.

In addition to the consequences for our health services, in primary and hospital care, managing as the pandemic progressed the increase in patients with Covid and the resulting knock-on effect on other health services such as elective surgery. Local authorities in Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil reacted quickly in planning local service responses. Collectively we have worked together across the region and across public services to provide a strategic response.

The Covid-19 Prevention and Response Plan covering the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region was coordinated with local authorities and the local health board. It described in detail the roles, key objectives and measures for six different workstreams which are overseen by a regional strategic oversight group, chaired by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board's executive director for public health.

The early impacts of the pandemic, and action taken to respond, included:

- Ensuring community meals for elderly people in their homes
- Responding to applications and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support from individuals and families
- Additional free school meals entitlements
- Packed lunches provided to pupils entitled to free school meals
- Emergency childcare provision in schools for vulnerable children between 4-19 years, including children looked after, those on the child protection register, young carers, and young people with additional learning needs
- Thousands of people identified by the NHS as vulnerable to Covid-19
- Creation of community hubs supporting many vulnerable children and families
- Maintaining essential services
- Deployment of staff in the Test Trace Protect programme and response to incidents or outbreaks

Across Wales the third sector has also responded swiftly and in partnership with public service providers. A report of the Senedd's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, *"Impact of Covid 19 on the Voluntary Sector"* published in February 2021. The Committee stated that:

*"The voluntary sector has played an invaluable role throughout the pandemic. The events have shown just how integral the sector is in supporting those providing statutory services, as well as providing support that is highly targeted to local need. The sector has shown great agility and responsiveness, and all of this needs to be captured and harnessed so we can build on this for the future."*

In the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region for example, the third sector has been at the forefront of the efforts to respond to the challenges of Covid, working side by side with statutory partners. Bridgend's Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) coordinated volunteering activity to support 850 to 950 people at the height of the pandemic, unable to undertake routine elements of their lives during lockdown, such as shopping and medicines collections.

National organisations also mobilised a significant amount of support. In every month from March 2020, Action for Children posted out different care packages, including games, equipment, treats and gifts to young carers to help them through a difficult time. The third sector added capacity and through outreach were able to assist many people struggling through the lockdown.

## Communities and people

COVID, like the response to the floods showed the significant strength of communities in the region with a joined-up response from agencies. This is a strength that will be significant in building resilient communities in the future.

Volunteering has been highlighted as one of the noticeable outcomes during the pandemic. Many people signed up to formal volunteering requests from third sector organisations, whilst there is anecdotal evidence confirming that many people supported their neighbours and communities informally, helping with prescriptions, shopping and meals for example. The Committee report concluded that *"the numbers of people who stepped forward to help others during the pandemic has been inspiring. All of these individual acts of kindness have coalesced to support statutory services and communities in a way that has been integral to ensuring those who need support have received it. In Wales we were already starting from a good base, with a robust structure to help support this volunteering."*

In the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, local authorities acted as an important source of information for those individuals and groups wanting to volunteer, signposting to our key third sector partners already well established in the region, such as BAVO, Interlink and VAMT.

Overall, responding to the pandemic has reinforced the interrelated nature of the four 'pillars' in the wellbeing assessment and points us towards having to find solutions in the round, with the importance of resilient communities and various agencies being adaptive in the future. Covid was not just a health problem but one that affected people's livelihoods and caused uncertainty in the job market. It changed our daily and life work patterns, increasing isolation for many in the workforce where people worked from home, but it also increased an appreciation of the outdoors. Further environmental impacts were secured through a reduced use of the car.

# Key Demographics (Population)

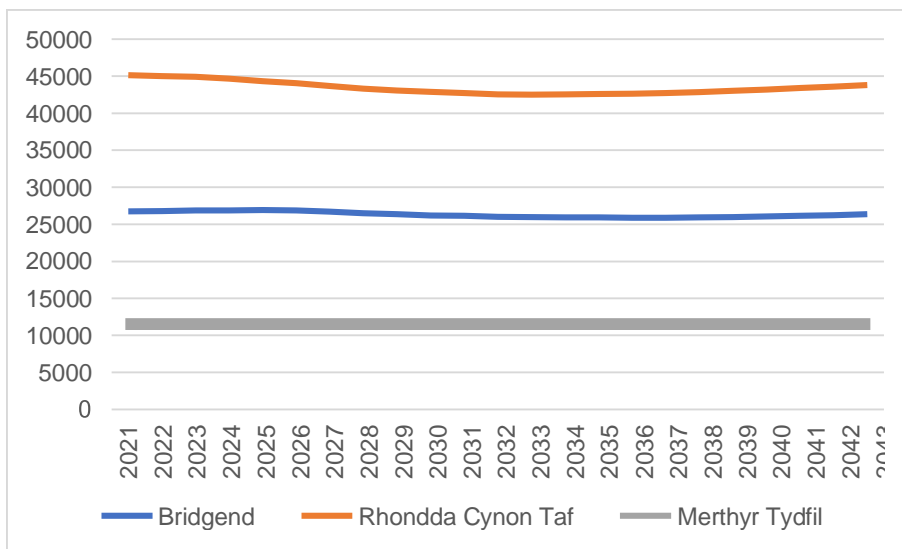
## Population Data

Population data provides an indication of the future population trends. The projected numbers of people living in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) will provide an indication of the likely increase in the population over the next few years.

The 2018 based population figures show that across the region there will be a slight increase in the population overall. There are some variants in the different age ranges with the population decreasing for those under 15 and a continuous increase in the over 65 population.

The following charts show the trends for each age range:

**Chart 1: Population estimates 15 and under**

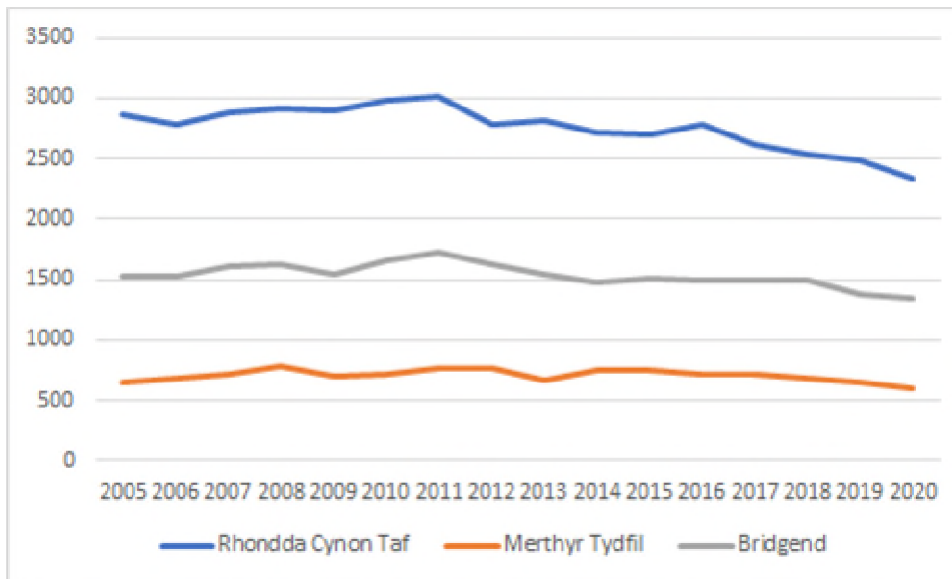


Source: Stats Wales

Although there are fluctuations in the population age group under 15 overall there is projected to be a decrease in RCT of 3%, Bridgend 1% and Merthyr Tydfil 4% between 2021 and 2043.

The reduction in the younger population is reflected in the birth rate which is also reducing. The below chart shows the number of births is decreasing across the CTM areas which is also reflected across Wales.

**Chart 2: Number of Live Births**

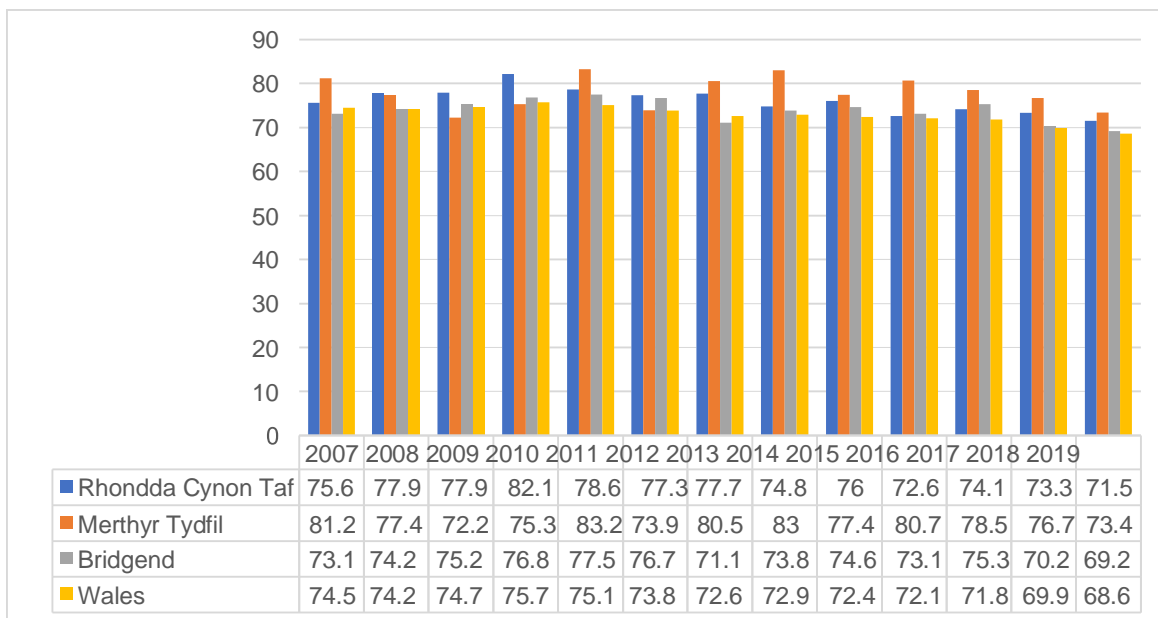


Source: Social Care Wales National Social Care Data Portal for Wales

The difference in the number of live births is higher in RCT with a reduction of 18% between 2005 and 2020. Merthyr Tydfil has a 6% reduction whilst Bridgend is a 12% reduction which is the same as Wales.

Conceptions are also decreasing across the areas as shown in the chart below:

**Chart 3: Rate of conceptions for all ages per 1,000 females aged 15-44**



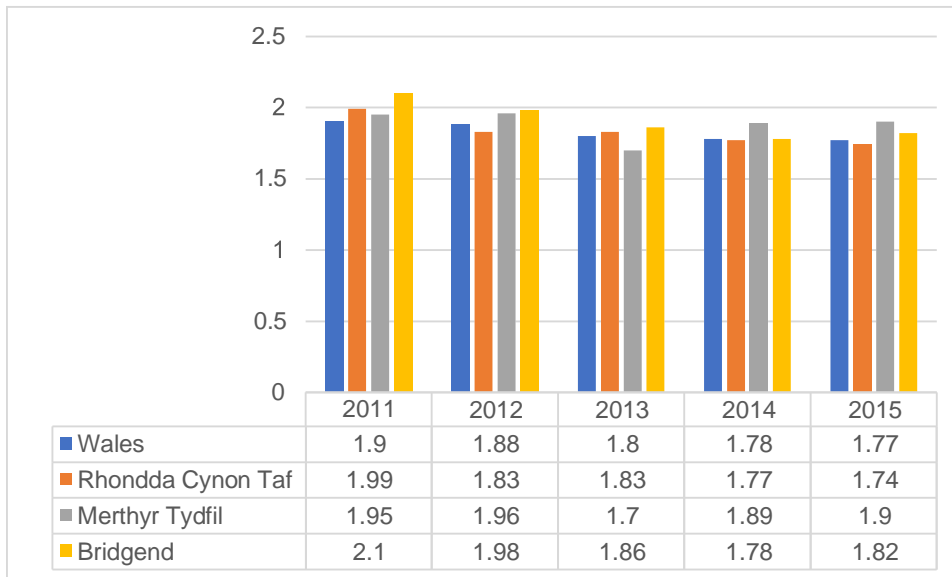
Source: Social Care Wales National Social Care Data Portal for Wales

RCT and Merthyr Tydfil have had a consistently higher rate than the Wales average. Bridgend (71.1) were at a slightly lower rate than the Wales (72.6) average in 2013 but all areas have experienced a reduction between 2007 and 2019.



Fertility rates are shown in the below chart.

**Chart 4: Total Fertility Rate**



Source: Stats Wales

Note: The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is the average number of children that would be born to a woman if current patterns of fertility persisted throughout her childbearing life

The chart shows the rates have reduced between 2011 and 2015 across all areas with Merthyr Tydfil seeing a slight increase in 2014. The reduction in fertility rates is seen across the UK and the European Union as shown in the below chart:

**Chart 5: Fertility Rates – OECD data**



Source OECD <https://data.oecd.org/pop/fertility-rates.htm#indicator-chart>

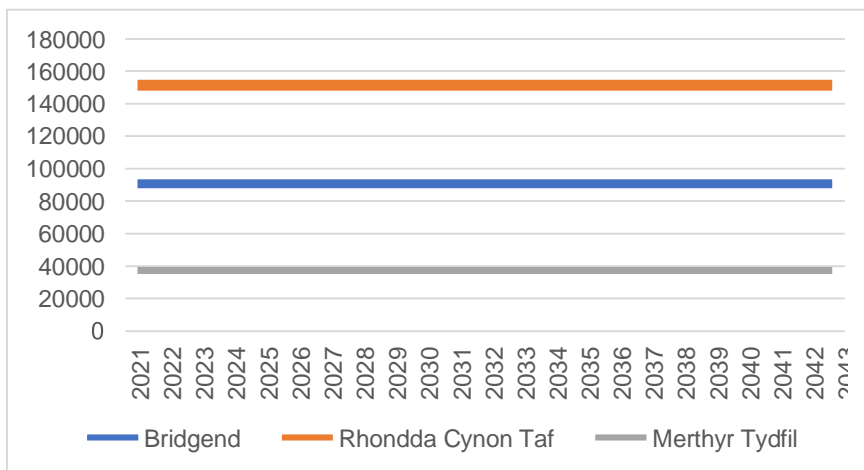
The reported reasons given for the reduced fertility rates include postponing starting a family and reduced family sizes. The increase in women having children later with 49%, almost half of women born in 1989, remaining childless by their 30th birthday compared to 38% of their mother’s generation (1961). The standard mean age of mothers in 2019 was 30.7 years which was a record high. Some of the reasons for delaying childbirth are likely to be (ONS 2020):

- Greater participation in higher education

- Delaying marriage and/or partnership formation
- Wanting to have a longer working career before starting a family
- Labour market uncertainty and the threat of unemployment

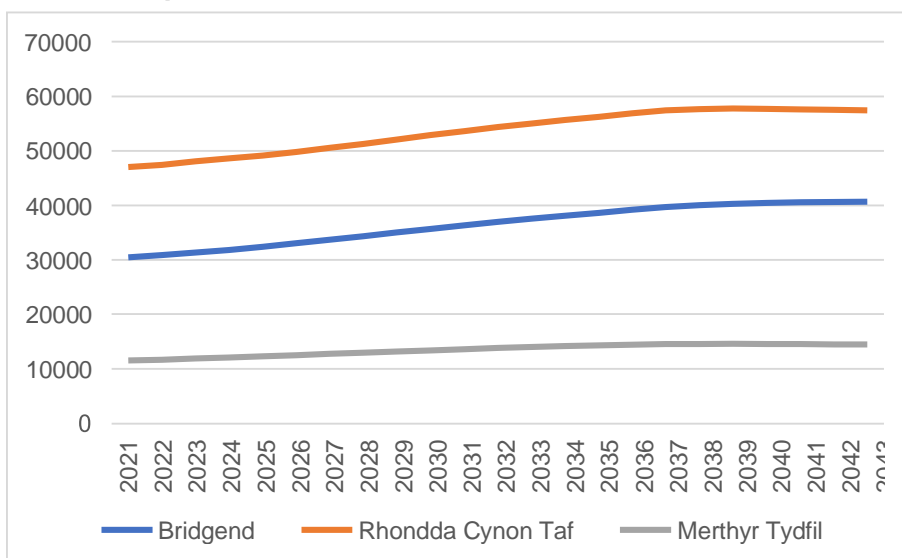
The difference in family dynamics, women working as well as both men and women having careers before wanting to start a family appear to be contributing to the decrease in birth and fertility rates. The overall outcome being that the younger population is decreasing. Looking to the future this is likely to result in a reduced older population compared to the higher numbers we are currently seeing. Having smaller families may continue to impact on the social care sector in that, as this population ages they may not have the wider family support structure to care for them.

**Chart 6: Population estimates 16 to 64**



The 16 to 64 age group in RCT is increasing year on year until 2029 when it begins to decline.

**Chart 7: Population estimate 65 and above**



Source: Stats Wales population estimates

Overall, the older age groups over 65 increased across all areas in CTM. Data shows RCT 22%, Bridgend 33% and Merthyr Tydfil 25% have an increase in this population group.

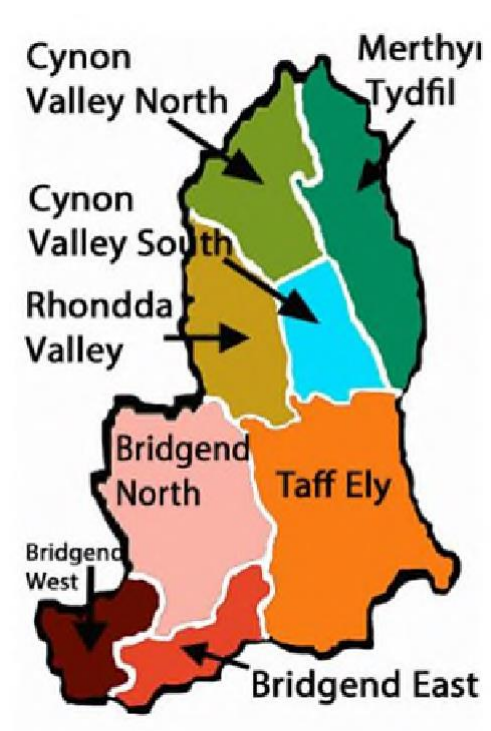
The size and demographic breakdown of the population influences the range of pressures experienced. Increased housing demand has pressures on the natural environment and specific demographics are likely to place demands on services.

## Area Breakdown

Cluster areas have been identified as the local level data for the purposes of this Wellbeing Assessment. They are broken down as:

- **Rhondda Cynon Taf** – Rhondda, Cynon (north and south) and Taf Ely
- **Bridgend** – North, West and East
- **Merthyr Tydfil**

The below map shows the areas identified above:



The population level data has been taken from the Upper Super Output level data and is shown in the tables below:

Table 1: Rhondda Cynon Taf – Mid Year 2020

|                  | Aged 0 to 15 | Aged 16 to 64 | Aged 65 + | All ages |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|----------|
| RCT              | 44887        | 150231        | 46755     | 241873   |
| Cynon Cluster    | 11530        | 37529         | 12130     | 61189    |
| Rhondda Cluster  | 15813        | 52939         | 17106     | 85858    |
| Taff Ely Cluster | 17544        | 59763         | 17519     | 94826    |

Table 2: Bridgend – Mid Year 2020

|                | Aged 0 to 15 | Aged 16 to 64 | Aged 65 +    | All Ages      |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Bridgend       | <b>26185</b> | <b>91186</b>  | <b>30168</b> | <b>147539</b> |
| Bridgend North | 9603         | 32511         | 9883         | 51997         |
| Bridgend West  | 7336         | 25187         | 9820         | 42343         |
| Bridgend East  | 9246         | 33488         | 10465        | 53199         |

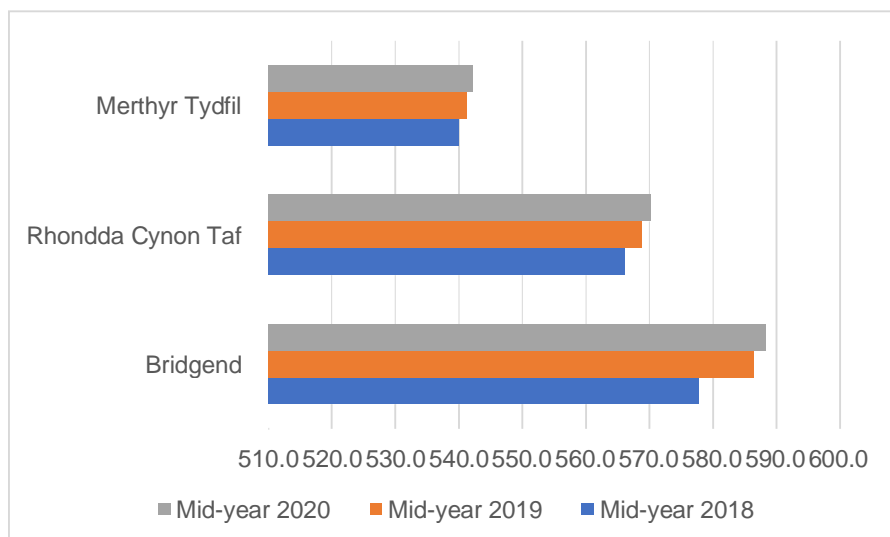
Table 3: Merthyr Tydfil – Mid Year 2020

|                | Aged 0 to 15 | Aged 16 to 64 | Aged 65 +    | All ages     |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Merthyr Tydfil | <b>11577</b> | <b>37453</b>  | <b>11394</b> | <b>60424</b> |
| North Merthyr  | 5608         | 17348         | 5116         | 28072        |
| South Merthyr  | 5969         | 20105         | 6278         | 32352        |

There is a higher population level in RCT area than in the other two areas with Merthyr Tydfil being the area with the smallest population in Wales. RCT also has a larger area at 424KMsq than the other two areas with Bridgend being 246KMsq and Merthyr Tydfil 111KMsq. There is a higher population density in these areas as part of the South East Wales cluster which has the highest population density in Wales at 545.5 compared to the Wales average of 151.4.

The CTM population density is increasing and as shown in the chart below.

**Chart 8: Population density per square kilometre of land area – 2018 to 2020 (Mid-year estimates)**



Source: Stats Wales

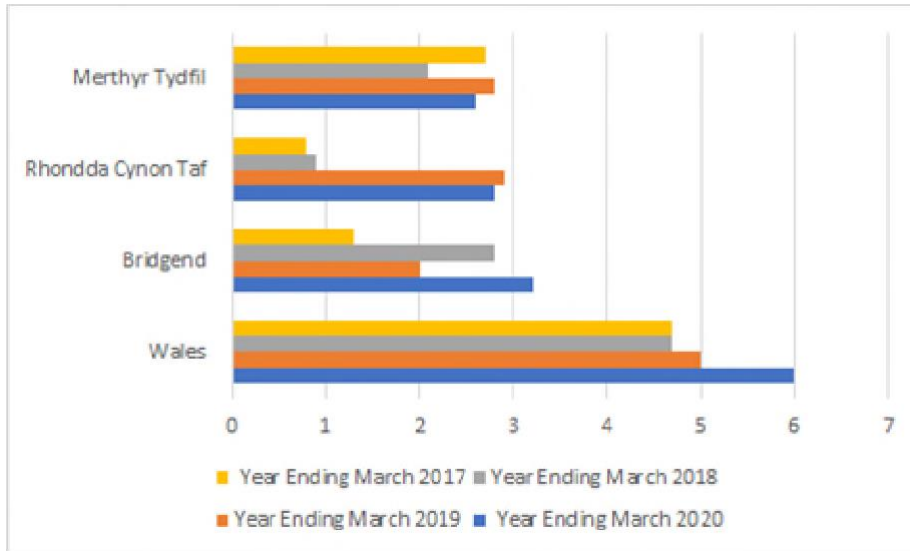
Population projections show that the population will increase between 2020/21 and 2042/43 by the following percentage in each area:

- Bridgend increase by 7.5%
- RCT increase by 5%
- Merthyr Tydfil increase by 5%

## Minority Groups

Minority ethnic groups are shown in the chart below:

**Chart 9: Percentage of people who are Black, Asian and minority ethnic between 2017 and 2020**



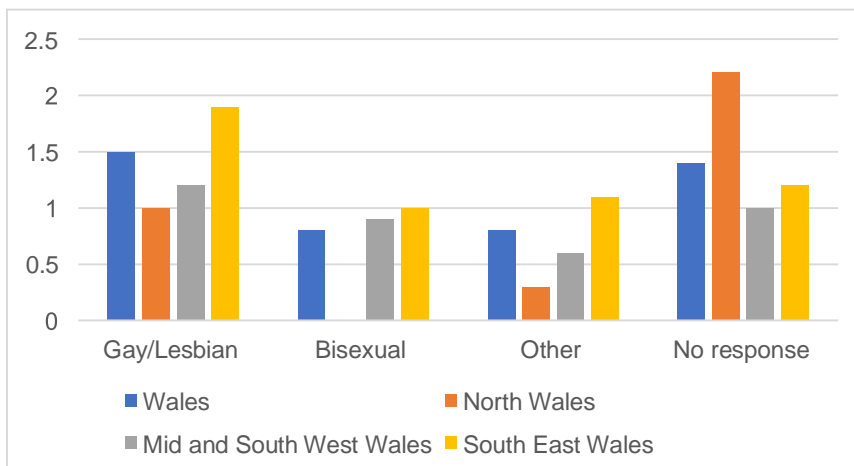
Overall, the percentage of ethnic minority groups in the CTM area is lower than the Wales average. There is an increase in Bridgend in 2020 which reflects the same across Wales. The increase in RCT between 2018 and 2019 is high compared to the other areas but has reduced slightly into 2020.

In relation to those seeking asylum being supported in the CTM areas this has been limited. There have been some resettled in the area under the ‘vulnerable persons resettlement scheme’ in Q2 of 2019 RCT received 7 people and in Q1 of 2020 Bridgend received 8 people.

## Sexual Identity

The table below shows the sexual identity of those in the different regions. The data is only available at this level with the most recent information shown for the years 2017 to 2019 inclusive. The confidence levels in the data is categorised as ‘acceptable’ due to the low response rate, but provides an indication of the levels in the area for the time frame given.

**Chart 10: Sexual identity 2017 - 2019**



## The Social Pillar

Social factors include influences on the population relating to health-affecting lifestyle which impacts on people and communities. It is about our wellbeing and the things that affect our lives across the age range, these can relate to our social background and social network.

### Introduction

As noted above, the population of people over 65 years is projected to increase year on year for the next 20 years. Whilst the older population is increasing, the younger population is decreasing especially in the 0 to 15 age group.

Families are more dispersed resulting in some people feeling lonelier, not just the older population but younger people as well. Lifestyles are changing with the development of technology and methods of communication. Healthy lifestyle choices are impacted by poverty and access to more unhealthy food.

### Adults

Being able to consider the profile of the adult population in the context of wellbeing is important. Thriving communities with people living longer, and healthier lives, participating in their local communities, is highly dependent on the social wellbeing of the population.

#### What do we know?

The 2018 based population figures for adults show that across the region there will be a slight increase in the population overall. There are some variants in the different age ranges with the population decreasing for those under 15 and a continuous increase in the over 65 population. This is in line with the expectations across Wales where we continue to see an increase in the numbers of people living longer, but often with a range of conditions.

The health and wellbeing of adults across our region can be measured in several ways. We know that we continue to see challenges in how people are supported to lead healthier lifestyles and that the socio economic, and environmental contexts are substantial determinants in our success. This is also true of the challenge across Wales.

According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021:

- Life expectancy had been rising, although at a slower pace in the past decade. However, it has fallen for the most recent period, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Healthy life expectancy continues to be worse for those living in more deprived areas, but there isn't evidence that the gap is increasing
- In the latest year there has been a substantial increase in community cohesion. However, it is too early to tell if this is the beginning of a sustained trend
- There has been an increase in people feeling that they can influence decisions in their local area which appears to reverse a downward trend

In this assessment we consider the issues of mental health and wellbeing, obesity, diabetes, and dementia.

## Mental Wellbeing

*Challenge: Ensuring access to a range of activities and support in communities which improves mental health and provides early support to those who need it to prevent escalation. The recovery from the impact of the pandemic will be a key consideration in this.*

*Feedback from engagement re what could work better: Mental Health Services: access to services and waiting times to be seen*

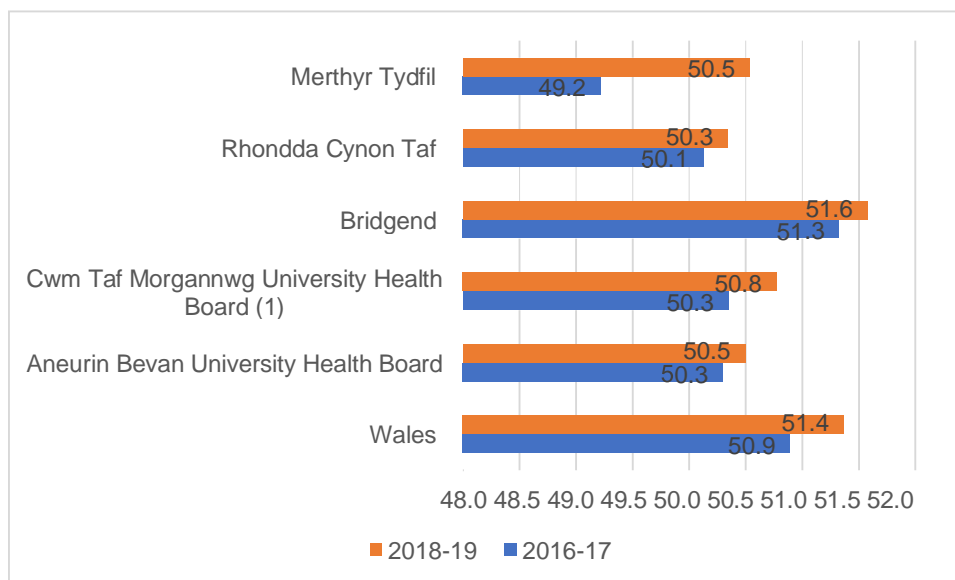
### What does the data tell us?

Mental wellbeing changes as we go through life, it is experienced by everyone on a continuum which can impact on people’s lives in different ways. The range of support relating to mental wellbeing is wide and includes family and friends support as well as community and statutory support and interventions. All these elements are important to maintain and improve our mental wellbeing.

Mental wellbeing is an important factor in a person’s overall health. Levels of wellbeing are reported by Public Health Wales (PHW) using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) (Warwick 2007). WEMWBS collects information on feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing, which is captured in the National Survey for Wales (NSW). Wellbeing scores are categorised by low mental wellbeing (14-40), middle mental wellbeing (41-59) and high mental wellbeing (60-70). Data relating to the WEMWBS across Wales is only available up to 2019.

The below chart shows that the scores relating to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) area are increasing which indicates that mental wellbeing is improving.

**Chart 11: WEMWBS Scale by local authority and health board**



Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) are below the Wales average indicating a lower level of wellbeing, these two areas have the higher levels of deprivation in the CTM area. Whereas Bridgend is slightly higher than the Wales average. Even though Merthyr Tydfil and RCT are below average it is showing an increase in the level of wellbeing from 2016/17 with Merthyr Tydfil seeing the higher levels of increase.

Population profiles provided by Cwm Taf University Health Board (CTUHB) show that in the Bridgend (10%) and RCT (11%) areas the percentage of those with Mental Health issues is above the Wales average of 9% (2017-19 figures). Feedback from different communities during engagement consistently identified Mental Health as an issue in accessing support as well as

being a challenge for the future. There is some correlation between higher levels of mental health and the concerns raised by people in the area.

Data relating recorded mental health by GPs in the cluster areas is shown below based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation Lower Super Output Areas. The average rate for Wales is 23.2.

The tables below provide an indication of the 3 highest and 3 lowest levels in each cluster area:

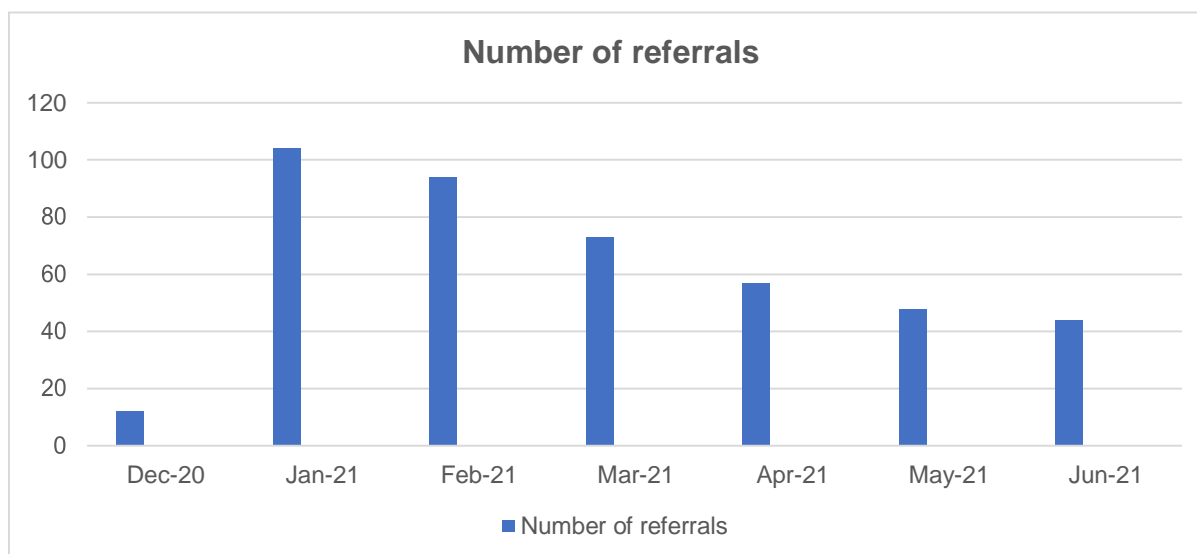
Table 4: Bridgend GP-recorded mental health condition (rate per 100) 2019

|  | Higher Rate | WIMD Rank |  | Lower Rate | WIMD Rank |
|--|-------------|-----------|--|------------|-----------|
| <b>Bridgend Area (average rate 26)</b> |             |           | <b>Bridgend Area</b>                                 |            |           |
| <b>Brackla 3 (East)</b>                | 40.6        | 60        | <b>Ogmore Vale 1 (North)</b>                         | 16.8       | 912       |
| <b>Caerau 1 (North)</b>                | 43.1        | 5         | <b>Ogmore Vale 2 (North)</b>                         | 16.6       | 401       |
| <b>Sarn 1 (North)</b>                  | 36.2        | 188       | <b>Bryntirion Laleston and Merthyr Mawr 1 (West)</b> | 16.6       | 1894      |

The data shows the two areas with the highest rate of mental health recorded with GPs in Bridgend North and Bridgend East. The rates in these two areas are higher than the Wales average for 24 out of the 31 areas in Bridgend North cluster and 16 out of 20 areas in Bridgend East cluster. In the Bridgend West cluster, there are 9 out of 20 areas above the Wales average. The areas with the higher levels of recorded mental health conditions are within the top 10% areas of deprivation with the lower rate being in the areas in the areas which are 30% and above.

Mental Health Matters Wales (MHMW) provides a service in the locality which includes a range of groups and interventions. There is also an out of hours service the 'Wellbeing Retreat' which is a collaboration between CTMHB, Bridgend Social Services, South Wales Police and other third sector partners. This service was launched in December 2020 to reduce barriers in accessing mental health support in Bridgend supporting those experiencing 'social crisis' and signposting them to local services for ongoing support. Operating on Wednesday, Friday Saturday and Sunday it is open between 5pm and 11pm with referrals being received from statutory and third sector services. To date they have received 600 referrals with the highest number being in January 2021 as can be seen in the below table:



**Chart 12: Referrals to Wellbeing Retreat received December 2020 to June 2021**

Source: MHMW six monthly report

The highest number of referrals are for females, the age range is fairly equal with a higher percentage aged between 18 and 25 years. The main issues identified have been anxiety and depression, isolation, stress and debt. Feedback gathered is positive with 100% reporting feeling safe and listened to. Below is feedback received from a person attending the retreat:

*“I’ve used the Wellbeing retreat when I’ve been really struggling with my mental health. Since lockdown, there is limited resources and support out there. When I’ve attended the retreat, I’ve felt at ease with the staff, they’ve listened without judgement and made me feel that they genuinely care. The set-up is relaxed and inviting. I’ve been referred to counselling through the retreat. I think this service is something that would be beneficial to many others like myself especially with mental health services being stretched. There’s not much out there like the retreat. I think it’s a really good idea especially in times of despair and distress. It’s a safe place to offload and speak to someone”.*

The Wellbeing Retreat appears to be making a positive impact on those who have accessed it and is a good example of partnership working between the statutory services and third sector.

There has been a higher number of people accessing the services of MHMW generally since Covid. Anecdotally it is considered by some that having time at home, has meant that their mental health is not as good as it should be. In other circumstances, eating disorders and self-harm have been harder to hide from family members. The self-harm group saw a rise in referrals in quarter 2 of 2020 which was during the first lock down, the higher number of referrals was for females and the age range 35 to 44 years (this could be male and female). Whilst the service is provided in Bridgend, there are a small number of attendees who attend from outside the area (this was higher with online groups).

Table 5: Rhondda Cynon Taf – GP: recorded mental health condition (rate per 100)

|                                     | Higher Rate | WIMD Rank |                                       | Lower Rate | WIMD Rank |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>RCT Area (average rate 23.9)</b> |             |           | <b>RCT Area</b>                       |            |           |
| <b>Llanharry 2</b><br>(Taf Ely)     | 35.6        | 257       | <b>Llantwit Fardre 2</b><br>(Taf Ely) | 13.6       | 1879      |
| <b>Penrhiwceiber 1</b><br>(Cynon)   | 35.1        | 6         | <b>Church Village 3</b> (Taf Ely)     | 14.1       | 1907      |
| <b>Tyn y Nant 3</b><br>(Taf Ely)    | 34.5        | 149       | <b>Treforest 2</b><br>(Taf Ely)       | 16.5       | 839       |

Llanharry has the highest rate of recorded mental health conditions in RCT and whilst the overall ranking within the WIMD is 257, within the 'health' domain, they are ranked 84 which is within the top 10% most deprived. The rates in the Cynon cluster are higher than the Wales average in 30 out of the 49 areas. Taf cluster rates show 19 of the 42 areas above Wales average and Rhondda shows 22 out of 49 of the areas within the cluster.

Table 6: Merthyr Tydfil – GP: recorded mental health condition (rate per 100)

|   | Higher Rate | WIMD Rank |                       | Lower Rate | WIMD Rank |
|---|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil (average rate 25.5)</b> |             |           | <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b> |            |           |
| <b>Penydarren 1</b>                       | 32.3        | 7         | <b>Treharris 1</b>    | 17.9       | 1662      |
| <b>Park 3</b>                             | 31.1        | 153       | <b>Treharris 2</b>    | 20.6       | 777       |
| <b>Dowlais 1</b>                          | 30.9        | 127       | <b>Merthyr Vale 3</b> | 20.7       | 967       |

There are 28 out of the 36 areas within Merthyr Tydfil which are above the Wales average. All three areas with the highest rates are within the 10% most deprived areas.

Overall, in each area the GP reported rates of mental health show that the higher levels are in the more deprived areas being within the 20% most deprived areas. The lower rates show a range across from the most to least deprived areas. **The full data with area breakdown is available in the accompanying spreadsheets titled 'Area breakdown WIMD Report'**

Data relating to those who are claiming mental health related benefits in each area is shown below:

Table 7: Mental Health Related Benefits DWP February 2021

| Area                     | Mental Health related benefits (%) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Wales</b>             | 3.3                                |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 3.7                                |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 4.7                                |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 4.6                                |

Source: Community Insight Report

The above figures show that in each area, the claimant rate for this element is higher than the Wales average.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the mental health of the population across the CTM area appears to be worsening with more people presenting with concerns over their mental health. There are people who experience varying levels of mental wellbeing some of which will be captured in the above statistics. However, there will be some who are receiving support in different ways and from local non-statutory services which includes third sector organisations.

Supporting People services have also identified that there are now increasing chronic needs in the population which includes mental health and substance misuse. These are co-occurring issues and require a significant amount of support provision. There are services funded through the Housing Support Grant managed by the Supporting People Team that provide accommodation and support for those who are experiencing mental health issues at moderate or higher need.

Data received from Bridgend Supporting People provides a range of information collected by the services providing support. In particular, the service user data (Jan to June 2020) relating to Lead Need as Mental Health has around 330 who are supported. Of these, around 130 people had co-occurring second, and third needs of substance misuse and criminal offending history.

### Strengths:

- A new initiative is being developed across CTM through the Housing Support Grant with a multi-agency approach to identify and support those in temporary accommodation with complex needs.
- There are a range of services in the CTM area which provide mental health support for those who do not reach the thresholds for statutory intervention. This can provide a preventative and early intervention approach to reduce the risk of escalating mental health requiring more intensive support.
- Bridgend Mental Health Matters have delivered an out of hours service which is seeing an increasing number of people referred from the mental health crisis team. These are people who would otherwise place pressures on police and health resources, this is a positive service with a multi-agency partnership approach.

### Opportunities

- Engagement has shown that mental health is a concern for the population, this was evident across the area. Socialising was considered a strong element to enhance mental wellbeing along with being in the outdoors, from their experiences during Covid restrictions. These both cut across the **Cultural** and **Environmental pillars** which provides an opportunity for a range of different services to work together to deliver support to improve mental wellbeing in the area. The CTM area has an extensive range of open green space from the valleys to the coast that offers the opportunity to escape and experience tranquility. Making good use of these areas and promoting their benefits for mental health is an opportunity for services working in partnership to provide preventative and early support to improve mental health.
- The engagement also identified the difficulties in accessing mental health support from health services with long waiting lists. This together data from Supporting People showing increased needs relating to co-occurring issues of mental health and substance misuse shows that there is a need for more intensive support for some. There is an opportunity for these services to work together, the benefits of which are being seen in Bridgend as noted above (Wellbeing Retreat) as well as the development of a new initiative to identify those who are 'harder to reach' funded through the Housing Support Grant.
- Carers were also identified as a group who experienced issues with mental health. This was highlighted in the engagement in particular with issues relating to older carers. Many were found not to be accessing support for their own mental health. In discussions many

felt there was a need for more information and facilities to support this group of carers taking account of their caring responsibilities and the importance of respite. There are opportunities to develop support in the communities making use of current groups and venues making services accessible. Due to the nature of a carers responsibilities of caring for someone they will need to be able to access services close by or in their own home.

- Research has shown that people with mental illness are about twice as likely to smoke as others who do not suffer from mental health issues <https://gov.wales/ambition-make-wales-smoke-free-2030-smoking-remains-leading-cause-premature-deaths>. This underlies the interconnected nature of issues. Question- could tackling mental health also address the ambition to quit smoking?

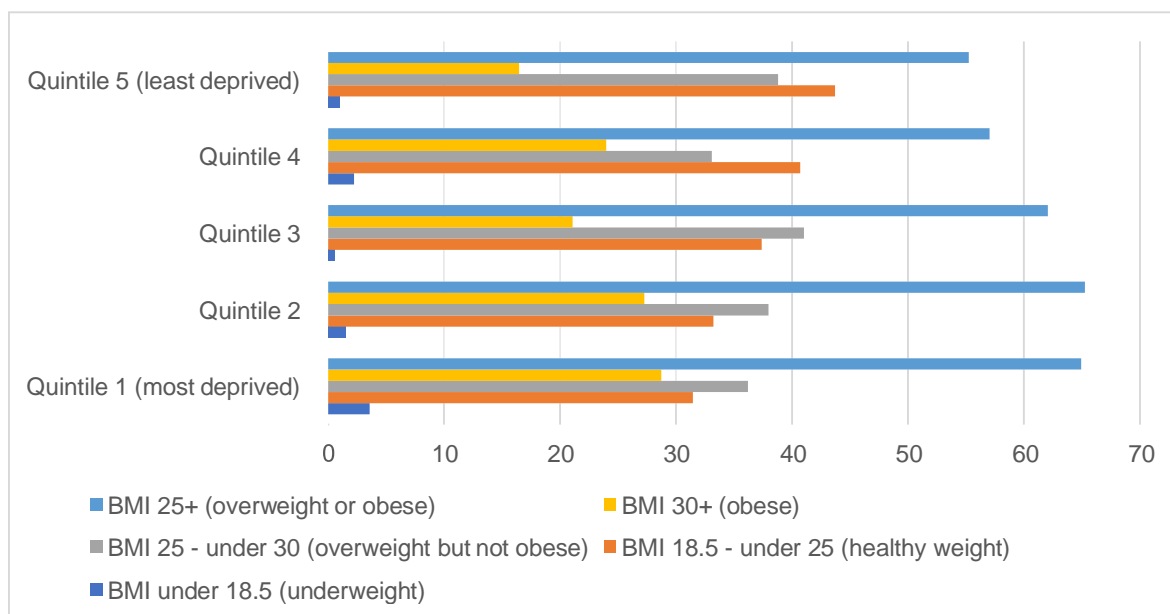
## Obesity

*Challenge: To encourage and support people to take part in activities which promote healthy behaviours to support a healthy weight*

### What does the data tell us?

Nationally obesity rates are higher in the more deprived areas with 29% shown as being obese living in the 20% most deprived areas according to the National Survey for Wales. The chart below shows the difference between the least and most deprived areas in Wales.

**Chart 13: Adult lifestyles by area deprivation, 2020-21 – Body Mass Index**

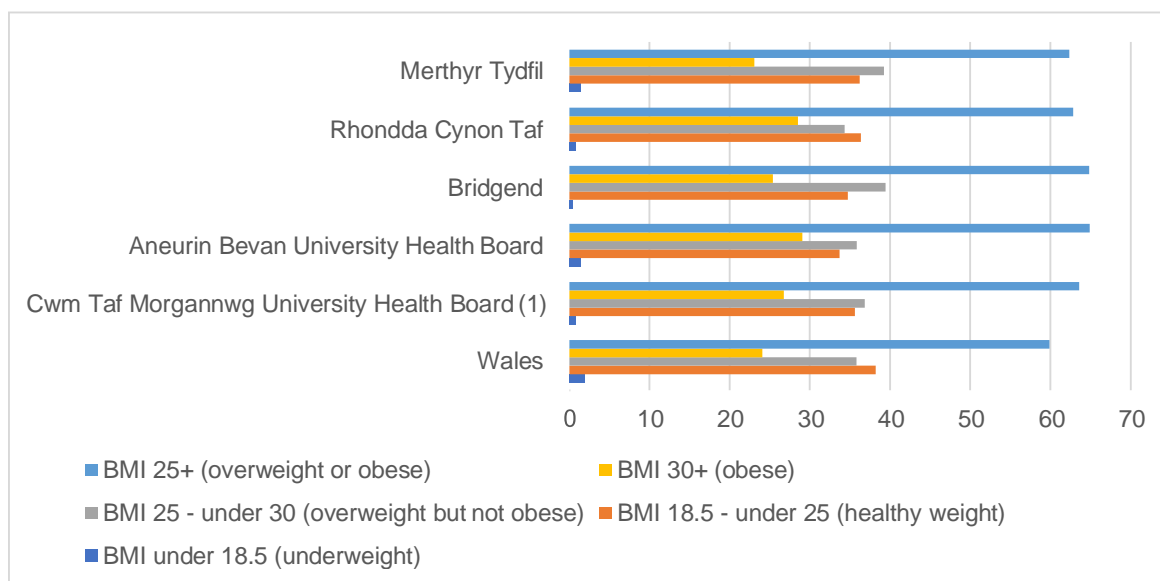


Source: Stats Wales 2020-21 quarter 4 Jan-March 2021

The above chart shows that the levels of obesity in the first and second quintiles are higher than those in the higher quintiles. There is also a higher number in the underweight category in the most deprived areas compared to the other quintiles.

The percentage of obesity for the CTM area is shown in the chart below.

**Chart 14: Adult lifestyles - 2016-17 to 2019-20**

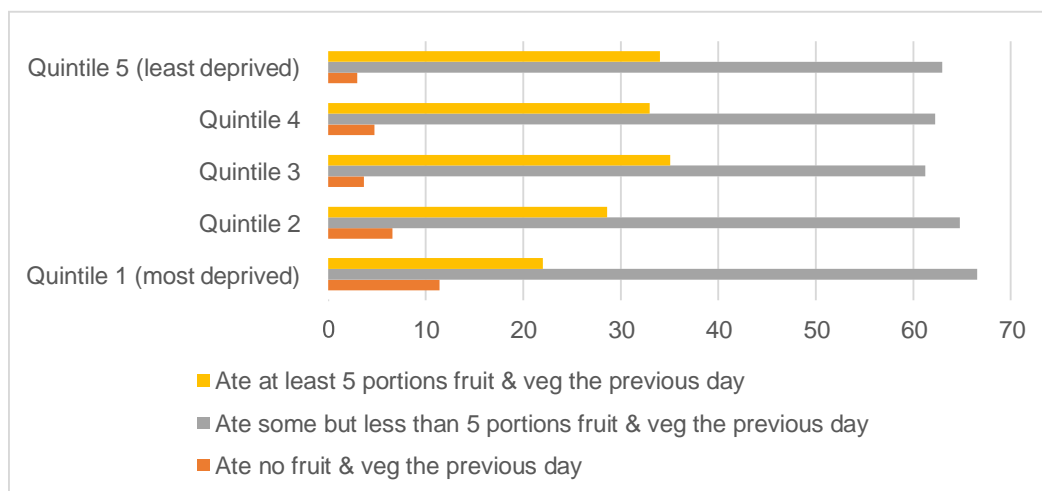


Source: Stats Wales, National Survey for Wales, Population health

The above data shows that the percentage of those who are overweight or obese, and obese is higher than the Wales average overall in CTM health board area. In comparison Aneurin Bevan UHB has a slightly higher percentage in the same categories. Merthyr Tydfil has a slightly lower percentage of people who are obese than the Welsh average. RCT has the highest rate of obesity in the area at 28%.

A healthy diet is considered important in ensuring a healthy lifestyle. Taking account of the recommendation of 5 portions of fruit and veg per day the chart below shows the difference in consumption between areas of deprivation.

**Chart 15: Adult lifestyles by area of deprivation 2020-21: Fruit and Veg**



Source: Stats Wales, population health

The chart shows that in more deprived areas there is a higher percentage who have eaten some fruit and veg the previous day; there are a higher percentage in the least deprived areas who have eaten at least 5 portions. The percentage who have eaten no fruit and veg is higher in the least deprived areas. However, this is just a snapshot in time reporting on the 'previous day'.

There are links to levels of obesity and diabetes and \*musculoskeletal illnesses which is shown in the table below.

Table 8: Adults reporting to have selected chronic conditions by obesity, age-standardised percentage, persons aged 16+, Wales, 2016/17

| Chronic condition                | Measure   | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Diabetes</b>                  | Not obese | 3.8        |
| <b>Diabetes</b>                  | Obese     | 10.0       |
| <b>Diabetes</b>                  | Wales     | 5.3        |
| <b>Musculoskeletal illnesses</b> | Not obese | 15.0       |
| <b>Musculoskeletal illnesses</b> | Obese     | 24.2       |
| <b>Musculoskeletal illnesses</b> | Wales     | 17.3       |

Source: Public Health Wales Observatory, Obesity in Wales

\*Musculoskeletal illnesses include: arthritis, rheumatism, fibrositis, back problems, slipped disc, spine, neck or other problems of bones/joints/muscles

The table shows that there is a higher percentage than the Wales average for those who are obese and have diabetes or musculoskeletal illnesses.

There is also a growing number of bariatric incidents in the CTM area; with the Fire Service being called to assist in the removal of people from their homes where the ambulance service is unable to. This involves the Fire Service attending to undertake structural work to enable the person to be removed. There have been 92 incidents in the last 3 years increasing year on year as indicated below:

- 2018/19 – 25
- 2019/20 – 28
- 2020/21 – 39

The above numbers are for the full financial years with the current year recording 21 incidents so far in 2021/22.

The levels of obesity in adults across Wales in general is increasing, according to Public Health Wales. Over 60% of adults are overweight or obese with 24% of those being obese (PHW 2019). The report also indicates that if the trend continues the rate of those who are overweight or obese will continue to rise, by 2030 it is likely to be 64%.

According to data from National Survey for Wales 2016/17 the rate of obesity is higher in males than in females. Males between the age of 45 and 64 years are more likely to be obese. According to the European Men Ageing Study data shows that obesity is associated with lifestyle factors including smoking status, physical activity level and education attainment in European men age between 40 and 79 years (Han et al 2016).

## Strengths

There are initiatives that are in development and being implemented such as:

- Pre-diabetes pilot – local and national (CTM Public Health Consultant Lead – Rebecca Cushen)  
During the last 2 years, CTM has been in receipt of WG funding for investment in Prevention and Early Years. One of the areas that CTM elected to invest in was in a primary care pilot of pre-diabetes brief identification and risk modification through lifestyle

referral and intervention. South Cynon practices participated in this pilot, which will be completed in August 2022. Following this, it will be evaluated by the Diabetes Research Unit at Swansea University. The evaluation will assess the impact of this intervention on HbA1c, plus its acceptability amongst staff and patients. It will also be used to consider the next steps with the CTM programme, including the selection criteria for referral for lifestyle management support, and relationship to the NHSE model and framework. An interim report had identified 987 patients with pre-diabetes (excluding frail, terminal illness, pregnant etc.) which gives an approximate prevalence of 3.2% in South Cynon.

### Opportunities for Development

- During the engagement there were many references to the natural environment within the area and this was highlighted in what people thought were the best things about living in the area. The proximity of the coast, mountains and countryside was highlighted with an appreciation of the landscape and the opportunities it provides for recreational activity which is captured in a quote from a participant '*We have beautiful surroundings, green spaces to exercise, ride bikes, walk. The area has improved dramatically over the last 10 years and continues to do so.*' The Valleys Regional Park survey (discussed in **Environment Section**) also indicates that people were using the natural environment more for walking and cycling. Bryngarw supported UK-wide studies which showed that more people reconnected with their local open and green spaces during the lockdown period, for their physical, mental and social wellbeing. Following the park's reopening in July 2020, with the necessary safety measures in place, an unprecedented number of people visited in August (48,864). Building on all these factors, especially use of the outdoors during Covid there are opportunities to work in partnership to promote activities through local community initiatives, schools and clubs.
- Learning from the evaluation of Pre-diabetes pilot is also an opportunity for implementation in other areas as well as how services can work together to support a healthy lifestyle.

### Diabetes

*Challenge: Promote healthy behaviours which encourage active and healthy lifestyles. Educating people to understand the importance of managing diabetes effectively to prevent escalation of harmful health conditions.*

Type 2 diabetes is associated with lifestyle factors such as being overweight or inactive as well as having a family history of diabetes (NHS). The prevalence of diabetes is increasing and according to Diabetes UK, ([https://www.diabetes.org.uk/in\\_your\\_area/wales/diabetes-in-wales](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/in_your_area/wales/diabetes-in-wales)) Wales has the highest number in the UK with diabetes. In 2020, an additional 10,695 were diagnosed in Wales increasing the number of people with diabetes to 209,015 (8% of the population). Of these 90% have type 2 diabetes. If the current trend continues 311,000 people could have diabetes in Wales by 2030, placing pressure on health and social care. The current cost to the NHS in Wales is approximately £500m per year, 10% of its annual budget (Diabetes UK).

Type 2 diabetes is closely related to obesity, and it is believed that the 'energy-dense Western style diet in conjunction with a sedentary lifestyle are the primary cause of Type 2 diabetes' (Kolb, Martin 2017).

Diabetes can be controlled with a good diet and medication, as well as ensuring attendance for regular check-ups. These elements can reduce the impact of diabetes which can cause heart disease and stroke and, in some cases where ulcers/injuries are not managed, amputations.



### What does the data tell us?

Data relating to diabetes in the CTM area was provided by the health board from the Diabetes Atlas information which shows the number with diabetes the table below:

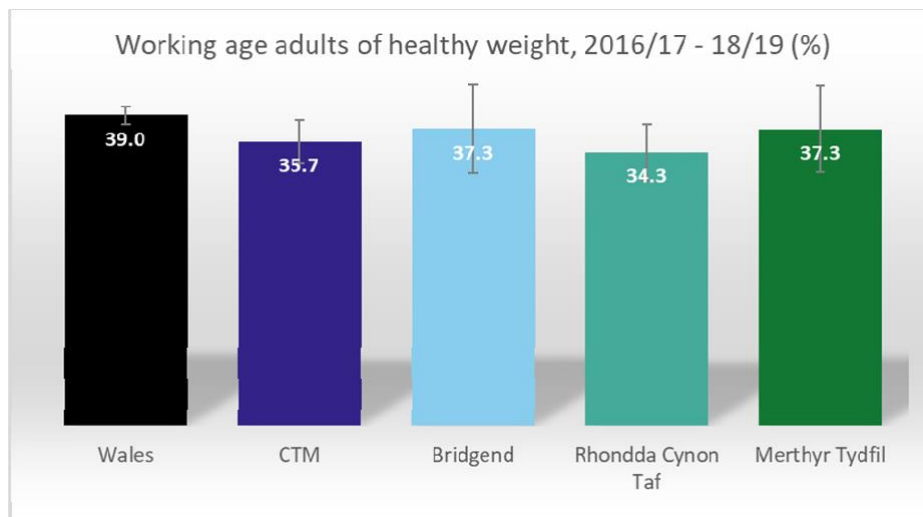
Table 9: Number of people with diabetes per 10k – Health board area 2021

| Area             | People with Diabetes per 10k |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| Wales            | 753                          |
| <b>CwmTaf</b>    | <b>810</b>                   |
| South Cynon      | 906                          |
| N Rhondda        | 895                          |
| N Cynon          | 850                          |
| S Rhondda        | 848                          |
| N Merthyr Tydfil | 845                          |
| Aneurin Bevan    | <b>770</b>                   |
| Bridgend N       | 898                          |
| Bridgend W       | 803                          |

The numbers above show that the rate of people with diabetes in the local areas are higher than the Wales and health board area average. South Cynon has the highest rate per 10K.

Risk factors relating to diabetes are captured relating to weight and smoking.

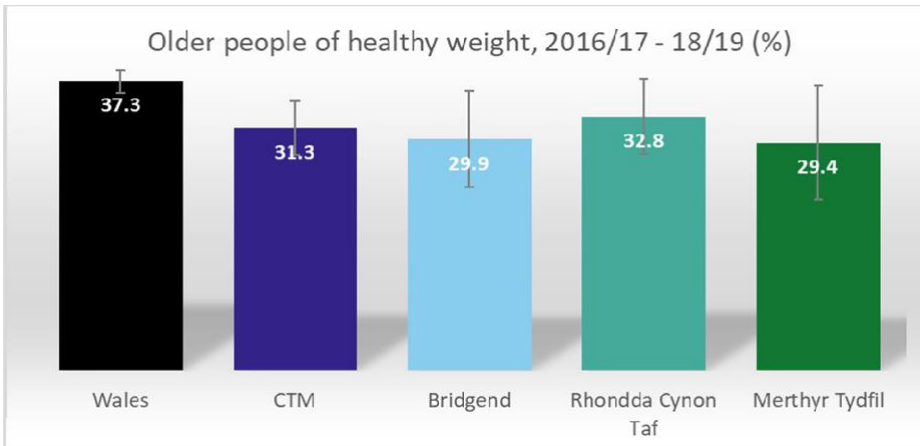
### Chart 16: Adults healthy weight



Whilst CTM has a slightly lower percentage of adults with a healthy weight compared to the Wales average; RCT has the lowest percentage of adults with a healthy weight in the area.



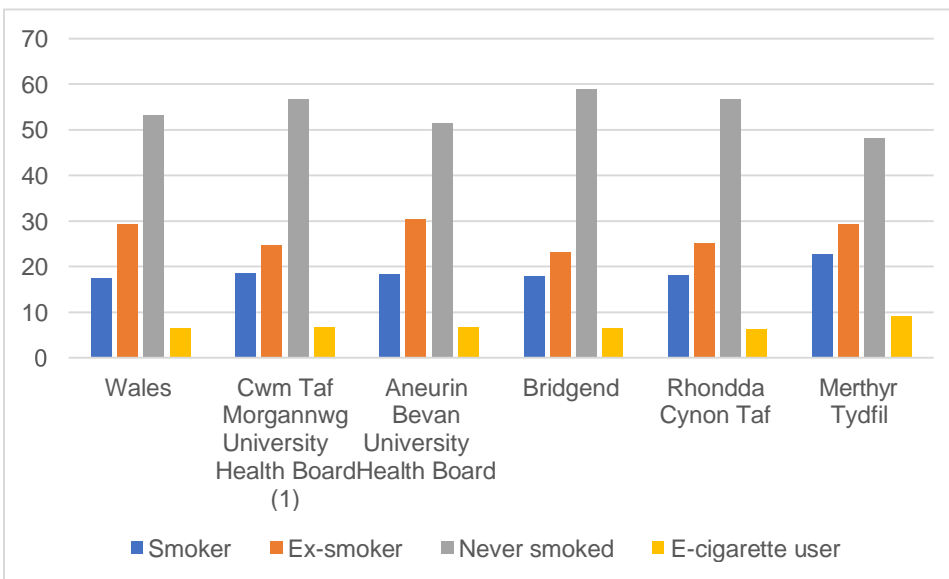
**Chart 17: Older people healthy weight**



Relating to older people the percentage of those with a healthy weight is significantly lower than the Wales average with Merthyr being the lowest percentage in the area and RCT being highest.

The percentage of people who smoke in the Cwm Taf area is higher than the Wales average (17%) for adults. Merthyr Tydfil has the highest percentage of adults who smoke at 23% and RCT and Bridgend at 18% which is only slightly above the Wales average. Although the smoking rate is high the percentage who have never smoked is higher across the area.

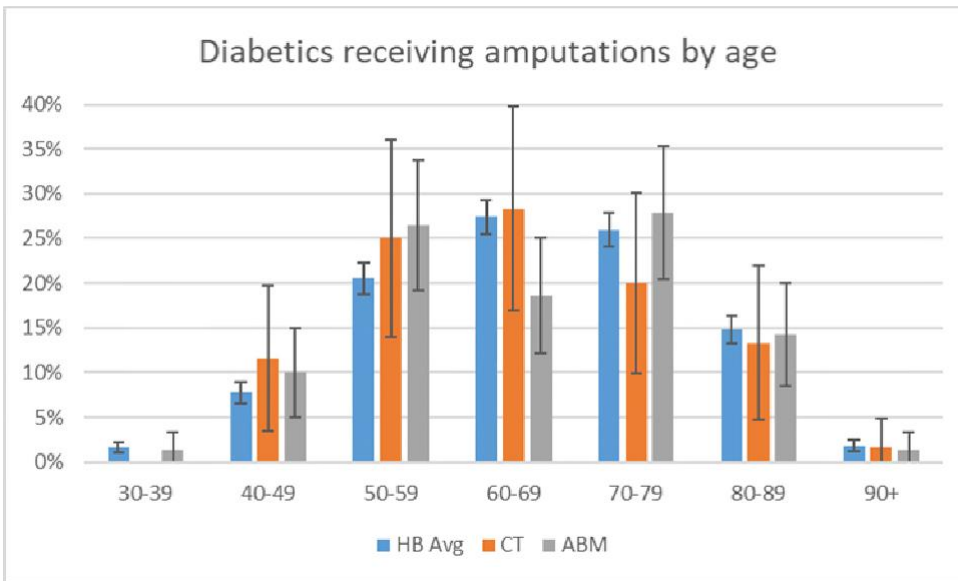
**Chart 18: Adult Lifestyle: Smoking and e-cigarette use - 2018-19 & 2019-20**



Source: Stats Wales: National Survey for Wales

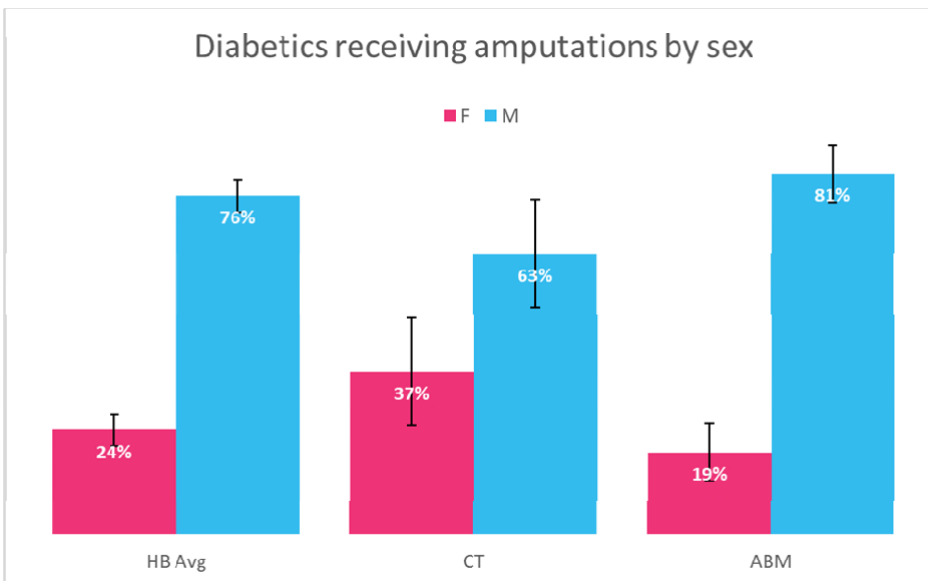
The chart below shows the percentage of amputations in the area with a comparison to Aneurin Bevan UHB.

**Chart 19: Diabetics receiving amputations by age (share of health board totals – not as a percentage of diabetics)**



There are more men than women diagnosed with diabetes in the CTM area who receive amputations as the chart below shows:

**Chart 20: Comparison of male and female diagnosis**



As indicated above the lifestyle behaviours and lack of management of diabetes can lead to amputations. This is a significant issue for the health service and for social care in relation to the care required for those who undergo an amputation. According to the above data the majority of those undergoing an amputation are male aged between 50 and 79 years. The related cost to the health board in undertaking amputations and ongoing care is significant with most amputations in the CTM area being toe (53%) and leg (27%) operations.

The information relating to diabetes shown above identifies that more men than women are diagnosed with diabetes as well as having a higher rate of amputations. When considering the data on obesity the higher level of obesity is for males aged between 45 and 64. This shows a likely link between obesity and type 2 diabetes in the area.

## Strengths

The work being undertaken in South Cynon relating to pre-diabetes discussed above is a positive initiative to identify and reduce the progress of diabetes for those who are referred and engage.

## Opportunities for Development

- These opportunities should be seen as working in tandem with the above relating to obesity.
- Focussing on early interventions with services that focus on preventing some of the issues that result in ill health and impact positively on peoples' ability to lead healthier lives. Feedback from the engagement was positive relating to living healthy lifestyles, keeping fit and enjoying the natural environment which indicated that people are aware of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. There are some elements that are shown to be prohibitive for some who identified the cost of accessing leisure facilities as well as issues with transport in the area where they are relying on public transport to access venues and services. Transport was identified as an issue mainly for those in the poorer areas as they were less likely to have their own transport and so relied mainly on public transport. The development of the South Wales Metro through the Cardiff Capital Region will provide some opportunities to improve transport in the areas which currently have less accessibility.
- The increase in the number of bariatric incidents shows a greater level of obesity emerging in the Region. Healthy lifestyle choices not only deal with issues of obesity, they also support mental health and reduce the likelihood of type 2 diabetes and may reduce the likelihood of dementia for some.

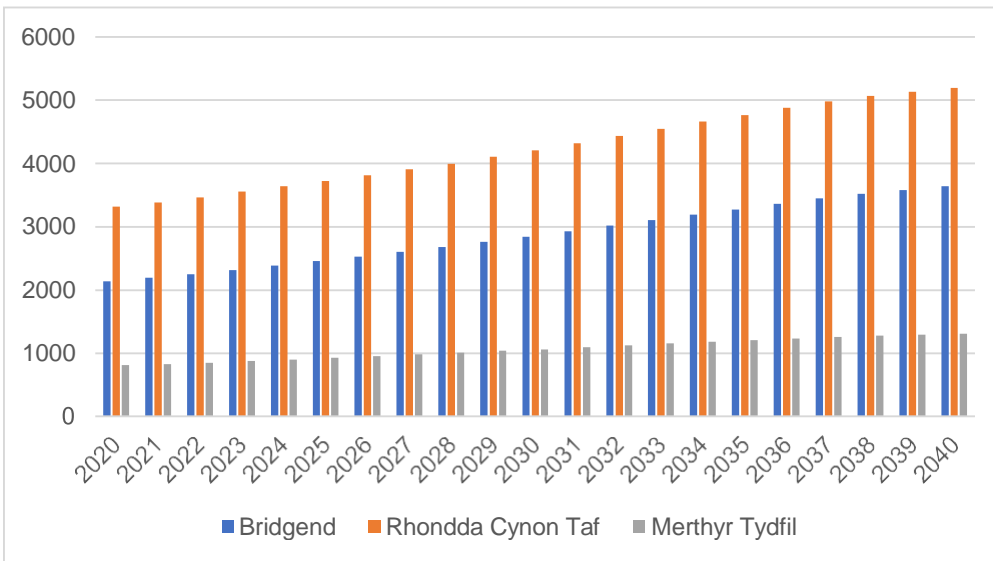
## Dementia

**Challenge:** *Dementia in the region is increasing with a stark rise in RCT compared to Bridgend and Merthyr. Initiatives in the communities and in work providing support and knowledge around dementia will assist those who are living with dementia as well as family and friends carers.*

### What does the data tell us?

The numbers of people diagnosed with dementia is increasing and according to predictions will continue to increase significantly over the next 20 years. According to Alzheimer's Research UK the prevalence of dementia in the Cwm Taf health board area is 4,264 which is 1.44% of the population. The predicted rise in dementia is shown in the below chart:

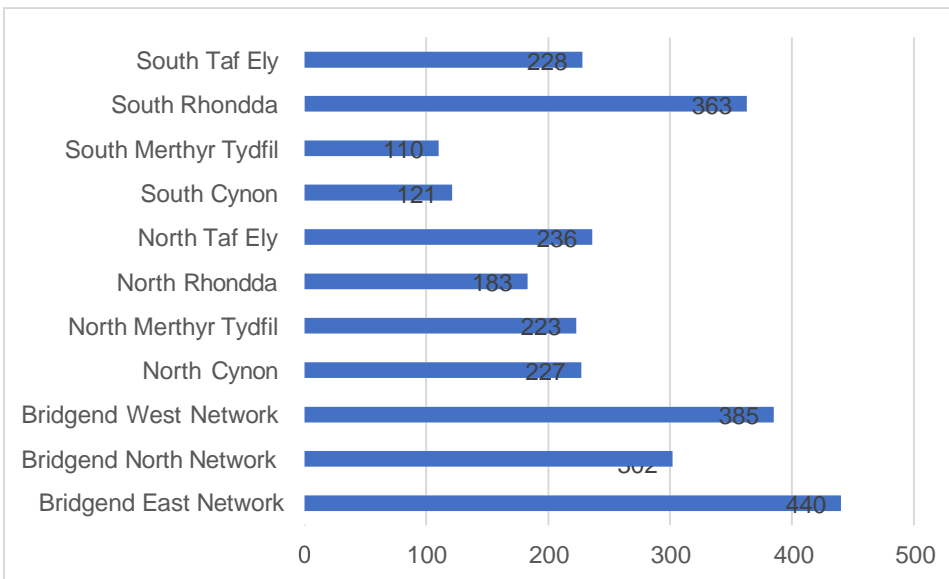
**Chart 21: Predicted Number of adults 65+ with Dementia 2020 to 2040**



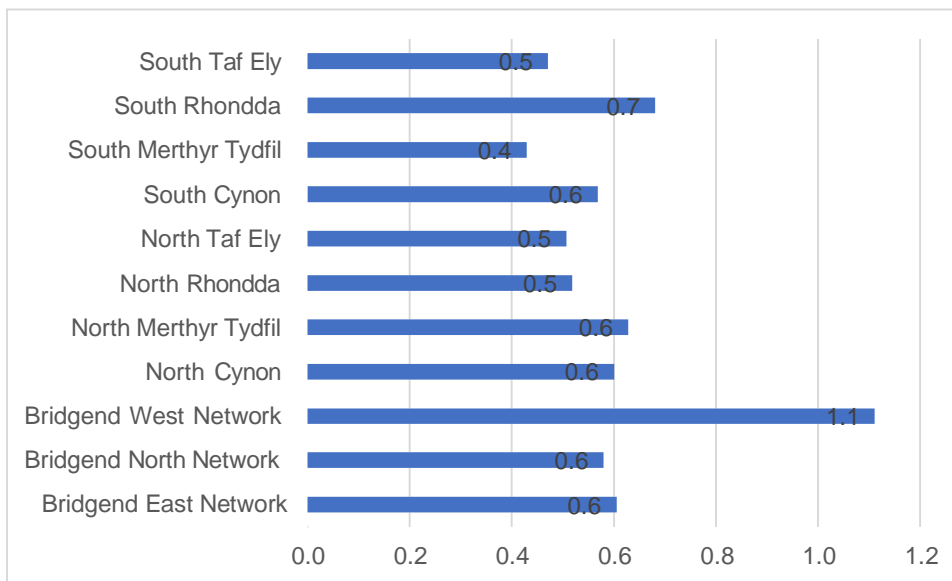
Source: Social Care Wales data observatory

The number diagnosed in the GP Cluster areas across CTM are shown below:

**Chart 22 : Dementia diagnosis in GP cluster area 2019-20 (number)**



**Chart 23: Dementia diagnosis in GP cluster area 2019-20 (rate)**



Source: Stats Wales Quality Assurance Improvement Framework (QUAIF)

The areas with the highest rate of diagnosis in each local authority area are South Rhondda and North Merthyr with Bridgend West having highest rate overall.

There are several risk factors for dementia, but the biggest factors are ageing and genes.

Other elements can contribute to this including (Alzheimer's Society):

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Lifestyle including smoking and excessive alcohol use
- Exposure to air pollution

Elements that can reduce the risk factors are

- Physical activity
- Balanced diet
- Exercising the mind
- Not smoking
- Reduce alcohol consumption
- Keeping your mind active

All of these elements are achievable, and support is available from health and other services in the local communities. The nature and quality of the environment are factors and improvements in air quality and ready access to green space will support changes. These, as well as activities provided in the local libraries and community centres, can support the reduction of risk factors (see Culture)

### Strengths

- Initiatives such as dementia friendly communities are supportive of those who are living with dementia and are being progressed in some areas. There are also activities such as dementia friendly swimming, and memory cafés in the community which can support people to live well with dementia.
- Halo Leisure have an activities programme 'Feel Good for Life' which not only provides activities for those living with dementia but those who are feeling lonely or low mood. The programme was developed in partnership which included health, local authority, third sector

and community groups. The provision has won an award in 2020 for its 'Impact through physical activity' for the dementia friendly activities.

- RCT developed Maerdy as a Dementia Friendly Village in 2015 which has continued to grow. Activities have included Dementia Friends training for the residents to improve awareness and understanding of dementia. There are groups meeting regularly to take part in activities such as 'singing for the brain', meeting for a cuppa and a chat as well as indoor bowling.
- Library services in RCT have also held Dementia and Reminiscence workshops in care homes prior to Covid. The workshops proved hugely popular and a programme of dementia outreach with care homes was beginning to be established. The service is looking at the opportunities to develop this service as an online interactive service going forward.

### **Opportunities for Development**

Feedback from the engagement activities identified the need for improved health and social care with more investment in preventative services. There was discussion around more use of social prescribing to improve wellbeing and a greater consideration for the role of carers, this included those caring for someone living with dementia. One participant captured this in the following quote: *'The social care as a whole needs to be remodelled especially for the elderly who may be on their own, have dementia, mobility problems. Having experienced this first-hand with my mother, more investment is needed in this area for the needs of the carers and the people being cared for.'*

Plans are already being developed to deal with the increase in dementia services and support that will be needed in the future from a health and social care perspective. These take account of the need to provide more community-based resources which is being progressed such as the Health and Wellbeing Hubs in Cwm Taf.

## Children and Families

Understanding the profile of the younger generation and their families is vital in understanding how public bodies need to respond. The aim is to secure a future where communities are safer and thrive, where the younger generation can experience longer and healthier lives than the generation before and be part of an economy that encourages and rewards them. This assessment examines the challenges and context in which children and families exist.

### What do we know?

We have a substantial level of data and information about the challenges faced by children and families in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region and we understand the picture across Wales. According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021 the main observations were that:

- Healthy life expectancy continues to be worse for those living in more deprived areas, but there isn't evidence that the gap is increasing.
- The proportion of babies born with a low birth weight has increased in recent years, following the lowest figures in 2014 and 2015.
- The proportion of children who were up to date with their routine immunisations by four years of age was 88% this year, the highest since this measure was first reported on.
- Young people's (19- to 24-year-olds), participation in education and the labour market has increased over the period since the recession of 2008 before levelling off more recently.

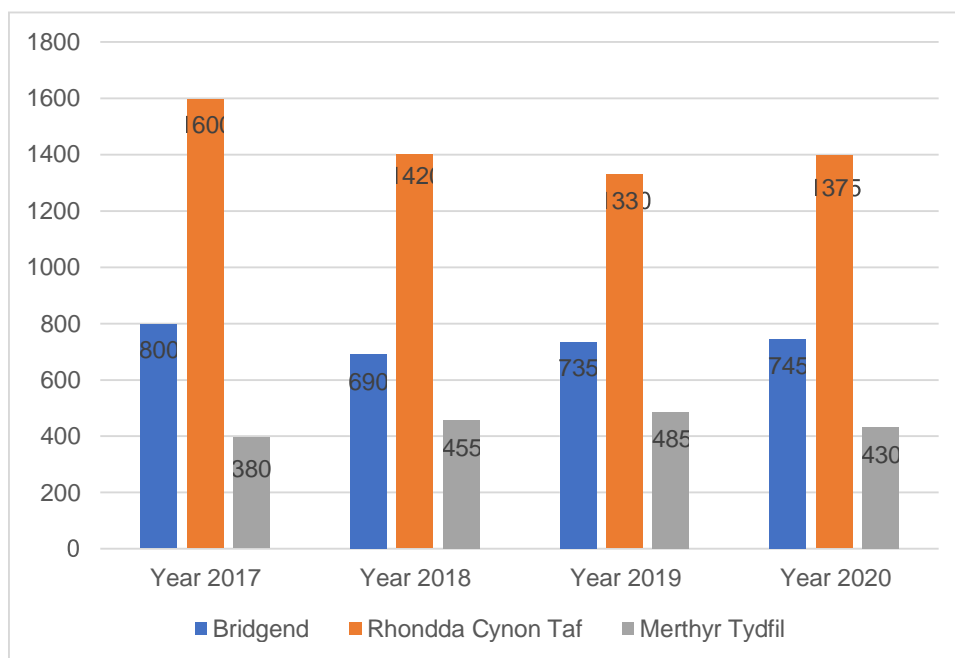
One of the key indicators about the challenges faced by children and families is the number of children in receipt of care and support, perhaps through formal arrangements where children are in care, or where their families are being supported at times of difficulty. There are often a range of reasons why children and families need support, and the data show that the main reasons relate to substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse. Children will also face a range of challenges in their own physical and mental health and wellbeing, with some identified through youth offending.

### Children receiving Care and Support

*Challenge: Responding to the early signs of ACEs to provide early support and interventions to prevent escalation to statutory services*

#### What does the data tell us?

Data indicates that the number of children receiving care and support fluctuates across the CTM area as shown in the chart below.

**Chart 24: Number of Children receiving care and support by local authority**

Source: Stats Wales

The breakdown of children receiving care and support shows fluctuations in the numbers being supported across the CTM area. Between 2019 and 2020 RCT and Bridgend saw an increase whilst Merthyr Tydfil show a decrease in numbers.

The category of need relates mainly to Abuse or Neglect, Family in Acute Stress or Family Disfunction which is shown in the below table.

Table 10: Number of Children receiving care and support by local authority and category of need

| Category of Need       | Year | Bridgend | Rhondda Cynon Taf | Merthyr Tydfil | Wales |
|------------------------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|
| Abuse or Neglect       | 2017 | 525      | 1125              | 330            | 7940  |
|                        | 2018 | 480      | 1050              | 350            | 8075  |
|                        | 2019 | 550      | 880               | 325            | 8245  |
|                        | 2020 | 565      | 775               | 220            | 8250  |
| Family in Acute Stress | 2017 | 35       | 300               | 15             | 1425  |
|                        | 2018 | 25       | 150               | 30             | 1345  |
|                        | 2019 | 25       | 255               | 30             | 1385  |
|                        | 2020 | 25       | 395               | 20             | 1620  |
| Family Disfunction     | 2017 | 160      | 85                | 20             | 1900  |
|                        | 2018 | 120      | 135               | 60             | 2045  |
|                        | 2019 | 105      | 140               | 65             | 1980  |
|                        | 2020 | 85       | 160               | 40             | 1895  |

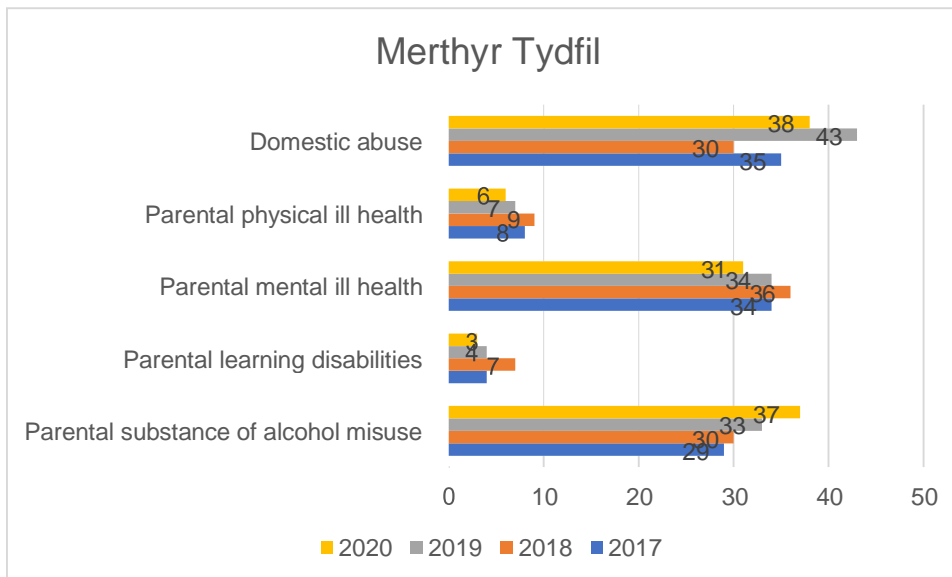
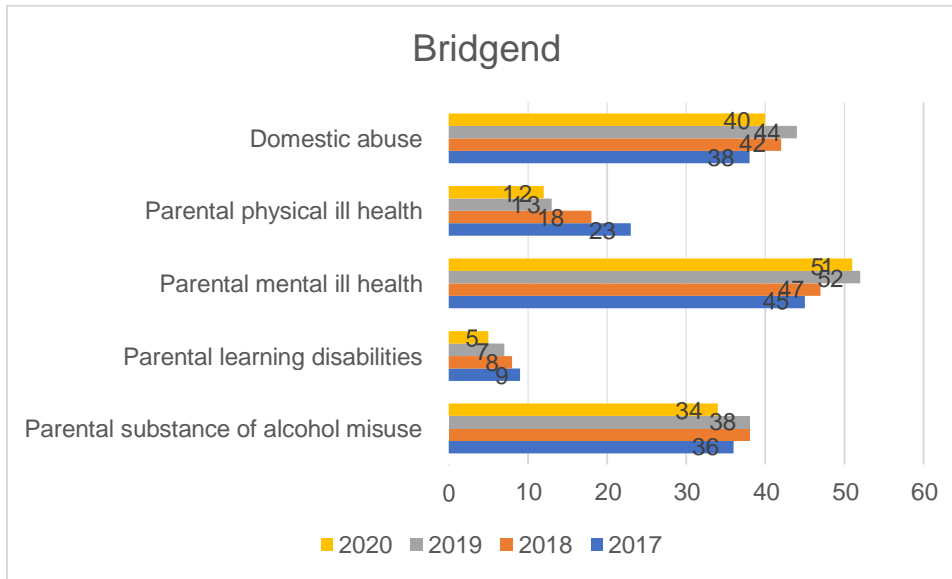
Source: Stats Wales

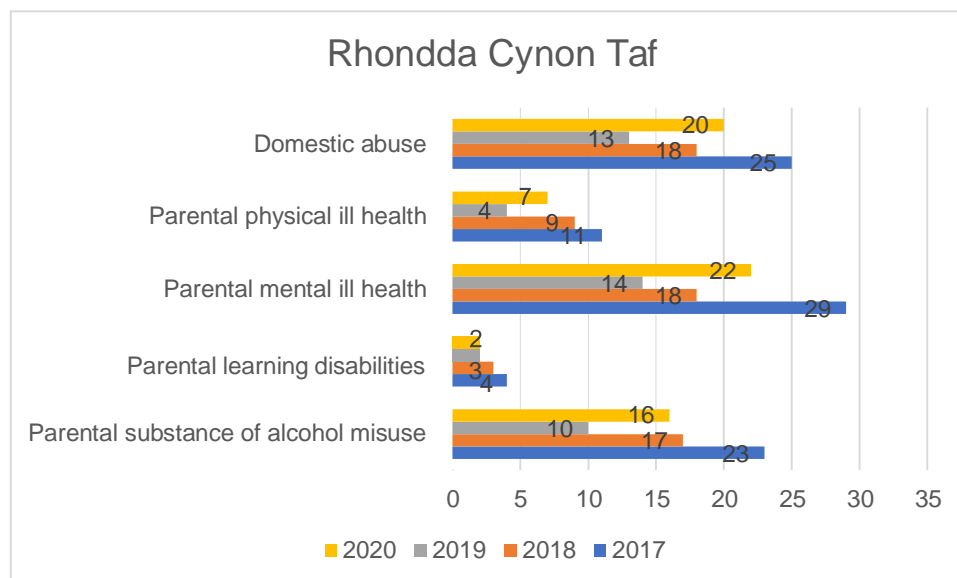


The numbers relating to Abuse or Neglect are increasing across Wales, however this is not the case in both RCT and Merthyr Tydfil which have seen a decrease over time between 2017 and 2020. Whilst Bridgend shows an increase in the number relating to Abuse or Neglect the numbers are reducing in relation to Family in Acute Stress and Family Disfunction whereas these are increasing in both RCT and Merthyr Tydfil.

Data relating to parental factors for children receiving care and support show that the main reasons relate to substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse. The following charts show the different elements in each local authority area:

**Charts 25 to 27 Parental factors of children receiving care and support by measure and year**





Source: Stats Wales

Integrated Family Support Services were established to deal with the three elements, providing intensive support to families to prevent children entering care. Assessments in RCT show the number undertaken are highest for mental health (n280) as a single issue and 204 assessments relate to all three factors being present. The figures align with the parental factors above.

The three main elements identified in the parental factors have been identified as three factors in the study of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Bellis et al 2015). The impact of these factors is known to have an effect on children as they develop, in particular in the early stages of brain development. Having 4 or more of the ACEs indicated poorer outcomes for children in later life if they are not addressed at an early stage.

Taking account of the ACEs it is likely that the parents of the children who are subject to intervention from social services have also experienced these factors in childhood which have not been addressed, resulting in their later health harming behaviours.

A further study relating to ACEs in Wales (Ashton et al 2016) identifies that those adults with 4 or more ACEs are five times more likely to have low mental wellbeing than those with no ACEs. The information above (Adult Mental Wellbeing) relating to the WEMWBS scores places RCT and Merthyr Tydfil with lower levels of mental wellbeing amongst adults.

## Early Intervention and Prevention

Early Intervention and prevention services are now embedded in the support for children and families with the Flying Start and Families First programmes. Both these programmes have a priority for support in the early years. The programmes are delivered through the Children and Communities Grant provided by Welsh Government. The Grant is made up of 7 programmes which aim to mitigate or remove disadvantage to vulnerable people.

The 7 programmes are:

- Childcare and Play
- Communities for work plus
- Families First
- Flying Start

- Legacy Fund
- St David's Day Fund
- Promoting positive engagement for young people

Across the CTM area the services provided have an element of early years support from health visitors as well as youth support provision, parenting and Team Around the Family which is a requirement of the Families First program.

The Resilient Family Service in RCT provides support to families taking a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach. This works on a multi-agency model to ensure families receive the right service when they are ready. The service can refer to a range of support locally. A snapshot of the service is shown in the below table for October 2020 to March 2021:

Table 11: Outcomes RCT Resilient Family Service

| Measure                                       | Data      |
|---|-----------|
| Total No of referrals                         | 858       |
| • Re-referrals                                | 375 (44%) |
| • With disability                             | 182 (21%) |
| Main referrals sources:                       |           |
| • Children Services                           | 198 (23%) |
| • Self-referral                               | 148 (17%) |
| • Health Visitor                              | 139 (16%) |
| • Primary schools                             | 102 (12%) |
| • Secondary schools                           | 92 (11%)  |
| • Police                                      | 32 (4%)   |
| • Primary care services                       | 27 (3%)   |
| • CAMHS                                       | 21 (2%)   |
| No of assessments:                            | 608       |
| • Re-referrals                                | 274 (45%) |
| • With disability                             | 216 (36%) |
| No of plans developed (signed):               | 556       |
| • Re-referrals                                | 229 (41%) |
| • With disability                             | 222 (40%) |
| Cases closed:                                 | 509       |
| • Re-referrals                                | 248 (49%) |
| • With disability                             | 201 (39%) |
| Outcomes:                                     |           |
| • Resilience improved                         | 396 (78%) |
| • Disengaged at evaluation (actions complete) | 27 (5%)   |
| • Step up to Children's Services              | 26 (5%)   |
| • Resilience not improved                     | 17 (3%)   |
| • Declined support                            | 12 (2%)   |
| • Disengaged (actions not complete)           | 29 (6%)   |

As can be seen the higher number of referrers are those who have early contact with children as well as self-referrals. Self-referrals will be an important element showing that parents have recognised that they need support and are actively seeking that support. The outcomes show that the majority have improved their resilience with only a small number either not improving or disengaging without completing actions.

The service works closely with the Community Hubs which provides a local and more community focussed service to those who are accessing support. This can help with future use of services as and when required.

The service needed to prioritise families during the Covid restrictions and did so by restricting face to face contact with the families at highest risk. Other families were offered and provided with virtual support.

Parenting support services is a universal service provided across the area. During the Covid restrictions they were able to continue their support by working differently. Remote services included programme materials being filmed and posted to the RCT Family Information Service Facebook page between October to March, which consisted of:

- 9 parenting support videos
- 25 early language videos
- 2 Parent group session videos
- 40 story time sessions
- 7 song time videos

The above received 15,304 views

**Bridgend Families First** have supported a number of families with a range of issues. The most significant numbers worked with are shown in Table 12 below:

| Outcome description  | Numbers worked with | % improved |
|--|---------------------|------------|
| Number of children who improved their speech, language and communication skills                                    | 257                 | 59%        |
| Number and % of participant parents with improved ability to support their child's learning and development needs. | 257                 | 63%        |
| Number and % of participants with improved emotional/mental wellbeing  | 458                 | 79%        |
| Number and % of individuals that report an improvement in own resilience   | 291                 | 78%        |
| Number and % of families that report an improvement in family resilience   | 280                 | 73%        |
| Number and % of families that report they feel they can contribute to changes to their lifestyle/behaviours        | 318                 | 83%        |
| Number and % of individuals that report improved family relationships  | 465                 | 86%        |
| Number and % of parents benefitting from a parenting intervention  | 280                 | 77%        |

The positive outcomes for these families contribute to families being more resilient and confident. This can prevent matters escalating as well as reduce the impact of any Adverse Childhood Experiences on children in the family. All these elements reduce the likelihood of families' needs escalating to the point of needing statutory interventions.

Flying Start provides early support to families with children 0 to 4 years living in deprived areas. This intervention provides intensive health visitor support, parenting and childcare. The childcare offer is well used in RCT and Merthyr Tydfil with over 90% take up of the provision, the percentage is less in Bridgend. The provision of the childcare offer provides children with activities to develop their skills ready for school.

Parents are able to access parenting courses both formal and informal but the take up for these is lower in Merthyr Tydfil (61% 18/19) and RCT (66%) for structured parenting courses. Children also have access to Speech and Language Therapy as part of the offer which is a crucial service for those with communication needs. The impact of not dealing with communication issues early on can have a detrimental effect on children as they progress through school, it is therefore an important element of the offer.

### Strengths

- Integrated Family Support Services continues to work with families to prevent children going into care as well as supporting them to return to their families (where this is safe to do so). Whilst the numbers of parents experiencing the three elements of mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse fluctuate in relation to children being involved with statutory services there are some encouraging signs of reduction in some areas.
- Early intervention and prevention initiatives are having a positive impact on families according to the outcomes recorded. There are good links being made with Community Hubs which is a positive element to support families in their local communities

### Opportunities

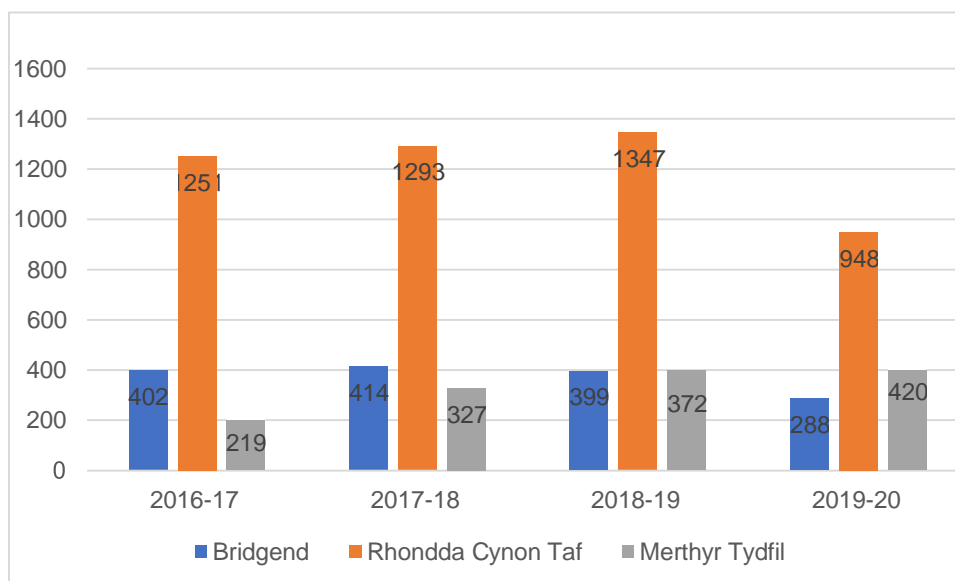
Building on the current support that is provided in the communities there are opportunities to develop and promote the services within the Community Hubs to support families. These are in place in all areas and providing support across the generations, which is important for families as a whole. There are opportunities to broaden the partnership working with key services such as education, social care and early intervention services in planning and developing the services. Young people who contributed to the engagement sessions spoke about not having anywhere suitable to meet friends, the use of the Hubs would be beneficial to young people to meet up as well as accessing any support they need in an informal environment. In particular it was identified that there was a gap in services for 13- to 17-year-olds in relation to youth provision, particularly for those in poorer areas as many lacked transports to be able to go outside their area.

### Mental Wellbeing

*Challenge: Ensuring that mental health issues are recognised early and provision of support is available early to enable effective intervention to prevent escalation.*

#### What does the data tell us?

Data relating to school counselling services shows that in Merthyr Tydfil and RCT year 9 pupils are the highest number receiving the service whereas in Bridgend this fluctuates between years 9 and 10. The below chart shows the overall numbers receiving counselling showing a year-on-year increase for both Merthyr Tydfil and RCT up to 2018/2019. The data for 2019/20 may be skewed due to Covid and subsequent lock downs. Overall, for Wales, Merthyr Tydfil has the highest number of children per 100 residents of 10- to 18-year-olds receiving counselling in 2019/20.

**Chart 28: Number of children and young people attending counselling by Area and Year**

Source: Stats Wales

The data also shows that there are a higher number of females accessing counselling services in schools.

The predominant<sup>2</sup> issues relating to referrals are

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Family
- Self-worth
- Stress

These relate to both male and female. There are higher numbers of issues relating to self-harm and suicide for both males and females in the Merthyr Tydfil area; in particular the numbers are higher in 2018/19.

Data relating to children and young people referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is shown in the table below

Table 13: Total number of referrals into all CAMHS services

| Year                       | All referrals | Females | Males | Gender not recorded |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|---------------------|
| <b>Apr 2019/Mar 2020</b>   | 2,689         | 1480    | 1205  | 4                   |
| <b>April 2020/Mar 2021</b> | 2115          | 1264    | 846   | 5                   |

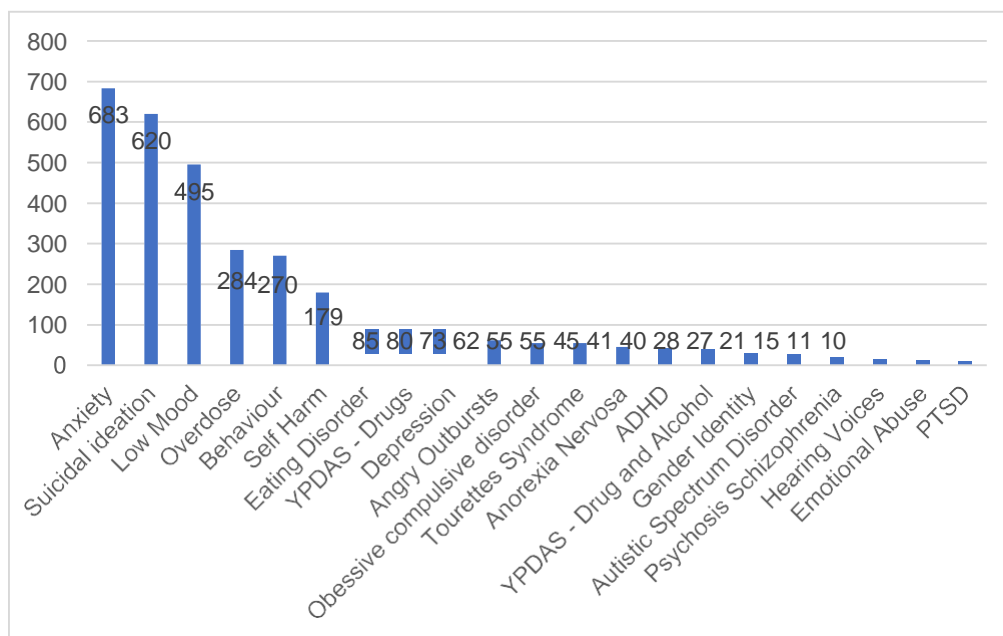
Table 14: Total number of referrals into all CAMHS by age

<sup>2</sup> A predominant issue is the underlying issue(s) that is identified during the counselling process. For example, a young person's presenting issue may be anger, but through the counselling process, he/she may come to realise that the predominant issue is family relationships.

| Mixed Gender        |         |          |           |
|---------------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Year                | Age 0-4 | Age 5-11 | Age 12-17 |
| Apr 2019/Mar 2020   | 10      | 669      | 2010      |
| April 2020/Mar 2021 | 5       | 479      | 1630      |

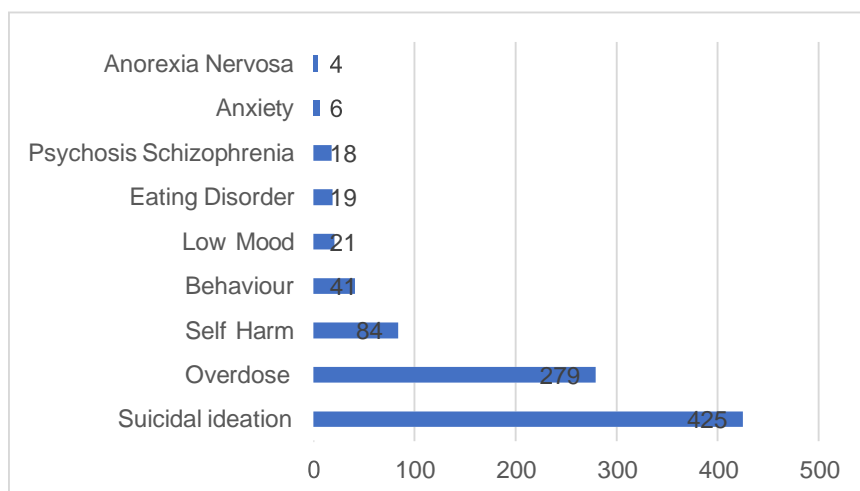
The referrals related to a range of issues which are shown in the chart below:

**Chart 29: Reason for referrals - all referrals, mixed age/ gender April 2019 - March 2021**



As can be seen the main reasons for referral are around Anxiety, Suicidal Ideation and Low Mood. This is similar to the school counselling issues with anxiety being more prevalent. The number of females referred is also higher and age range between 12 and 17 years is significantly higher than the other ages referred. This again mirrors the information relating to school counselling services with years 9 and 10 being in a similar age range.

There were 918 referrals for crisis services between April 2019 and March 2021 the reasons for referral are shown in the following chart:

**Chart 30: Clinical Conditions (reason for referral) between April 2019 and March 2021**

The Together for Mental Health Children and Young People workstreams include the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing as a preventative approach. Whilst this is delivered in the schools there is limited information centrally available relating to interventions and delivery. Interventions will be delivered differently in different schools in order to meet the needs of the pupils.

The below table shows the predicted number of children with 'mental disorders' over the next 20 years. As can be seen the numbers remain similar over time with a slight increase in 2025 however the trend is downwards in all areas.

Table 15: Predicted number of children with mental disorders

| Area                     | Year | Number |
|--------------------------|------|--------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2020 | 1,936  |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2025 | 2,013  |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2030 | 1,975  |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2035 | 1,930  |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2040 | 1,907  |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2020 | 3,280  |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2025 | 3,313  |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2030 | 3,159  |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2035 | 3,081  |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2040 | 3,079  |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2020 | 835    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2025 | 872    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2030 | 856    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2035 | 819    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2040 | 807    |

Source: Social Care Wales data observatory - Population Projections Platform

The above information is predicted from a pre Covid perspective. Public Health Wales released a report (2021) regarding young peoples' mental wellbeing during the pandemic. It considered the



elements which reduced the negative impacts as well as those which had a negative impact on young people.

The activities which reduced the negative impacts included:

- Spending time outside
- Keeping physically active
- Engaging in creative activities and hobbies
- Being aware of nature
- Routines
- Maintaining contact with friends

Taking account of all the above elements they have a strong correlation with the environment, health, culture and cohesion.

The elements which had a negative impact included:

- Parents struggling to cope, and feelings of loneliness and isolation because of social distancing were associated with worse outcomes for young people.
- Educational disruption, school closures, and lack of access to support at school were responsible for many of the worries and anxieties children and young people have been experiencing

It was found from the study that more adolescents and young people exhibited anxiety and depression compared to younger age groups and adults. Further to this, girls were more likely to be affected than boys.

Further information relating to Autism predictions also show a similar pattern for numbers as seen in the below table:

Table 16: Autism Predictions – Age range 0 – 17 years

| Area                     | Year | Number |
|--------------------------|------|--------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2020 | 541    |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2025 | 553    |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2030 | 544    |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2035 | 536    |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 2040 | 537    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2020 | 917    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2025 | 916    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2030 | 887    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2035 | 875    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 2040 | 885    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2020 | 238    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2025 | 243    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2030 | 236    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2035 | 230    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 2040 | 231    |

Source: Social Care Wales data observatory - Population Projections Platform

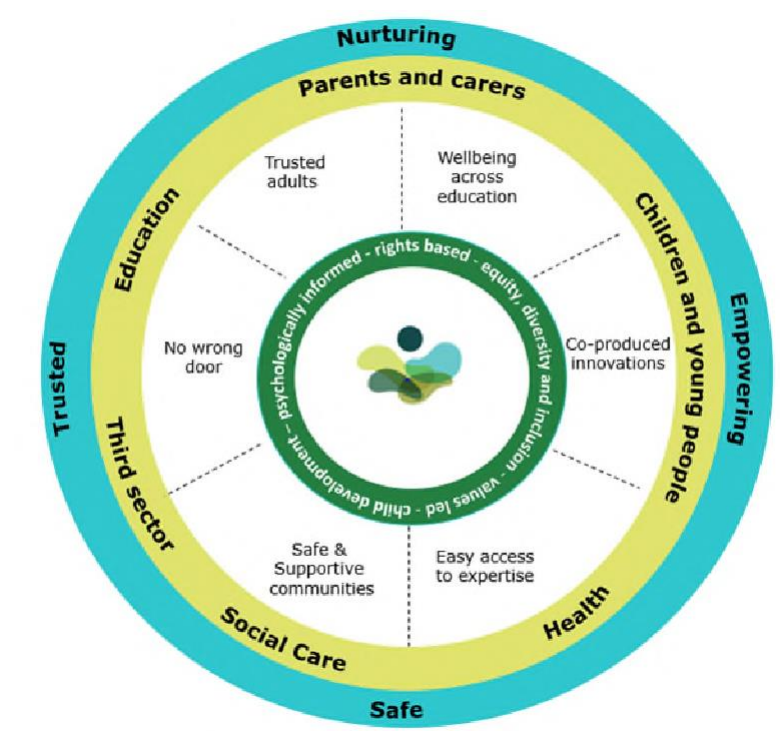
## Strength

There are growing concerns relating to the mental health of young people not only in Wales but across the UK. The Children’s Commissioner has released a report ‘No Wrong Door’ which identifies that children and young people in Wales are waiting too long to get help when they are experiencing distress with mental health, emotional wellbeing and behavioural issues. It states they are ‘bounced between services who cannot agree who is responsible for their care’. The report identifies that Regional Partnership Boards have the opportunity to work to bring services together to support these children and young people. The report highlights the work of the CTM Regional Partnership Board in engaging young people in their work, taking a co-productive approach which includes their concerns around emotional health and wellbeing.

## Opportunities

Nurturing, Empowering, Safe and Trusted (NEST) is a framework that has been developed to prevent mental health difficulties in children and young people as well as help those who are struggling. The framework responds to the ‘No Wrong Door’ approach and is for use by the Regional Partnership Boards in delivering their assessments taking a partnership approach. The framework was developed based on engagement with a range of stakeholders including children and young people as well as parents. It acknowledges that many need extra support at different points in our lives (children or adults) and aims to be able to respond appropriately and effectively.

The visual representation of the framework is shown below and is a tool to be used in planning mental health and wellbeing services for babies, children, young people, parents, carers and their wider families across Wales (NHS Wales)



Based on the feedback from engagement with young people they were concerned about mental health and considered that more support was needed. During a Hackathon relating to mental health the following areas were highlighted by young people:

- More support in building resilience relating to recovery from Covid, in particular dealing with those who have been digitally excluded, family problems, bullying and dealing with this, raising confidence, risk taking and decision making

- Transition for those leaving care, with additional learning needs and support for young carers
- Make safe places and strengthen cohesion- young people need safe space within their communities and to be heard at community and decision-making levels

The concerns of the young people all fit into the elements presented in the NEST framework above and take account of all the people/services who can make a difference to the young people. Working with the young people, listening and acting on their thoughts and concerns is an opportunity to manage and support their development and improve mental health.

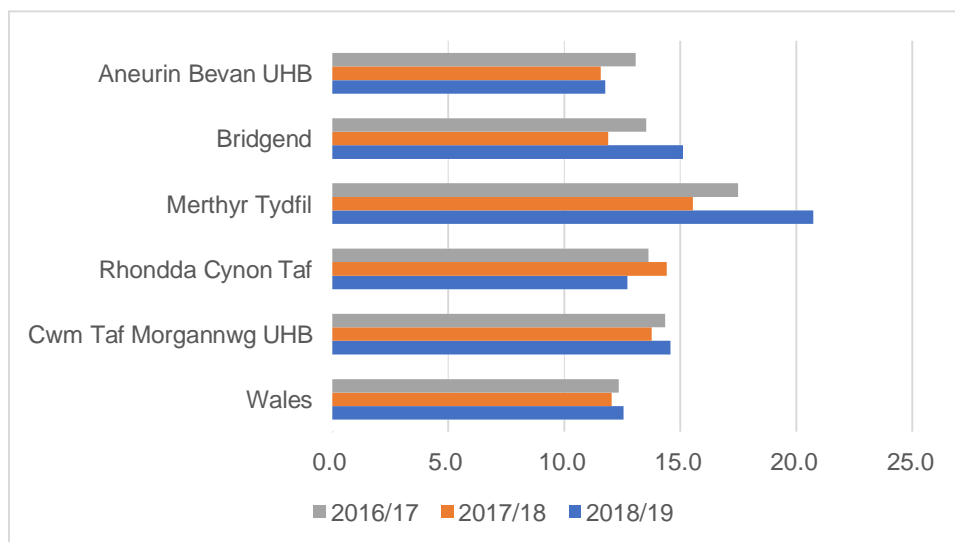
## Obesity

*Challenge: Introducing children to a healthy and active lifestyle early to prevent embedded unhealthy behaviours in the future which result in unhealthy weight gain. Educating children about the importance of a varied diet to ensure they are able to make good choices.*

### What does the data tell us?

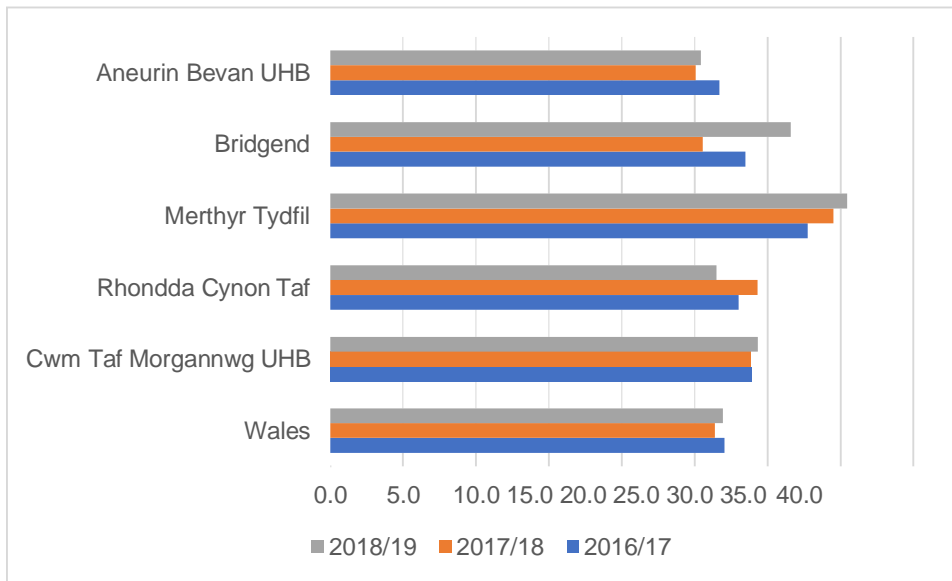
The rate of obesity in CTM is above the Wales average with Merthyr Tydfil having the highest level of obesity in Wales. Both Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil have had increased levels of obesity with RCT decreasing between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The Child Measurement Programme involves measuring the height and weight of children in reception class across Wales which provides a comparison across the nation for the weight of children. The chart below provides a comparison of children in the reception years from 2016/17 to 2018/19.

**Chart 31: Child Measurement Programme – % Obese**



Source: Public Health Wales

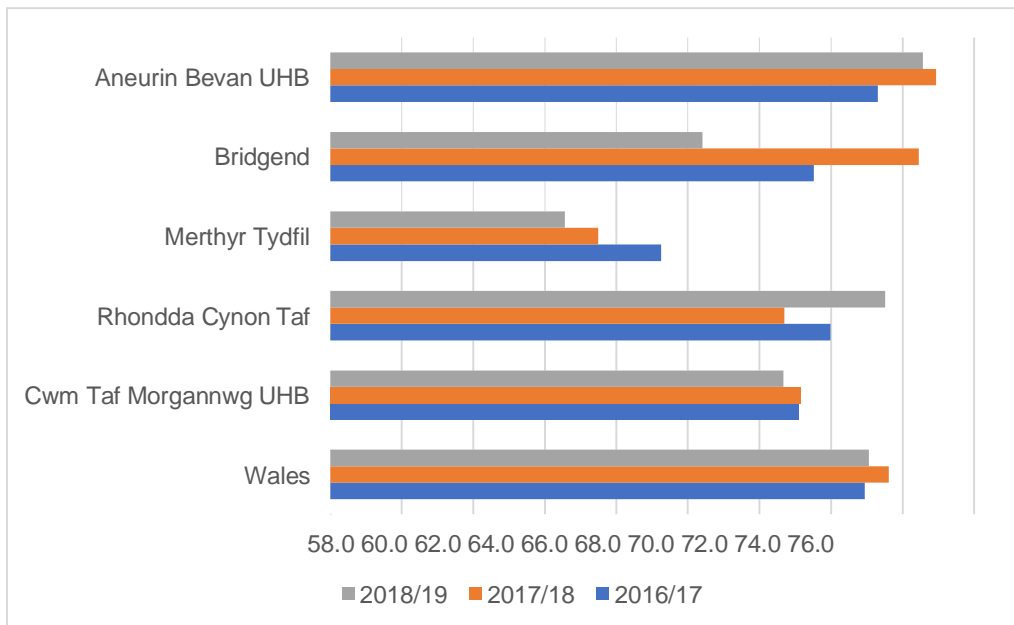
**Chart 32: Child Measurement Programme – % Overweight or Obese**



Source: Public Health Wales

The chart above shows that overall, in CTMUHB children are above the Wales average for being overweight or obese. In 2018/19 RCT has a lower level of obesity than the Wales average.

**Chart 33: Child Measurement Programme – % Healthy Weight or Underweight**

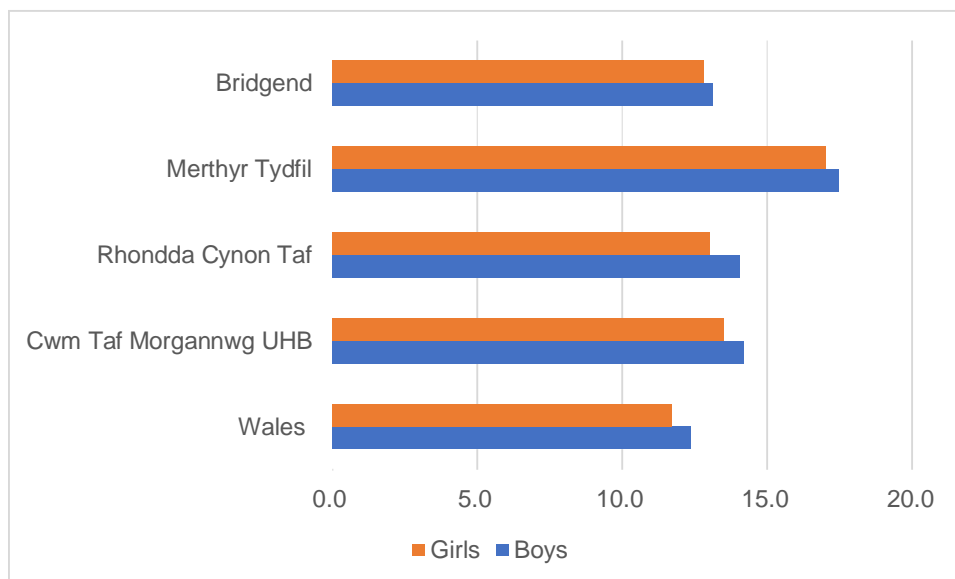


Source: Public Health Wales

The above chart shows that in RCT the level of children who are of a healthy weight or underweight is higher than the Wales average for 2018/19. Merthyr Tydfil are consistently at a much lower level than the other areas within the CTM area. Bridgend have shown a much lower level of children in this weight category for 2018/19 compared to 2017/18 where they were above the Wales average.

Data also shows that boys have higher rates of obesity than girls as shown in the below chart.

**Chart 34: Obesity in Boys and Girls - 5 years 2014/15 - 2018/19 combined**



Source: Public Health Wales

The programme has piloted the measurement of children in Year 4 in 2012/13 (PHW 2015) as a follow on from the initial height and weight measurement. The pilot was undertaken for the CTM area and showed that the prevalence of obesity in year 4 was higher than in the reception year. They also considered the results in relation to the deprivation level, this showed that those living in the most and second most deprived areas had a higher level of children who were overweight or obese.

The incidents of obesity in the main are in the most deprived areas and so the link between poverty and ability to afford healthy and nutritious food is likely to contribute. The table below shows the prevalence of obesity in areas of deprivation from least to most:

Table 17: Child Measurement Programme Deprivation Levels: Data Tables 5 years combined 2014/15 – 2018/19

|                             | Healthy Weight or Underweight (%) | Overweight or obese (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Wales</b>                | <b>73.4</b>                       | <b>26.6</b>             |
| <b>Least deprived fifth</b> | 78.9                              | 21.1                    |
| <b>Next least deprived</b>  | 74.4                              | 25.6                    |
| <b>Middle deprived</b>      | 73.1                              | 26.9                    |
| <b>Next most deprived</b>   | 71.5                              | 28.5                    |
| <b>Most deprived fifth</b>  | 70.8                              | 29.2                    |

Source: Public Health Wales

According to Flying Start statistics the percentage of children who are a healthy weight is lower than those in non-Flying Start areas.

Table 18: Prevalence of children in 'healthy weight' categories for children aged 4-5 years resident within Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas, 2016/17 and 2017/18 combined

| Local Authority (c)      | All Children |                  | Boys         |                  | Girls        |                  |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
|                          | Flying Start | Non-Flying Start | Flying Start | Non-Flying Start | Flying Start | Non-Flying Start |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 68.2%        | 74.1%            | 68.6%        | 74.1%            | 67.8%        | 74.2%            |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 67.8%        | 72.8%            | 67.3%        | 72.9%            | 68.3%        | 72.7%            |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 63.7%        | 68.4%            | 62.8%        | 67.3%            | 64.5%        | 69.5%            |

Note: Healthy weight includes healthy weight and underweight

Source: Child Measurement Programme for Wales PHW

As indicated above (Adults – Diabetes) obesity has a long-term impact on health with a higher likelihood of type 2 diabetes in later life as well as other life limiting illnesses. Tackling the issue at an early stage will prevent later complex health needs.

Public Health Wales undertook a study relating to risk factors in childhood obesity examining the food environment in Wales 'Fast Food Density Report'. They considered the definition of fast food and identified those outlets:

*'that sell energy dense savoury food that could provide a substitute meal prepared outside the home that is available quickly':*

This included (but not limited to) burger bars, kebab and chicken shops, chip shops, Indian takeaways, Chinese takeaways and pizza outlets.

The following table shows the results of the information gathered and is shown as the number of fast-food outlets per 100,000 population. The mean for Wales is 100.65 outlets per 100,000 population:

Table 19: Fast Food Outlets per 100,000 Population by Local Authority for Wales, November 2018

| Local Authority       | Fast food outlets per 100 000 head of population |
|-----------------------|--|
| Blaenau Gwent         | 125.00   |
| <b>Bridgend</b>       | <b>108.80</b>                                    |
| Caerphilly            | 99.00  |
| Cardiff               | 93.99  |
| Carmarthenshire       | 89.01  |
| Ceredigion            | 99.86  |
| Conwy                 | 132.59   |
| Denbighshire          | 107.14   |
| Flintshire            | 99.23  |
| Gwynedd               | 132.58   |
| Isle of Anglesey      | 107.45   |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b> | <b>118.33</b>                                    |

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|                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Monmouthshire            | 73.72         |
| Neath Port Talbot        | 104.86        |
| Newport                  | 89.77         |
| Pembrokeshire            | 76.98         |
| Powys                    | 80.00         |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | <b>107.49</b> |
| Swansea                  | 101.83        |
| Torfaen                  | 97.51         |
| Vale of Glamorgan        | 88.75         |
| Wrexham                  | 80.38         |
| <b>Wales</b>             | <b>100.65</b> |

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The level of fast-food outlets shown identifies that the rates are slightly higher than the Wales average in the CTM areas. Conwy and Gwynedd have the higher levels for Wales as a whole with Blaenau Gwent in the South Wales region showing the highest density for this area. There are challenges in both reducing the number of outlets and education relating to healthy lifestyle behaviours. Both of these need to be addressed, however there are competing factors with the local economy in relation to both bringing people to an area and job opportunities.

### Opportunities

Engagement with both adults and young people identified that they were aware of the need to live a healthy and lifestyle. There is an opportunity to develop this and encourage the young people to partake in activities and initiatives that support what they have identified about living well.

The most important consideration for young people was to have some space to undertake activities that was safe and for some these needed to be age appropriate and low or no cost. People want to see more activities and events that are affordable and accessible to improve physical and mental health. Activities during school holidays and more provision for teenagers and young people. The below extract from the engagement report is what young people felt:

*'There's not much to do for teenagers and I think that's why they hang around on the streets so much. I don't always think they are causing trouble, but it can look quite off putting. More social inclusion for people of all ages, abilities and race.'*

*'More inclusive activities where we could go and not feel different. Not be stared at, ridiculed or made to feel we don't belong.'*

### Youth Offending

*Challenge: Maintaining the interventions that are providing positive outcomes for young people and their families.*

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) and Bridgend Youth Justice Service provide the support to young offenders and those on the periphery of offending. Most offenders in the area are males aged between 15 and 17 years, although this number is decreasing year on year from 85 in 2016/17 to 56 in 2018/19. The number of females offending is lower, and the number for this cohort is also decreasing.

With funding from the Children and Communities Grant the Cwm Taf Youth Prevention Service works with families and young people. The service provides advice and support around young people involved in Anti-Social Behaviour which has a two-stage process. There are limited numbers of young people who escalate to stage 2 of the process which indicates that the parents have been able to respond effectively to the information they receive from the service. Other disposals are provided through this service and of the 188 young people closed to the YOS in 2020/21

- 148 did not have any further ASB records (79%).
- 149 did not have any further offending incidents (79%)
- 0 went to custody

These are positive outcomes for the young people.

There is also a preventative service which is offered to all young people who are identified as being at risk of engaging in offending or anti-social behaviour. YOS prevention will assess, plan and carry out an intervention, feeding back to the referring agency as necessary.

Other diversionary services are in place to provide early intervention and restorative support where necessary and to provide multi agency support for those experiencing difficulties in education, particularly those with additional learning needs. This work reflects the requirements of the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales in the promotion of children receiving targeted preventative youth justice services at the earliest point, in order to avoid further offending behaviour/convictions. This work has already proven to be a highly beneficial service for Children Looked After living in two care homes in the area.

### **Strengths**

The success of the interventions put in place for young people and their families in the area is positive with significant changes being made which improve their prospects for the future.

### **Opportunities**

Engagement activities with young people identified that they feel blamed for social problems and anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods which is leading to issues around social cohesion. This was evident in the responses during engagement with some stating that ‘ *Kids hanging about by the takeaways and by the leisure centre. I don't feel safe when it's dark and the school doesn't do anything* ’. Whilst young people reported the challenge of having little to do and being suspected of bad behaviour for no reason. ‘ *There's not much for young people to do and even if we're just meeting up people think we're making trouble.* ’ There are opportunities for community engagement with young people to understand their needs and to ensure they feel their needs are met and that they are not ‘blamed’ for anti-social behaviour as a result of meeting up with friends.



## Community Cohesion

### What do we know?

Across the region our public bodies are committed to supporting people to live in cohesive communities characterised as safe and strong, where we have a sense of belonging and engagement. The wellbeing assessment refers in the first part, the social pillar, to the importance of homes and housing, the drive to ensure community safety and building communities that work together.

According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021:

- In the latest year there has been a substantial increase in community cohesion. However, it is too early to tell if this is the beginning of a sustained trend.
- There has been an increase in people feeling that they can influence decisions in their local area which appears to reverse a downward trend seen in the previous two sets of results.
- Recorded race hate crime incidents have fallen slightly in 2019-20.

### A sense of community

Having a sense of community contributes to community cohesion in an area. The factors related to this include, feeling of belonging, people from different backgrounds getting on well together and people treating each other with respect and consideration.

Key findings from the National Survey for Wales in its analysis of interviews in 2018/19 shows the following linked to people feeling their local area has a sense of community:

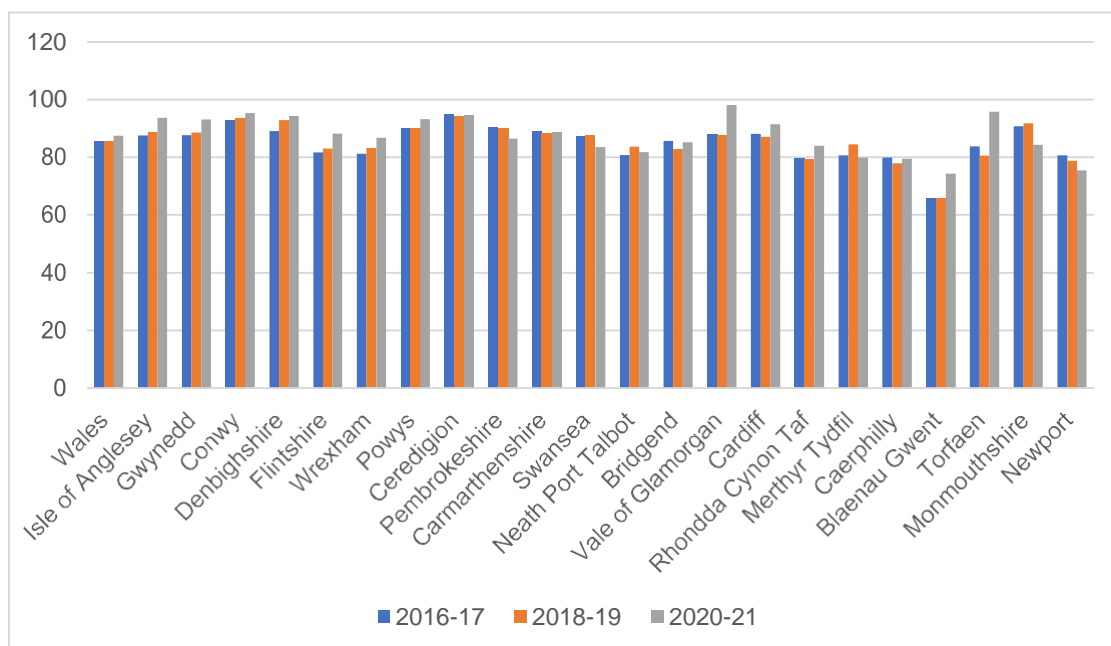
- Being older.
- Having high mental wellbeing.
- Feeling safe in different situations (e.g. walking in the area after dark).
- Being satisfied with the local area as a place to live.
- Having a good understanding of what the local councillor does for the community.
- Feeling able to influence decisions affecting the local area.
- Feeling satisfied with the availability of local services and facilities.

### What does the data tell us?

The tables below show a range of the responses which reflect some of the findings from the National Survey for Wales.

Satisfaction with the local area is a question asking 'Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?'.

Across Wales the percentages are similar for those who are satisfied as shown in the chart below:

**Chart 35: Percentage of people satisfied with local area as a place to live**

This is further broken down for the CTM area from 2016/17 to 2018/19 ranging from satisfied to dissatisfied:

Table 20: Satisfaction with local area as a place to live (%)

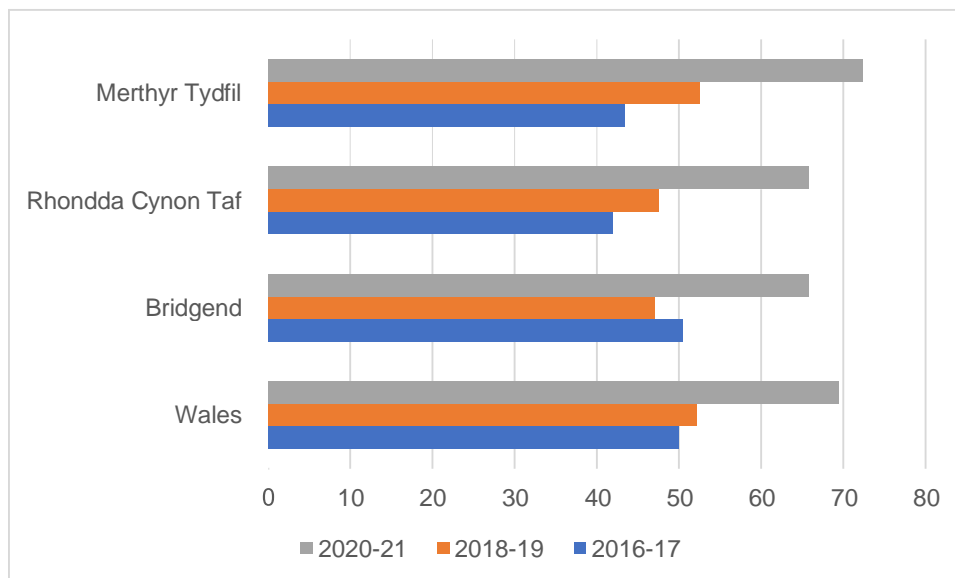
| Local Authority       | Satisfied |         | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied |         | Dissatisfied |         |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|--------------|---------|
|                       | 2018/19   | 2016/17 | 2018/19                            | 2016/17 | 2018/19      | 2016/17 |
| <b>Wales</b>          | 85        | 86      | 7                                  | 7       | 7            | 7       |
| <b>Bridgend</b>       | 83        | 86      | 7                                  | -       | 10           | 7       |
| <b>RCT</b>            | 79        | 80      | 10                                 | 11      | 11           | 10      |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b> | 84        | 81      | -                                  | 10      | -            | 9       |

Overall, across Wales the satisfaction rates were mainly at over 80% with Ceredigion being highest with 94% reporting being 'satisfied' in 2018/19. The area with the lowest satisfaction rate was Blaenau Gwent with 66% as well as the higher percentage for being dissatisfied at 21%. There has been a slight decrease in satisfaction rates in both RCT and Bridgend and a slight increase in dissatisfaction, however Merthyr Tydfil has seen a slight increase in satisfaction compared to 2016/17.

When this is further broken down to economic status in 2018/19 there is a higher percentage of those who are satisfied and in employment (86%) compared to those who are unemployed (73%). There is also a lower satisfaction rate in the 20% most deprived areas (75%) compared to least deprived (93%).

Within an area it is important that people from different backgrounds get on together to enhance the community cohesion. The below chart shows the overall percentage for each area within CTM:

**Chart 36: Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect**



This chart shows that over the last 2 years the percentage of people in Merthyr Tydfil who believe that people from different backgrounds get on and treat each other with respect has increased and in 2020/21 is above the Wales average. The other two areas whilst not above the Wales average have shown a significant percentage increase up to 2020/21. It is interesting to note that the increase has been more significant during this time when the pandemic and associated restrictions were in place. This may reflect the community support that developed to help those who were in need of additional support during this time. This is reflected in the number of volunteers who came forward to support people who were isolating or isolated which is discussed further in **Culture and Volunteering**.

Across the age ranges the higher percentage of those who agree that people treat and respect each other is highest in the 75 and over age range with the lowest percentage age range being between 25 and 44.

Feedback from the engagement process with the BAME community identified that some felt isolated and not part of the community which could be seen to contradict the statistics. One participant had lived in the area for a number of years but still didn't feel they have many good friends. They wanted more opportunities to meet new people and develop friendships. They want a sense of belonging but one stated *'I want to make this my home, but I feel like an outsider'*. Whilst the numbers from the BAME community responding was low there is obviously some concern relating to belonging.

Engagement with the communities also found that there were some perceptions from older people of younger people gathering in outdoor spaces and being 'anti-social' but young people say they don't have anywhere to meet. This appears to be more of a perception for some adults that they are causing trouble.

### Strengths

There is a sense that people living in the local communities generally get on well and support each other. Social cohesion featured strongly in the engagement responses identifying the importance of communities getting on and supporting each other it was seen as a key part of social wellbeing. 'Community spirit' was often referred to about living in the area.

*“With flooding and the virus, communities and neighbours have been so important and I think that’s something that’s always been good in the valleys. We look out for each other”*

This is also supported by the data identifying a high satisfaction rate of the area as a place to live.

## Opportunities

There is an obvious pride in the way the communities come together to support each other during difficult times. This is a strength in the area. However, there is an element of distancing for those from different backgrounds that feel isolated and not belonging, as found during the engagement. There are opportunities to bring the communities together which will support an understanding of each other’s backgrounds and culture. The ‘Human Library’ initiative being developed in RCT involving people from different backgrounds sharing their cultural experiences could be a way of bringing the communities together and gain a better understanding of each other.

## Housing and Homelessness

*Challenge: The initiatives to support the homeless living on the streets during Covid have been successful for some in engaging with services. Being able to continue to support those who are homeless in? going forward can reduce the number living on the streets.*

We have a substantial level of data and information about the importance of homes, the challenge of delivering new affordable homes and working together to prevent homelessness. According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021:

- Housing conditions in Wales have improved over the last 10 years, reducing the potential risk to the health of occupants. Social housing dwellings that are compliant with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard continues to increase, with 99% of dwellings compliant (including acceptable fails).
- The most recent Welsh Housing Conditions Survey showed that 82% of dwellings were free from the most serious (category 1) hazards in 2017-18, compared with 71% in 2008. There were improvements in all tenures.
- During 2019-20 there was a fall in the number of households that had approached their local authority for support as they were threatened with homelessness, with over two-thirds of these successfully prevented from being homeless. During the COVID-19 pandemic many households who were previously homeless have been supported into emergency temporary accommodation.
- Whilst the homelessness prevention rate remained steady in 2019-20, services for those facing homelessness were transformed during the pandemic with many households being supported into emergency temporary accommodation.
- During 2019-20, nearly 10,000 households in Wales were assessed as being threatened with homelessness, a decrease of 7% on 2018-19.
- Homelessness was successfully prevented for at least 6 months in 67% of these cases. The successful homelessness prevention rate has remained consistent since 2017-18.

When we look at the range of housing across our region, we aren’t just looking at buildings. We are looking at homes, supporting individuals and families who live and work in the region, for whom housing gives them a sense of place, an anchor to their community.

Thriving communities rely on good quality housing and enough to accommodate those who wish to live here. In securing the right number of homes, working with our partners across local government to ensure that we plan our housing needs of the future, we have developed strong

working relationships with social housing providers and contractors to ensure we have the right mix of provision.

Individuals and families in good quality and affordable homes live healthier lives. Housing, health and socio-economic wellbeing are all impacted by the quality of housing that people can access. There are clear links across a range of wellbeing indicators with housing:

- The quality of the local environment and access to local green space are important factors on the living experience of people in homes, with links to their mental health and wellbeing. This provides a preventative and long-term contribution to mental health and wellbeing issues identified elsewhere.
- The quality of our building with good standards of heat and noise insulation, ensuring that we tackle the challenge of fuel poverty, and making new housing more resilient to the likelihood of more flooding.
- Good quality housing is not just about giving local people the chance to stay and work locally it is also about the attractiveness of the built environment where business and people might seek to locate.

### What does the data tell us?

Housing stock numbers are provided to show how housing needs are being met. The table below shows the numbers from March 2017:

Table 21: Housing Stock at Social rent 2016/17 to 2020/21

| Local Authority          | 16/17  | 17/18  | 18/19  | 19/20 | 20/21  |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 8,787  | 8,867  | 8,943  | N/A   | 9,179  |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 15,607 | 15,734 | 15,651 | N/A   | 16,004 |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 5,871  | 5,843  | 5,837  | N/A   | 5,838  |

Source: Stats Wales

Note: In 19/20 WG did not collect this data from RSLs due to the response to Covid-19 being a priority

The above data shows that housing stock for RSLs has increased in both RCT (2.5%) and Bridgend (4.4%) but has had a slight reduction in Merthyr Tydfil (-0.6%).

The data excludes:

- Properties charged at anything other than social rents, including those charged at intermediate or market rents, and intermediate tenures
- Non residential properties
- Dwellings leased to temporarily house the homeless
- Any dwellings that are managed as a social lettings agency on behalf of another social landlord (e.g. Cartrefi Hafod properties)
- Fully-staircased shared ownership dwellings
- Right to buy
- Investment properties where an equity stake is owned until the homeowner sells (e.g. Homestep Plus)

Therefore, in RCT and Bridgend, this may be why there is only an increase of 397 and 392 units respectively of Additional Affordable Housing, when the data below shows that RCT have delivered 943 units and Bridgend 623 units over this period of time.

Table 22: **Additional affordable housing provision by Local Authority**

|                                  | 2016-17<br>Delivered | 2017-18<br>Delivered | 2018-19<br>Delivered | 2019-20<br>Delivered | 2020-21<br>Delivered |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>                  | 154                  | 61                   | 148                  | 94                   | 166                  |
| <b>Rhondda<br/>Cynon<br/>Taf</b> | 244                  | 230                  | 96                   | 135                  | 238                  |
| <b>Merthyr<br/>Tydfil</b>        | 22                   | 31                   | 21                   | 21                   | 49                   |

The cost of private rent is higher than social landlord rent. Social landlord rent in the CTM areas is generally lower than the Wales average. The private rent sector is higher than social sector as can be seen in the table below:

Table 23: Average rent for Private and Social Landlords 2019

| Area            | Private Rent (3 bed<br>accomm) | Social Rent |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Bridgend</b> | £577.13                        | £417.47     |
| <b>RCT</b>      | £501.25                        | £388.53     |
| <b>Merthyr</b>  | £493.57                        | £375.87     |
| <b>Wales</b>    | £598.19                        | £487.29     |

Welsh Government introduced the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 which made a number of changes relating to statutory homeless legislation.

Part two of the Housing Act created multiple changes in the way homelessness is dealt with in Wales. These changes include:

- new duties for local authorities to help prevent homelessness for anyone who asks for help
- involving people in designing their own solutions, by jointly developing a Personal Housing Plan looking not just at immediate housing problems but also at any underlying issues
- intervening early – within 56 days of homelessness – to prevent people’s situations escalating out of hand
- removing automatic priority need for prison leavers
- placing new duties on housing associations to cooperate in homelessness prevention; and
- allowing local authorities to discharge homelessness duties with an offer of private rented accommodation without the consent of the applicant. (Shelter 2015)

The Act provides for a more proactive approach to prevention of homelessness and an emphasis on joint working with different housing services. The number who are able to remain in their homes is lower than those who are supported to find alternative accommodation as shown in the table below:

Table 24: Cases where positive action succeeded in preventing/relieving homelessness 2018-2019

| Local Authority   | Homelessness Prevented | Assisted to obtain alternative accommodation |
|-------------------|------------------------|--|
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 87                     | 735  |
| Bridgend          | 21                     | 549  |
| Merthyr           | 51                     | 141  |

Source: Stats Wales

The success rate of homelessness prevention is higher in Merthyr Tydfil with the main area of support provided relating to financial, mediation and conciliation. Across all areas those who were assisted to obtain alternative accommodation were placed in social housing.

During the floods of 2020 there was a need to provide temporary accommodation owing to people being displaced from their homes whilst repairs were carried out. The likelihood of flooding is expected to increase so there is likely to be a corresponding increased demand for temporary housing. See Environment section.

Local authorities work in partnership to prevent homelessness. Bridgend County Borough Council for example works in partnership with Shelter Cymru to build on its existing homelessness prevention provision, helping people with debt advice, support and advocacy work. Between November 2019 and April 2021, the council referred 445 households to the service, almost a third of all people applying for housing assistance.

The Homelessness Strategy 2018-22 in Rhondda Cynon Taf outlines the strategic objectives which the Council, assisted by partners and stakeholders, will strive to achieve over the next four years. Detailed actions have been identified under each of the three strategic objectives:

- Objective 1: Preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness from occurring, wherever possible, therefore reducing homelessness.
- Objective 2: Ensuring that appropriate support and accommodation, including temporary and emergency accommodation, is available to meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless people.
- Objective 3: Ensuring people with housing support needs have these fully assessed and have access to services to maintain independent living.

## Supporting People

**The Vision:** “A Wales where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish”.

Supporting People is a grant funded Welsh Government initiative through the Housing Support Grant. It provides early support and intervention to those who are vulnerable and find themselves in difficult circumstances; supporting them to live independently in their own homes or in supported accommodation. The scheme aims to support people to prevent them from becoming homeless, in doing so it helps people to tackle issues such as mental health, debt, substance misuse and domestic abuse.



## Bridgend Supporting People

Data relating to the support provided and their homelessness status at the start and end of support is provided below:

Table 25: Homelessness Status at start and end of support

| Period   | Status  | Number at start | Number at end |
|--|---|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>January to December 2018</b>                              | Homeless  | 886             | 199           |
|  | Threat of homelessness within 56 days                       | 423             | 68            |
|  | In interim accommodation                                    | 216             | 136           |
|  | Need support to remain in own home                          | 912             | 137           |
|  | Maintaining stable accommodation independently (6 months +) |                 | 841           |
| <b>January to June 2019 (this data is only for 6 months)</b> | Homeless  | 578             | 96            |
|  | Threat of homelessness within 56 days                       | 385             | 30            |
|  | In interim accommodation                                    | 162             | 88            |
|  | Need support to remain in own home                          | 959             | 58            |
|  | Maintaining stable accommodation independently (6 months +) |                 | 443           |
| <b>January to December 2020</b>                              | Homeless  | 1,373           | 173           |
|  | Threat of homelessness within 56 days                       | 605             | 99            |
|  | In interim accommodation                                    | 659             | 443           |
|  | Need support to remain in own home                          | 1,245           | 41            |
|  | Maintaining stable accommodation independently (6 months +) |                 | 939           |

Source: Bridgend Supporting People Services

Based on the above data the status of the majority receiving support is for homelessness or support to remain in their own home. Based on the end data it shows that a significant number have been supported out of homelessness or to prevent becoming homeless. There is also a high number who are maintaining stable accommodation for 6 months or more.

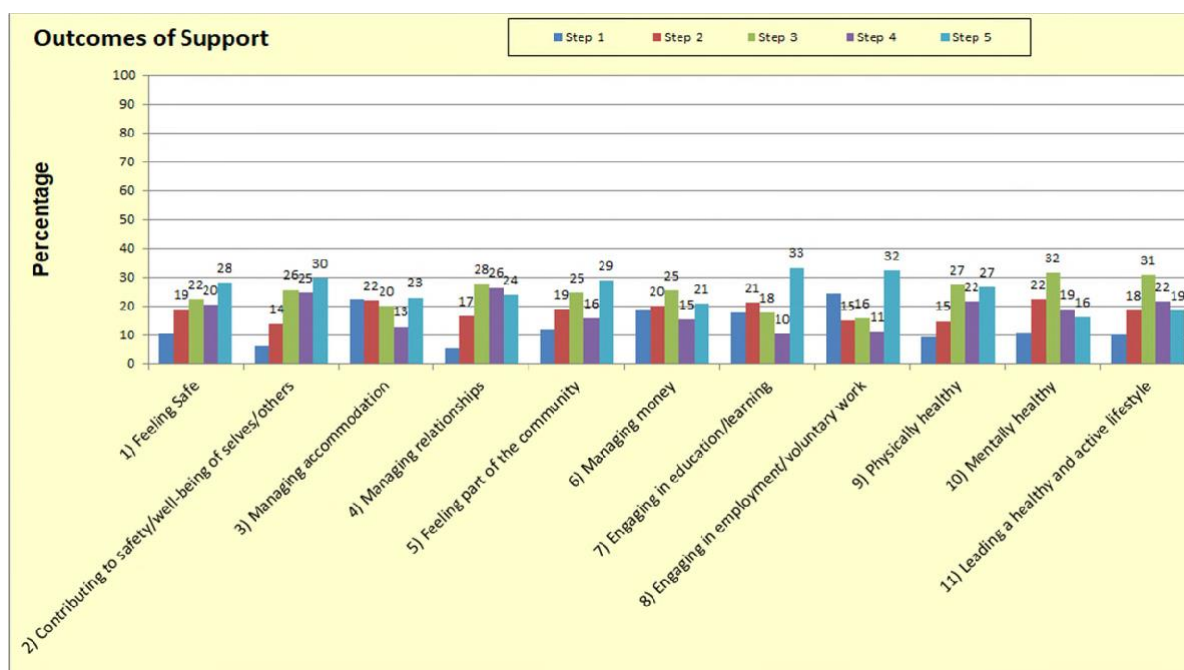
Bridgend Supporting People data provided shows that between January 2018 and December 2020 the majority of those being supported is through Floating Support to prevent homelessness. When support is ended the main reason is that 'Housing related support needs have been met'. The below chart shows the outcomes of support recorded according to steps achieved which are:

- Step 1 – No progress
- Step 2 – Initial stages of goal progression
- Step 3 – Some progress of time-bound goals



- Step 4 – Substantial progress of time-bound goals
- Step 5 – Goal achieved

**Chart 37: Outcomes of Support (%)**



### Merthyr Tydfil Supporting People

Merthyr Tydfil Supporting people data, in Table 26 below, shows similar patterns to that of Bridgend above.

| Period                      | Status  | Number at start | Number at end |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>January to June 2019</b> | Homeless  | 145             | 10            |
|                             | Threat of homelessness within 56 days                       | 47              | 10            |
|                             | In interim accommodation                                    | 76              | 52            |
|                             | Need support to remain in own home                          | 927             | 49            |
|                             | Maintaining stable accommodation independently (6 months +) |                 | 189           |
| <b>January to June 2020</b> | Homeless  | 162             | 13            |
|                             | Threat of homelessness within 56 days                       | 26              | 0             |
|                             | In interim accommodation                                    | 61              | 6             |
|                             | Need support to remain in own home                          | 931             | 0             |
|                             | Maintaining stable accommodation independently (6 months +) |                 | 1130          |
|                             | Homeless  | 77              | 0             |

|                              |   |      |    |
|------------------------------|---|------|----|
| <b>July to December 2020</b> | Threat of homelessness within 56 days                       | 46   | 0  |
|                              | In interim accommodation                                    | 98   | 0  |
|                              | Need support to remain in own home                          | 1223 | 1  |
|                              | Maintaining stable accommodation independently (6 months +) |      | 70 |

As can be seen in the above data the outcomes for those who are supported show a reduced number of homelessness. The reasons for leaving the support provision are mainly that the 'Housing support needs have been met' which is the main purpose of the initiative.

Overall, those who have been supported in both Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil have had various needs. The main lead need was that they required generic floating support to prevent homelessness. One of the other main lead needs in supporting people was people with mental health issues which is discussed as an increasing need above.

### Strengths

- There are examples of positive support for those who are struggling to keep their accommodation. The number who are prevented from becoming homeless is increasing and from data provided by supporting people the outcomes are good. The holistic support provided for those receiving help from Supporting People providers is making a difference to their overall wellbeing as well as housing.
- There has been a small increase in housing in the area as a whole. Bridgend has seen a higher increase of social housing compared to RCT and Merthyr Tydfil

### Opportunities

Engagement with the communities identified that affordability of housing was a significant concern for many either for buying a property or renting. The availability of appropriate and safe accommodation to rent was also a concern. Data shows that the cost of private rent is higher than social housing which will impact on the type of housing available and affordability for those on lower incomes or benefits. One respondent stated that *'For me personally it will be finding a standard of rented accommodation that is fit for human habitation and that is affordable.'*

Affordable housing and homelessness were identified as challenges for the future mainly in the Bridgend area.

The Cardiff City Regional plans include support for house building to address viability issues preventing the progress of new housing developments in the area. This may resolve some of the issues, but affordable housing will be an element that needs to be addressed.

### Community Safety

Being safe and feeling safe has a significant impact on our wellbeing. Victims of crime can suffer long lasting consequences and fear of crime impacts on our ability to take part in our communities and our enjoyment of our everyday activities.

### Community Safety Partnerships

The strength of social wellbeing in Cwm Taf Morgannwg comes from our communities. Feeling safe in your community is an important element of community cohesion. Community Safety

Partnerships (CSP) were established in response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. There are two CSPs in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, one covers Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr and a separate partnership in Bridgend County. The partnerships bring together agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to reduce crime, disorder, and the fear of crime locally to improve the quality of life and create a safer living and working environment.

Each partnership has a statutory responsibility to undertake annual reviews of crime and disorder in their area. The review helps partners understand the nature of crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse in the area and develop a community safety strategy which details the actions that need to be taken to reduce these problems and identifies the resources required to make the actions effective.

This wellbeing assessment will be used to inform the strategic review of crime and disorder.

## What does the data tell us?

### Feeling Safe

The National Survey for Wales asks if people feel safe in their local communities in a range of situations, e.g. after dark; either walking or on public transport.

Between 2016 and 2018 when the survey question was asked, there was a reduction in the percentage of people feeling safe across Wales and this was equally true for Bridgend, and Merthyr however RCT showed an increase in the percentage of people feeling safe between 2016 and 2018.

Compared to other areas in Wales all of the areas in Cwm Taf Morgannwg were below the Wales average in 2018. Out of 22 local areas, RCT ranked 13, Bridgend 18 and Merthyr 22.

In Merthyr just over half of respondents said they felt safe compared to Ceredigion where over 90% of respondents reported that they felt safe in their area.

Table 27: Percentage of people who feel safe in their community

| % of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling |                            |                            |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | Financial Year Apr 2016-17 | Financial Year Apr 2018-19 |
| <b>Bridgend</b>  | 73.0                       | 64.7                       |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>   | 68.6                       | 69.6                       |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>  | 62.8                       | 58.6                       |
| <b>Wales</b>   | <b>73.0</b>                | <b>71.0</b>                |

In contrast, Bridgend and RCT were below Wales average for recorded crime

The most recent analysis from the National Survey for Wales (NSW) (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-03/what-factors-are-linked-to-people-feeling-safe-in-their-local-area.pdf>) indicates that the factors for people feeling safer in their local area are that they:

- Are male
- Aged between 25 and 34
- Not in material deprivation

Older people aged 75 and above were least likely to feel safe. This was broken down further in the analysis showing that females were more likely to feel unsafe walking in the local area and feel unsafe at home after dark.

This analysis is Wales wide and does not break down into local authority areas.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales asks respondents whether they believe crime has gone up 'a little' or 'a lot' in the last few years. The results are generally nationwide but does consider the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) (Employment) domain for those living in the most and least deprived areas. 50% of people in the 20% most deprived areas felt that crime had gone up in the last few years, whereas only 33% in the 20% least deprived areas felt that crime had gone up. Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

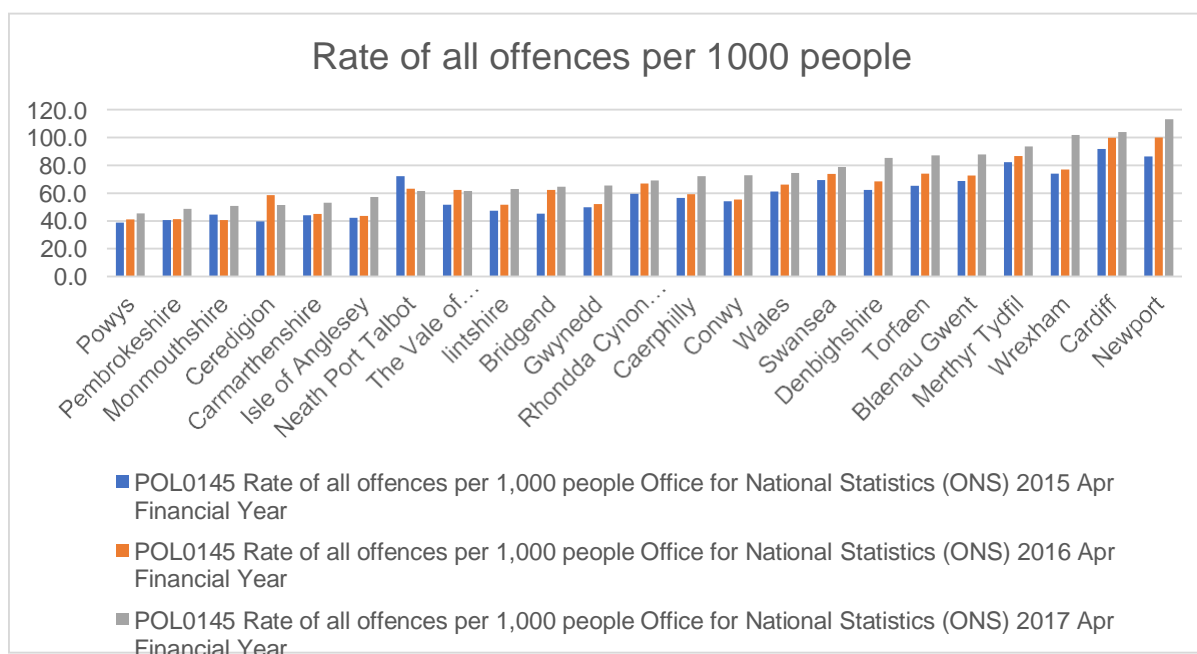
The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation includes a breakdown on community safety that considers levels of crime and disorder as well as feelings of safety. Whilst 4 of the top 10 most deprived areas in Wales are in Cwm Taf Morgannwg area, for just the community safety domain, areas in Cwm Taf Morgannwg area ranks low. This may suggest a difference between feelings of safety and actual incidence of crime and disorder in communities in Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

During the engagement activities there was some element of concern for some feeling safe walking after dark, in particular some worried about anti-social behaviours and gangs gathering. In relation to social wellbeing and feeling unsafe there was a concern from women about walking alone after dark as well as drinks being spiked.

## Recorded Crime

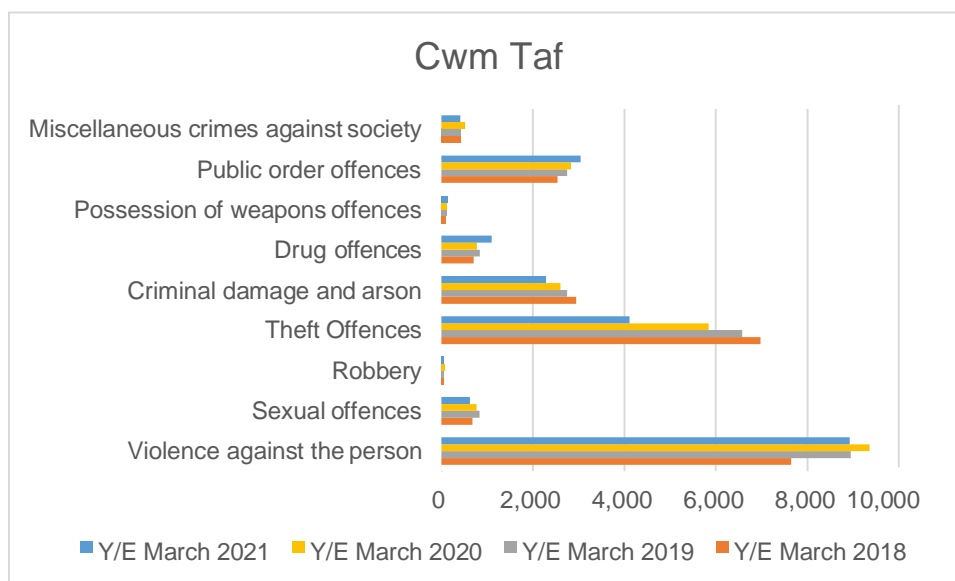
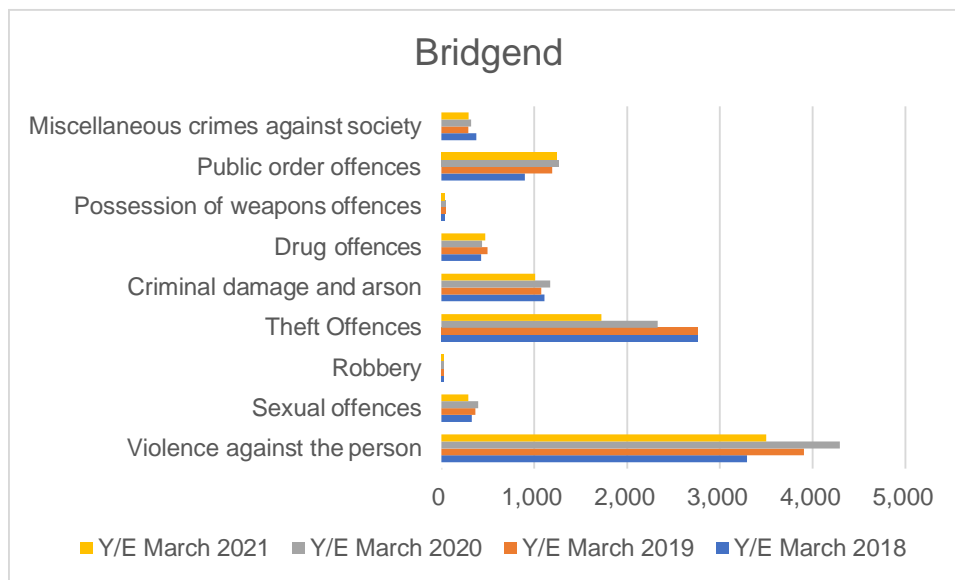
Overall crime rates in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area are lower compared to our major cities in Wales.

The crime rates for local authority areas between 2015 and 2017 are set out in chart 38 below.



For those years RCT and Bridgend were below Wales average and Merthyr above. The charts below show the recorded crimes from 2018 to 2021 by each Community Safety Partnership Area: The numbers recorded for 2020/21 are likely to be skewed due to the Covid restrictions imposed.

**Chart 39 & 40: Community Safety Partnerships: Number of recorded crimes for headline offences**



Source: ONS Crime in England and Wales: Community Safety Partnership Tables

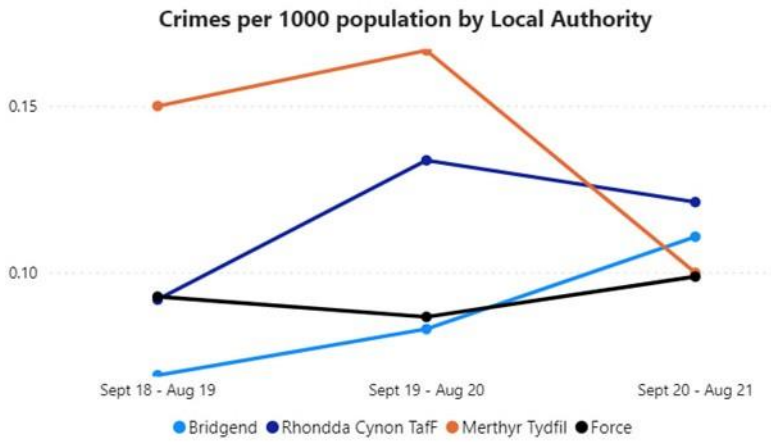
The numbers of recorded crimes show that ‘violence against the person’ continues to be the highest recorded crime across CTM showing an increase in both Bridgend and Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership Areas.

Violence against the person is broken down into different categories. These show that since March 2019 the number of ‘stalking and harassment’ offences has been higher than the other categories. This could be due to people being encouraged to report incidents and also in response to national campaigns and awareness raising about cyber stalking. Violence with injury is higher than violence without injury. There is also an increase in drugs offences and possession of weapons.

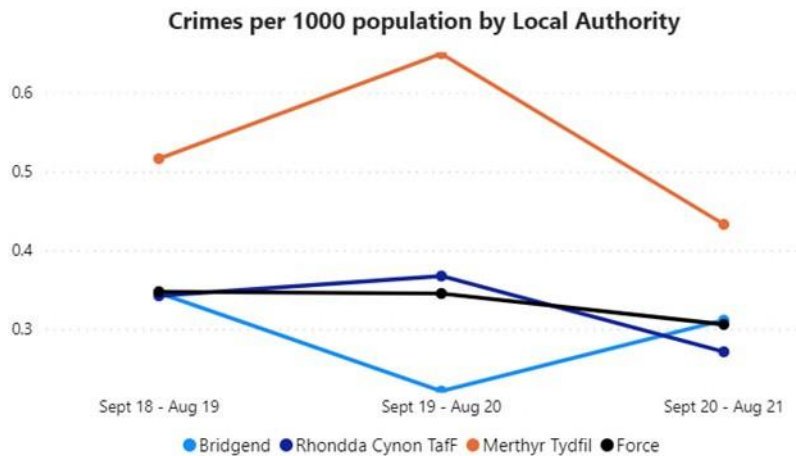
Theft offences, including burglary are the second highest category for both partnership areas and both have shown a consistent decrease in numbers over the four years. The below diagrams show crimes per 1000 population for each local authority area. The highest rate of burglary was

equivalent to around 3 crimes per 20,000 people and theft was equivalent to around 6 crimes per 10,000 people.

### Burglary – chart 41 & 42



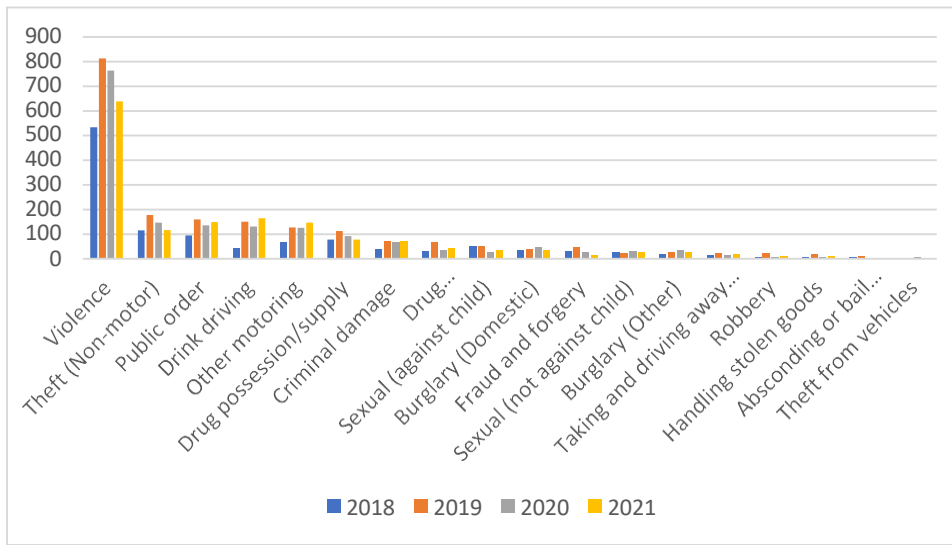
### Theft



Public order offences have increased in both areas over the last four years whilst criminal damage and arson has reduced in Cwm Taf.

The chart below from the National Probation Service shows offenders Sentenced in Cwm Taff Morgannwg Probation Delivery Unit Between 01/01/2018 and 31/12/2021.

**Chart 43: Offenders Sentenced**



Recognising the impact on crime rates from lockdown in 2020 and 2021 and also the impact on courts and justice services, the increase in sentencing between 2018 and 2019 is noticeable.

## Violence

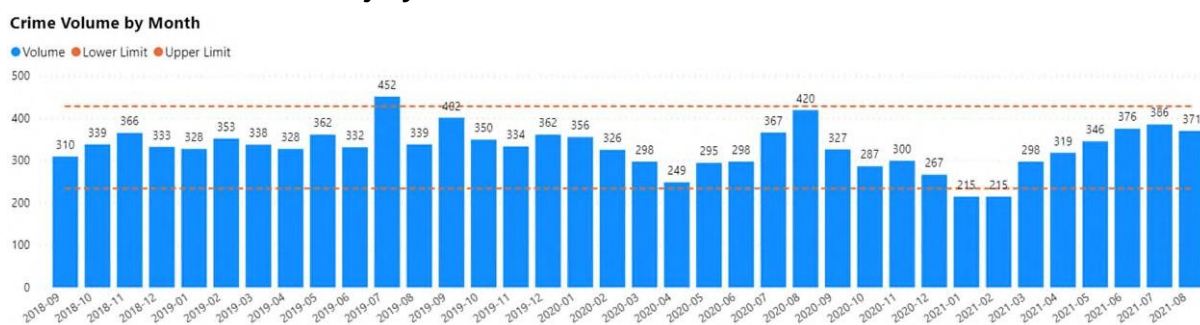
Not only is violence against the person the highest rated crime in Cwm Taf Morgannwg; to be a victim of, or in fear of violence can have a devastating impact on wellbeing at the time of the incident and further into the future. It is important therefore that this assessment looks at all aspects of violence against the person. This assessment looks at violence both with and without injury and at sexual offences.

Violent crime covers a range of offence types from minor assaults, such as pushing and shoving that result in no physical harm, to murder. This includes offences where the victim was intentionally stabbed, punched, kicked, pushed, or jostled, as well as offences where the victim was threatened with violence whether there is any injury.

### Violence with Injury

Between Sept 2018 and August 2019 there were 4180 incidents of violent crime with injury both in domestic and non-domestic settings.

**Chart 44: Violence with Injury**

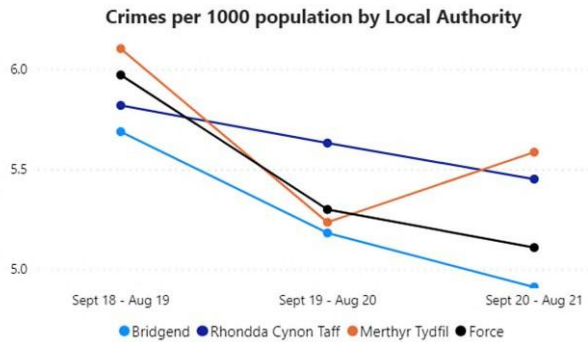


Numbers of violence with injury crimes each month for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area dropped during lockdown times in early 2020 and late 2020 early 2021 but seem to come back up to pre-



lockdown levels following that time. Across the area overall violence with injury rates per 1000 population have decreased between September 2018 and August 2021 from just below 6 to just over 5 crimes per 1000 population.

**Chart 45: Violence with injury per 1000 population**

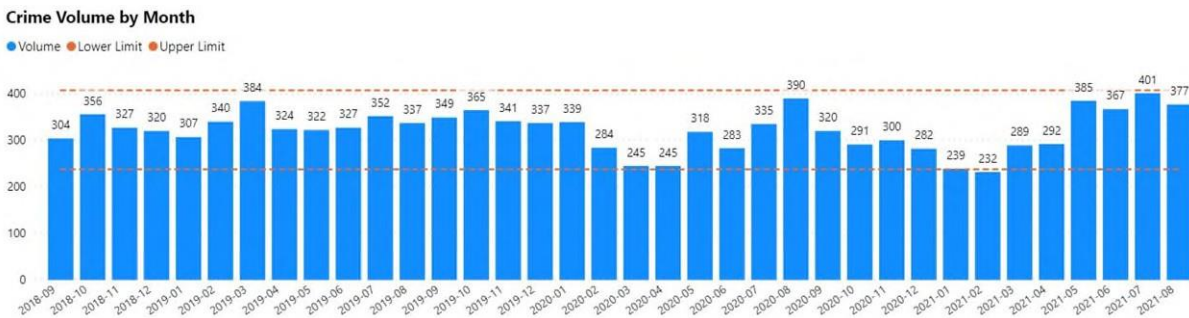


The lockdowns imposed in March 2020 will inevitably have had an impact on these figures from that point onwards. For non-domestic abuse and violence people have not been mixing so much outside their household so in many cases the potential for violent incidents to occur would be reduced.

**Violence without injury**

Between Sept 2018 and August 2019 11,985 incidents of violence without injury in Cwm Taf Morgannwg area.

**Chart 46: Violence without injury**

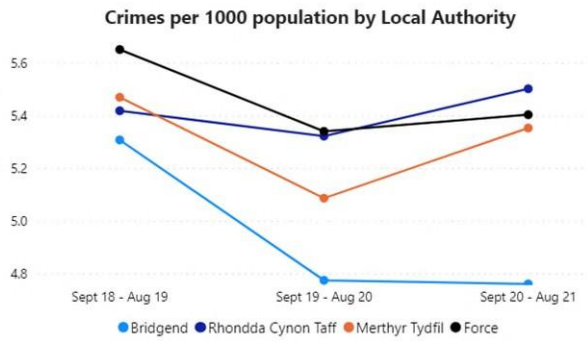


|                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| Sept 18 - Aug 19 | 11985 |
| Sept 19 - Aug 20 | 11447 |
| Sept 20 - Aug 21 | 11540 |

There has been a slight decrease in violence without injury across the region since September 2018. The charts below provide more detail.



**Chart 47: Violence without Injury per 1000 population**



Violence without injury decreases between year ending August 2019 to year ending August 2020 in all areas. This decrease may be due to the first lockdown restrictions and people not being able to go out as freely.

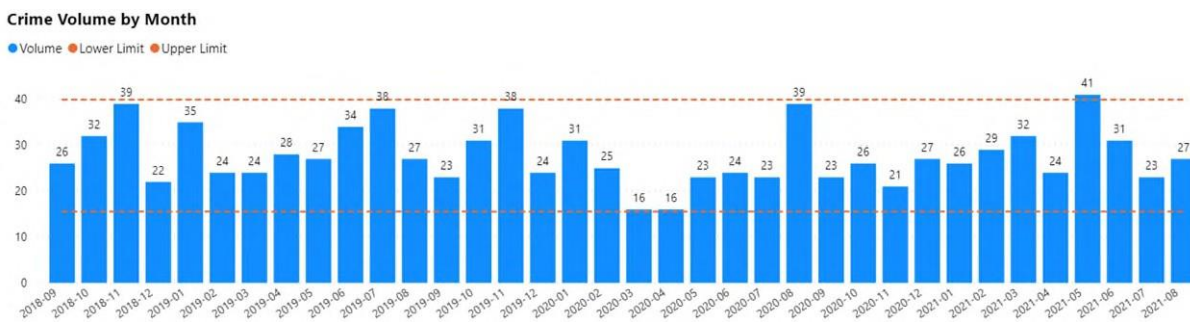
Whilst domestic abuse and violence without injury fell through both periods of lockdown, abuse and violence without injury in non-domestic situations increased into the second period of lockdown back up towards pre lockdown levels, which may indicate a change in behaviour during the second lockdown and in intervening periods.

Both Merthyr and Bridgend have rates around or below force average in non-domestic cases whilst rates for RCT have risen above force average between September 2020 and August 2021.

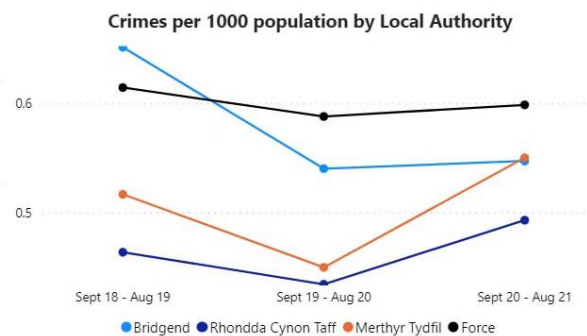
## Sexual Offences

Sexual offences include rape and other serious sexual offences.

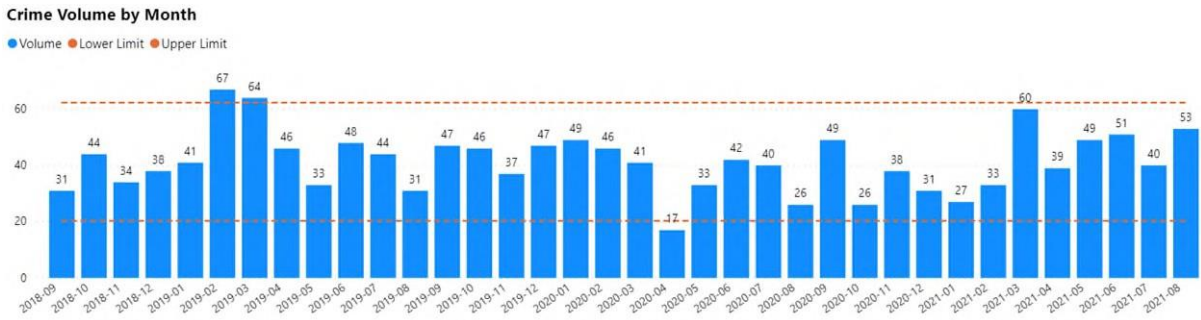
**Chart 48: Rape**



**Chart 49: Non-domestic Rape per 1000 population**

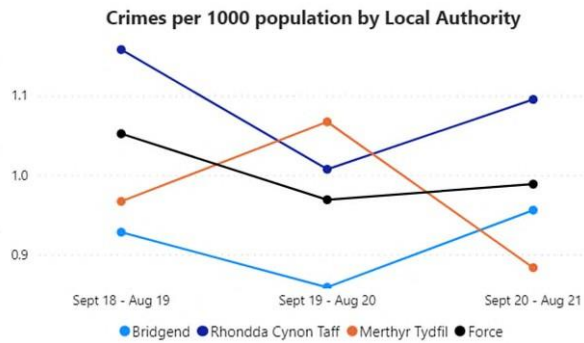


**Chart 50: Other serious Sexual Offences**



Between September 2018 and August 2019 there were 521 other serious sexual offences in Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

**Chart 51: Other Non-domestic Serious Sexual Offences per 1000 population**



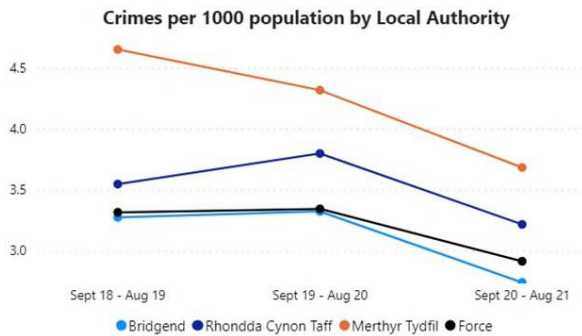
Source: SWP

## Domestic Abuse and Violence

This assessment has differentiated between domestic and non-domestic violence and sexual offences. The circumstances of each are different. When considering fear of crime, the national survey asks about fear of crime away from the home.

### Domestic Violence with Injury

**Chart 52: Violence with injury per 1000 population**

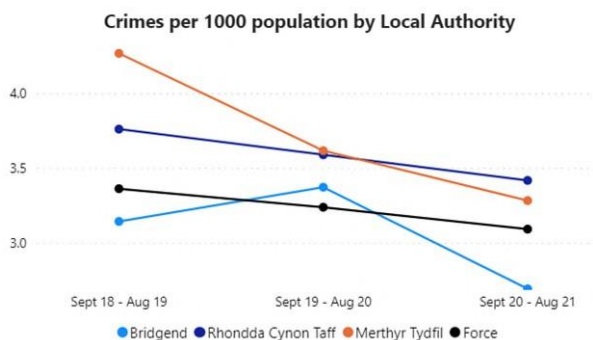


The lockdowns imposed in March 2020 will inevitably have had an impact on these figures from that point onwards. Falling rates of domestic violence following March 2020 may suggest that victims of domestic crime were unable, or felt unable, to report incidents during lockdown.

RCT and Merthyr have remained higher than force average for domestic violence with injury.

### Domestic Violence without Injury

**Chart 53: Violence without Injury per 1000 population**

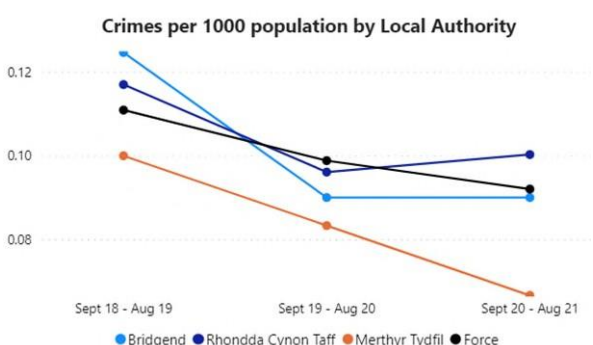


Domestic abuse and violence with injury shows increasing levels in Bridgend and RCT during the months of September 2019 to August 2020. In comparison violence without injury decreases during this time in RCT and Merthyr Tydfil. Both RCT and Merthyr have rates above the force average in all three years for domestic abuse and violence without injury.

Whilst domestic abuse and violence without injury fell through both periods of lockdown, abuse and violence without injury in non-domestic situations increased into the second period of lockdown back up towards pre lockdown levels which may indicate a change in behaviour during the second lockdown and in intervening periods.

### Other serious domestic sexual offences

**Chart 54: Other Serious Sexual Offences per 1000 population**



Source: SWP

Between September 2018 and August 2019 there were 52 crimes of serious domestic sexual offences.

When looking at violent offences, this analysis has considered offences both in a domestic and non-domestic setting. As set out above, whilst domestic violence and abuse makes up a small proportion of violence offences, rates in Cwm Taf Morgannwg are around or above force average.

Much of the data does coincide with Covid lockdowns from March 2020 onwards (acknowledging some relaxation), and contrary to the reported crime rates above it is reported that domestic abuse increased due to not having contact with others and not being able to leave the home. Social Care Wales identified that there was a 49% increase of calls to the Live Fear Free helpline during the lockdown. The increase in domestic abuse was a trend not only in Wales and the UK, but across the world. They also report that more frequent abuse was being experienced with shorter escalation periods <https://socialcare.wales/service-improvement/domestic-violence-and-abuse-guidance-for-professionals>

## **Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)**

In 2015 the Welsh Government passed the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (Wales) – (VAWDASV)

(1) The purpose of this Act is to improve:

- a) arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.
- b) arrangements for the protection of victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- c) support for people affected by gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

We know that 1 in 3 women in Wales will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. (FRA Report).

- Four out of five women in Wales have experienced some form of workplace sexual harassment. (No Grey Area: Welsh Women's Aid)
- 1.5% of reported rape cases result in a charge. (Home Office)

Domestic abuse is mainly perpetrated by males against women; however, it is also acknowledged that there are males who are victims of abuse. The assessment above does not differentiate between gender of victims of violent offences.

Data from South Wales Police shows that since September 2018/19 crime recorded as Domestic Abuse and Violence is reducing slightly in all areas relating to violence with/without injury.

However, whilst rape has decreased in Merthyr Tydfil and RCT, it has increased slightly in Bridgend between September 2020 and August 2021. Serious violence also increased in RCT at the same time.

It is reported that the impact of Covid and restrictions with the message to 'stay at home' did result in women being at significant risk from violent and abusive partners. The data should be treated with caution in relation to the increase, as some women who may have not previously reported incidents may have done so during the restrictions due to increased threats.

Rape is mainly perpetrated against women and the data shows that it has increased across the CTM area in 2020/21 for non-domestic abuse cases.

The increase in domestic abuse was a trend not only in Wales and the UK but across the world. They also report that more frequent abuse was being experienced with shorter escalation periods <https://socialcare.wales/service-improvement/domestic-violence-and-abuse-guidance-for-professionals>

## VAWDASV Services

VAWDASV services across the region delivered the following services during 2020/21:  
Refuge and dispersed accommodation provided a safe place for:

- RCT 138
- Bridgend 94

Over 2000 victims of domestic abuse and violence were supported in Cwm Taf Morgannwg during the last year.

The table below details the numbers accessing Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) and Domestic Abuse support services across Cwm Taf Morgannwg during April 2020 to March 2021.

Table 29: People accessing services directly

| Target Group  | Breakdown by high/medium/low risk | Total number of beneficiaries |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Women         | High                              | 1576                          |
|               | Medium                            | 322                           |
| Men           | High                              | 182                           |
|               | Medium                            | 25                            |
| <b>TOTALS</b> |                                   | <b>2105</b>                   |

## Strengths

Cwm Taf Morgannwg has established a VAWDASV Regional Strategic and Commissioning Partnership (Partnership) which brings together organisations in Bridgend and Cwm Taf areas (RCT and Merthyr Tydfil) who plan, develop and deliver VAWDASV services. Whilst it is acknowledged there were challenges associated with the impact of Covid and related restrictions this did not prevent the work of the Partnership progressing to meet their aims which are:

1. Increase awareness of violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg population.
2. To break the generational cycle of VAWDASV behaviour in families by promoting healthy relationships in children and young people.
3. Hold perpetrators to account for their actions and support them to change their behaviour
4. Ensure services are designed and commissioned to meet the needs of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg population

The strength of having a strategic group across the region is that they are able to work together to support victims of abuse as well as to promote knowledge and understanding. Whilst there are challenges, it provides a forum for these to be discussed and where they are able to be resolved.

## Hate Crime

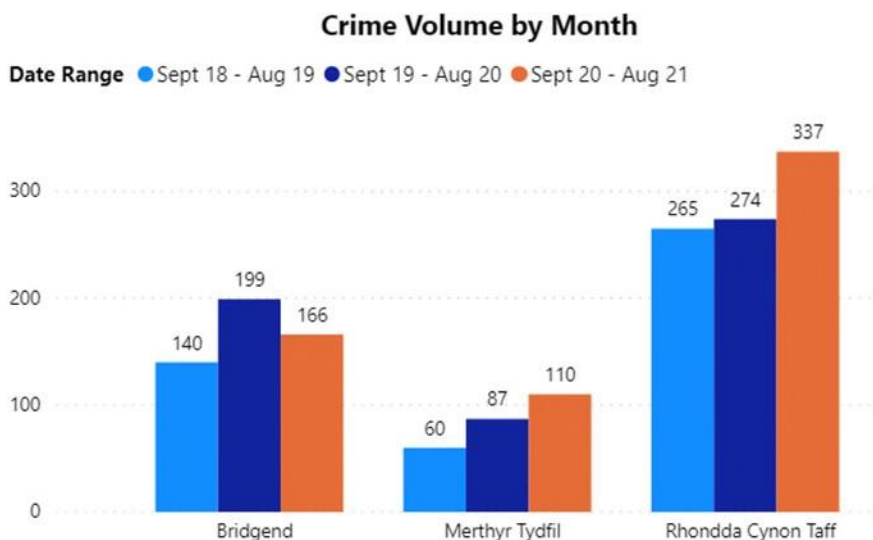
Hate Crime is a crime which is motivated by hostility or prejudice towards another person. It relates to a person's:

- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

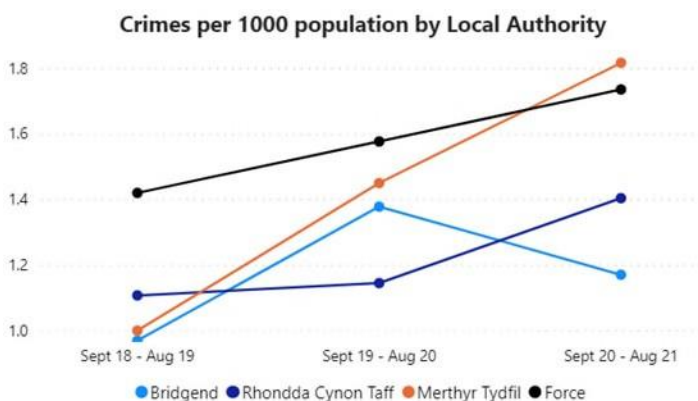
- Transgender identity
- Disability

It relates to verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault, and damage to property. The incidents of hate crime are recorded, and the below charts show the breakdown for the CTM area. Data was provided from South Wales Police and is likely to be skewed by the restrictions imposed during Covid for data between 2020 and 2021.

**Chart 55: Overall Reported Hate Crime CTM**



**Chart 56: Hate Crime per 1000 population**



As can be seen from the above snapshot the numbers of reported hate crime are increasing. Although in Bridgend this did reduce in in 2020/21 which may be due to the Covid restrictions. The main driver for increase in hate crime reporting across the region related to the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. The murder saw a global focus on hate crime and led to well organised protests across the CTM area, which was reflected on a national level.

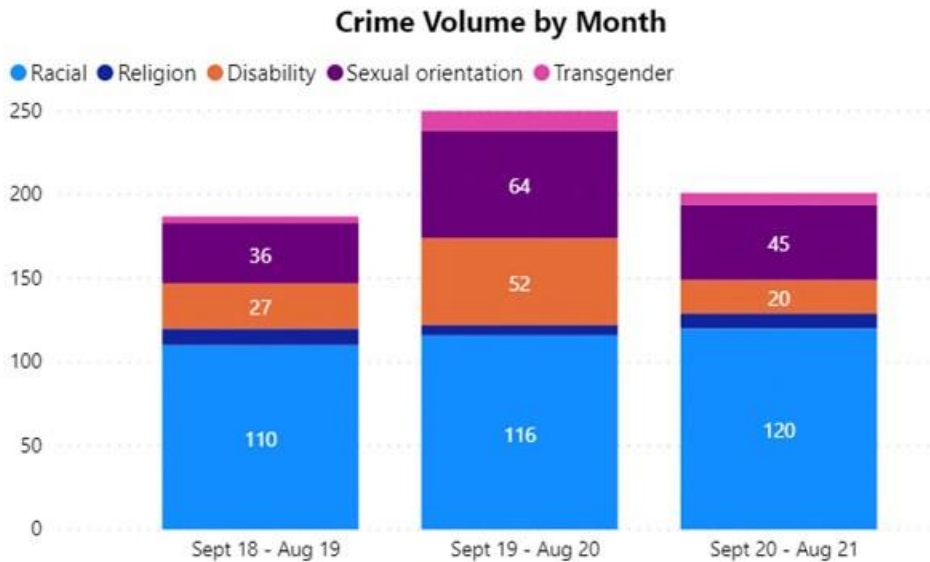
Community Safety Partnerships have also worked to encourage reporting, through Hate Crime week and other events and in schools

This local trend is contrary to the Wellbeing in Wales report that found that nationally racial hate crime had reduced slightly 19-20.



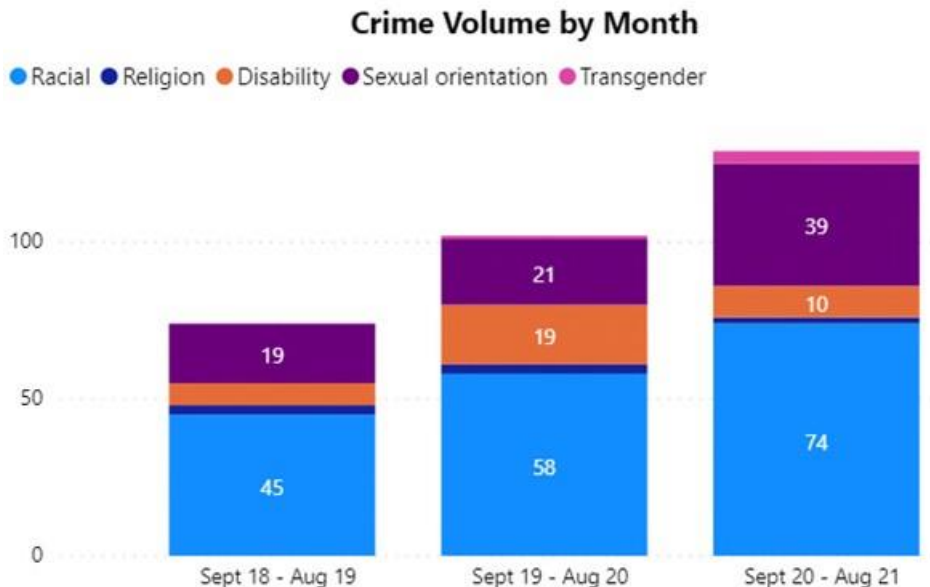
The next few charts show a breakdown by area and type of hate crime. The data is from 2018/19 to 2020/21 and is likely to have been impacted by the Covid restrictions for the latter part of 2020 into 2021.

**Chart 57: Bridgend reported hate crime**

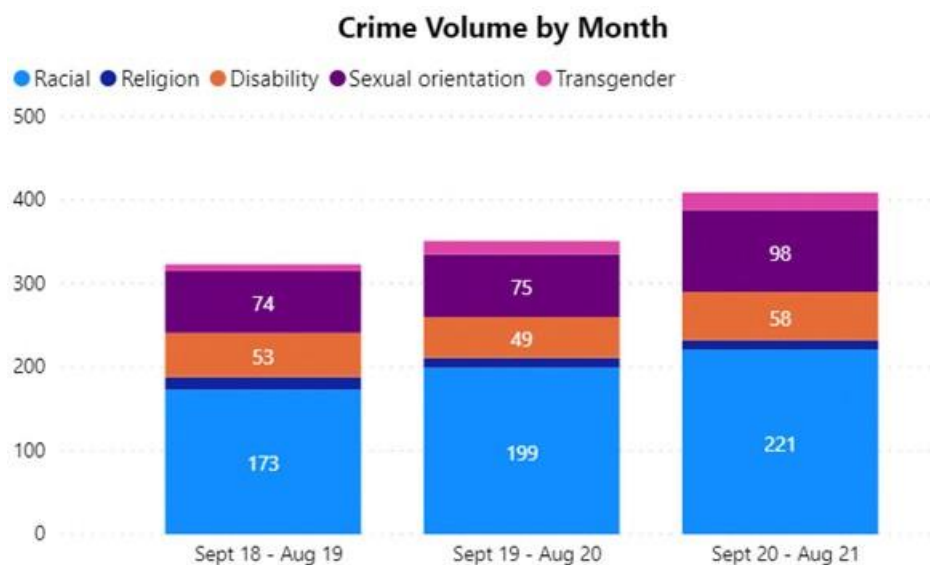


The racial element of the hate crime statistics is consistently higher than the other areas. There is a significant increase in hate crime relating to sexual orientation (56%) and disability (63%) in 2019/20 compared with the other years. This is not replicated in the other areas which may indicate that this is a local trend to Bridgend either relating to more willingness to report, wider knowledge and understanding of the offence or a higher prevalence.

**Chart 58: Merthyr Tydfil**



Merthyr Tydfil data is showing a higher number of reported hate crime relating to racial or sexual orientation. These continued to increase in 2020/21 with a 60% increase in reported hate crime relating to sexual orientation. The numbers for disability hate crime increased slightly in 2019/20 but decreased in 2020/21. The reduction may be linked to Covid restrictions as well as people shielding therefore not being in contact with the wider community.

**Chart 59: Rhondda Cynon Taf**

RCT shows a consistent increase in reported hate crime relating to Racial, Disability and Sexual Orientation. Hate crime relating to sexual orientation has increased by 26% between 2019/20 and 2020/21. There is also a slight increase in hate crime relating to transgender.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) as:

*“Acting in a manner that is causing or likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not in the same household as the perpetrator.”*

ASB can be defined as behaviour by an individual or group that results in:

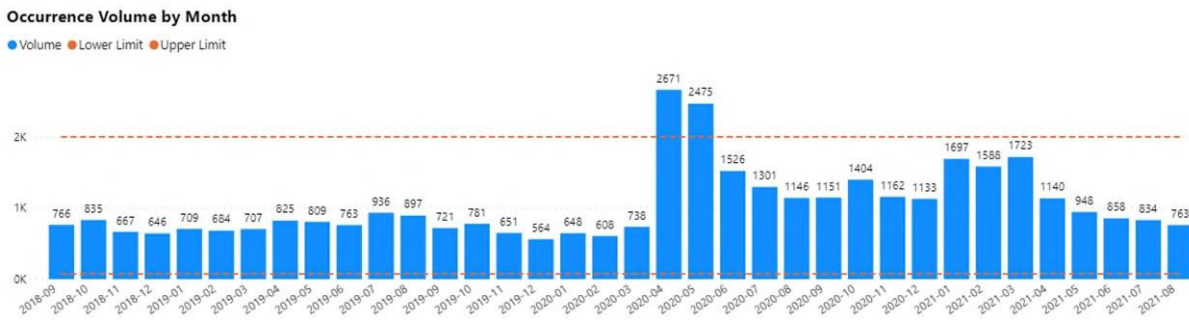
- Another party feeling **personally** threatened;
- Creates a public **nuisance**; or
- Has a detrimental impact upon the **environment** and thereby has a detrimental effect upon the quality of life of an individual or the community as a whole.

The ASB process utilised across South Wales is based on a four-stage process of prevention, early intervention and enforcement measures for perpetrators and support for victims. Most antisocial behaviour is dealt with through the local community safety partnership team making a first contact with the perpetrator where they are known.

Incidents included in the analysis below are those that are reported to the Police and followed up by multi-agency teams linked to the community safety partnerships.



**Chart 60: ASB incidents followed up**



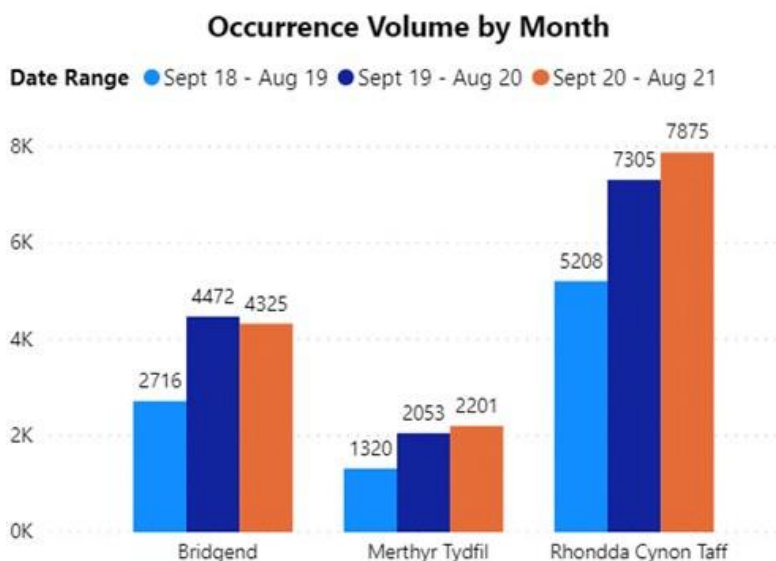
The data for anti-social behaviour for 2020 to 2021 includes occurrences relating to breaches of COVID 19 restrictions so should be treated with caution. The monthly offences chart above shows the impact in rates after March 2020.

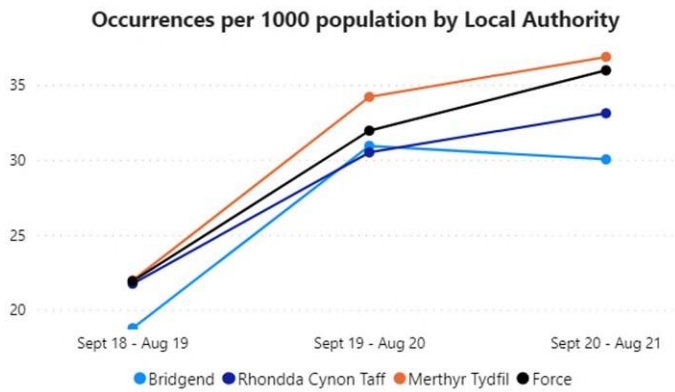
The occurrences that our ASB teams have been working with through this time period, not including Covid breaches is set out in Table 30 below.

| Year    | No of ASB occurrences |         |      | SOURCE                    |
|---------|-----------------------|---------|------|---------------------------|
|         | BRIDGEND              | MERTHYR | RCT  |                           |
| 2018-19 | 1553                  | 370     | 2294 | ASBIT                     |
| 2019-20 | 1828                  | 567     | 2280 | ASBIT THEN NICHE FROM NOV |
| 2020-21 | 1727                  | 795     | 2162 | NICHE                     |

In previous years ASB has been fairly consistent. Community safety partnerships report that ASB other than covid breaches decreased during lockdown but have since returned to pre- lockdown levels.

More detail on ASB in the 3 local authorities can be found in chart 61 and 62 below. It should be noted that the three local authority areas have different populations.

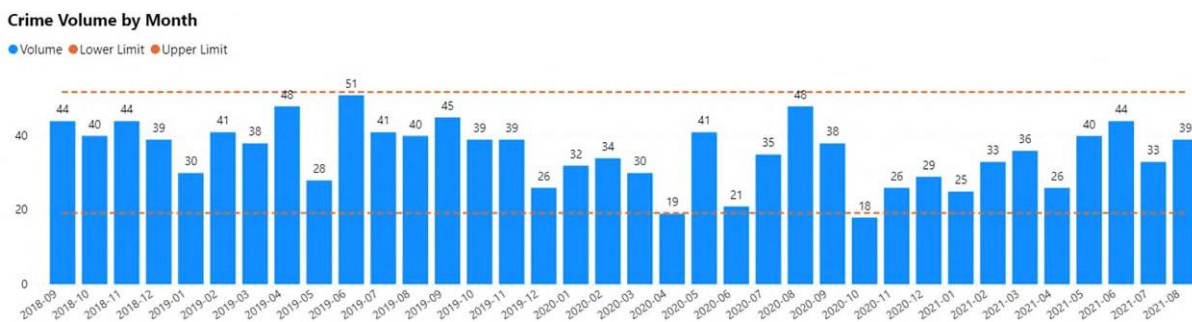




## Serious Violence

Serious violence is described as specific types of crime such as homicide, knife crime and gun crime, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent such as gangs and county lines drug dealing.

**Chart 63: Serious Violence**

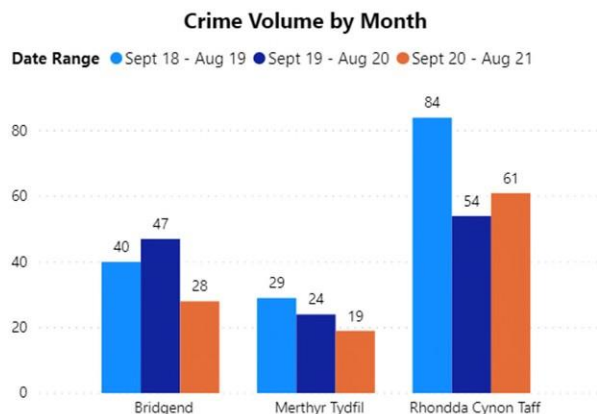


| Date Range       | Volume |
|------------------|--------|
| Sept 18 - Aug 19 | 484    |
| Sept 19 - Aug 20 | 409    |
| Sept 20 - Aug 21 | 387    |

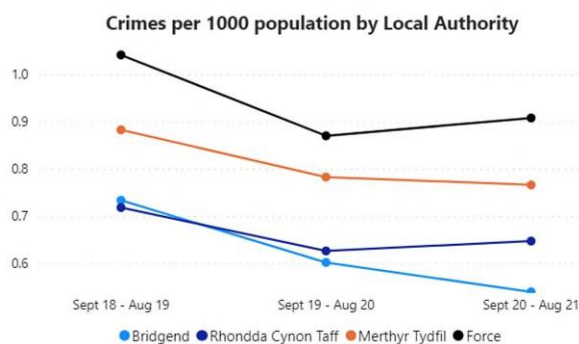
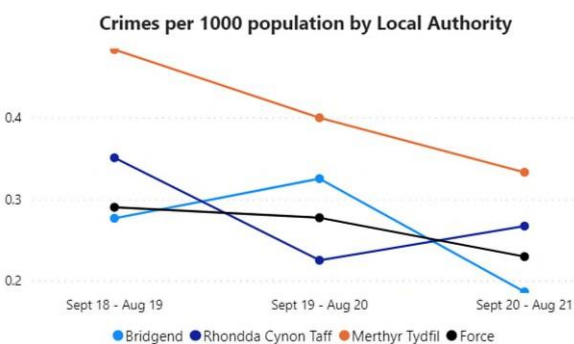
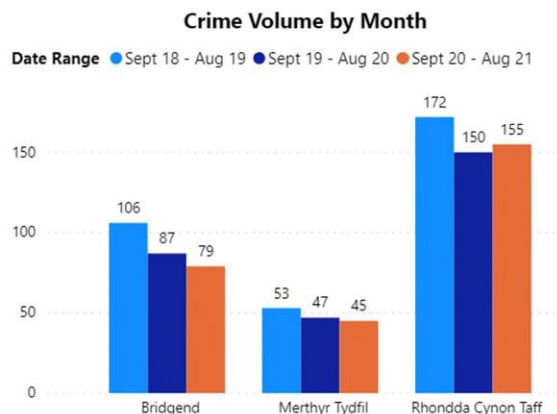
Between September 2018 and August 2019 there were 484 offences classified as serious violence.

### Charts 64 - 67: Serious Violence

#### Domestic Abuse and Violence



#### Non-Domestic Abuse and Violence



For domestic and non-domestic serious violence Merthyr has consistently higher rates than the other two areas. Serious violence rates in common with other violence with injury have largely fallen in domestic settings in the last two years but rates have started to return to pre-covid levels in non-domestic settings. Rates of serious violent crime in Cwm Taf Morgannwg have remained lower than Wales average.

### Serious Violence Duty

Following consultation in 2019 the government announced it would bring forward a serious violence duty that will require local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in an area and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Incidents of serious violence are thankfully low across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region compared to larger towns and cities in Wales, but the duty will still apply and is likely to be in place by late summer 2022.

## Health

Health has a wide range of elements to consider when for people and communities and can be impacted in different ways including lifestyles, community cohesion, housing, employment, environment and culture. The information already discussed has considered health in the different contexts, however there are other elements that also impact on a person's health. These are captured here.

### Loneliness

There is a distinction between loneliness and social isolation. A widely used definition of loneliness by J. de Jong-Gierveld (1998) is:

*'Loneliness is a situation experienced by the individual where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of quantity or (quality of) certain relationships. This includes situations in which the number of existing relationships is smaller than is considered desirable or admissible, as well as situations where the intimacy one wishes for has not been realised.'*  
(Social Care Wales, What is Loneliness)

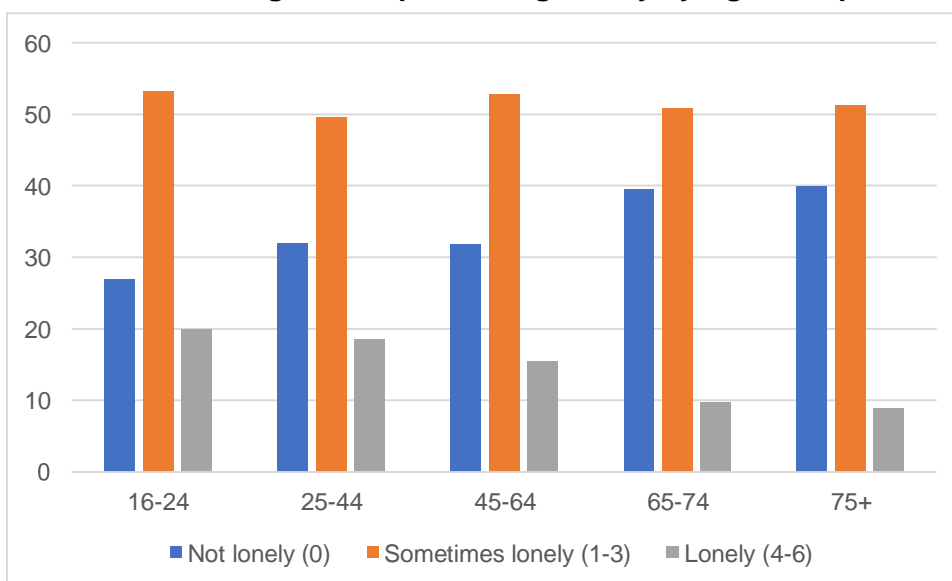
The number of people with whom a person has contact with may not indicate that they are lonely or not. According to the above definition loneliness can be linked to the quality of the relationship a person has with a group of friends/acquaintances rather than the number of people they know. Social isolation can be the lack of social contact with other people.

#### What does the data tell us?

People who live in communities can still feel lonely and this can relate to any age or the status of the person. The data below is taken from the National Survey for Wales and so is representative of a cohort of people who took part, the sample size for both charts was 11,400.

The chart below gives an indication of the difference through age ranges:

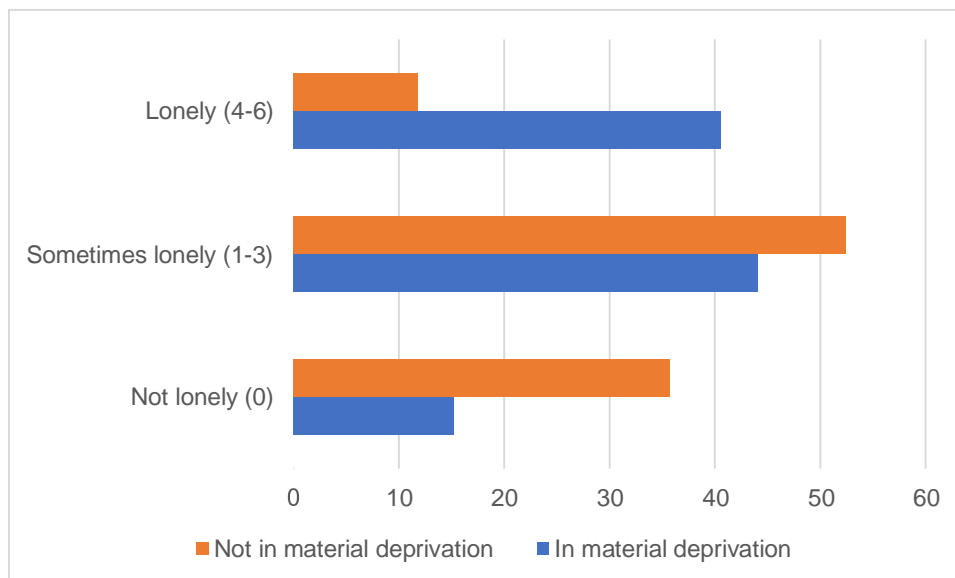
**Chart 68: Percentage of People Feeling Lonely by Age Group**



The percentage of younger people between 16 and 24 is higher than the other age ranges for both feeling lonely and sometimes feeling lonely but is higher in not being lonely.

The chart below shows the percentage for material deprivation:

**Chart 69: Percentage Households in material deprivation**



It is clear from the above chart that those living in material deprivation identify as being lonelier than those not in material deprivation.

Loneliness has an impact on a person's health and wellbeing. It is linked to the risk of depression and early mortality according to the Campaign to End Loneliness (WCPP 2021).

The WCPP report also identifies a difference in the type of loneliness- emotional loneliness (absence of close relationships), and social loneliness (absence of broader social networks). The report also indicates that there is a need to understand who is lonely and how it affects the different groups.

The Campaign to End Loneliness published a report relating to how loneliness affects a range of people, 'Alone in the Crowd: Loneliness and Diversity'. The report discusses how loneliness impacts on a range of people in different ways, covering a range of people and issues which include carers, sexuality, race and sensory impairment. <https://content.gulbenkian.pt/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2014/05/01175456/27-05-14-CEL-Alone-in-the-crowd-loneliness-and-diversity.pdf>

During the Covid restrictions many people were isolated from friends and family. There were many schemes put in place which involved volunteers during this time to befriend and support people in various ways. One example which relates to older people is an initiative run in Bridgend. **Stronger Together Bridgend**, an Awen initiative run in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council, was launched at the start of the first coronavirus lockdown to support the mental health and wellbeing of older people while the restrictions were in place.

The project encouraged those social distancing or self-isolating at home to be more creative, take up a new activity or share an existing interest with others in the same situation. Suggested activities included creative writing, keeping a diary, taking a photograph and telling a story, learning the basics of playing the ukulele, using another musical instrument to contribute to a virtual band performance, being a part of an online choir, recording fond memories and more. The initiative

highlighted all that was good about the communities of Bridgend and proved a successful vehicle in raising spirits and supporting those at risk of isolation.

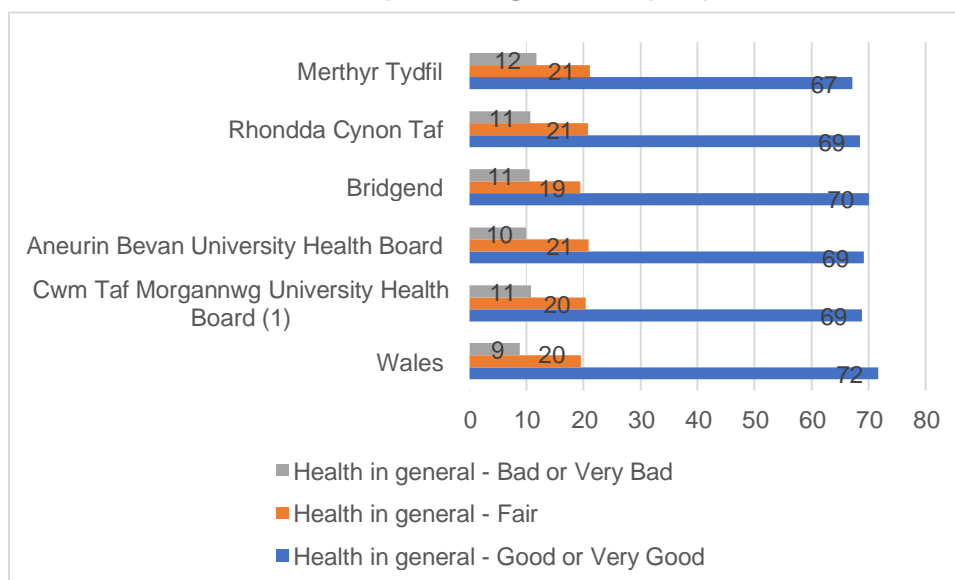
The outputs of this project were shared each Friday afternoon in a magazine-style show broadcast on Facebook, featuring a curated programme of interviews with participants and community organisations, and viewed by thousands of people.

## General Health

### What does the data tell us?

The National Survey for Wales (NSW) identifies the general health of the population which is broken down to health board and local authority. The charts below show the percentage in the different elements:

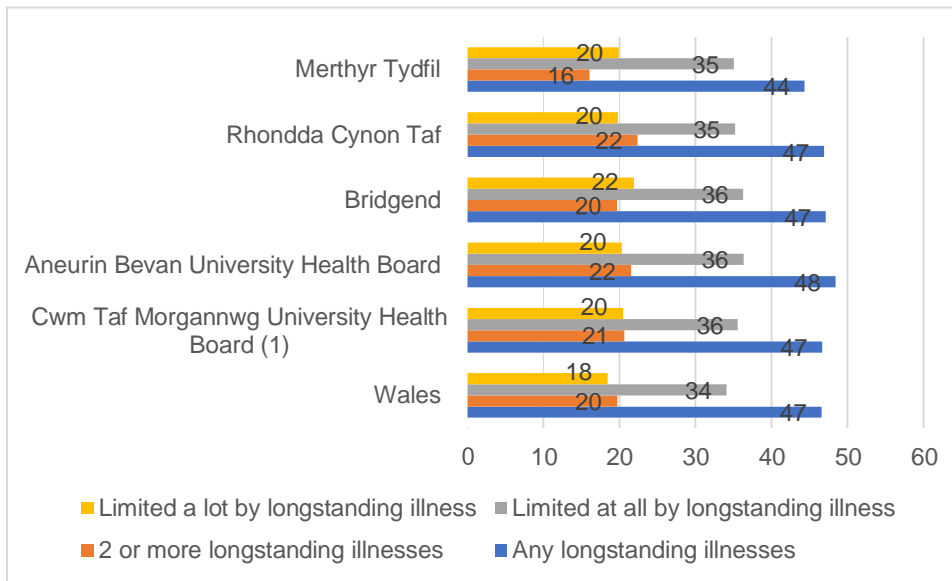
**Chart 70: General Health – percentage adults (16+) Year 2018-19 & 2019-20**



The data shows that there is a much higher percentage of the population who are in good or very good general health. There are higher levels of those reporting bad or very bad health across CTM compared to Wales. In comparison the levels are also higher than the Wales average for ABUHB. Overall, the percentage difference is not significant compared to Wales in all categories.

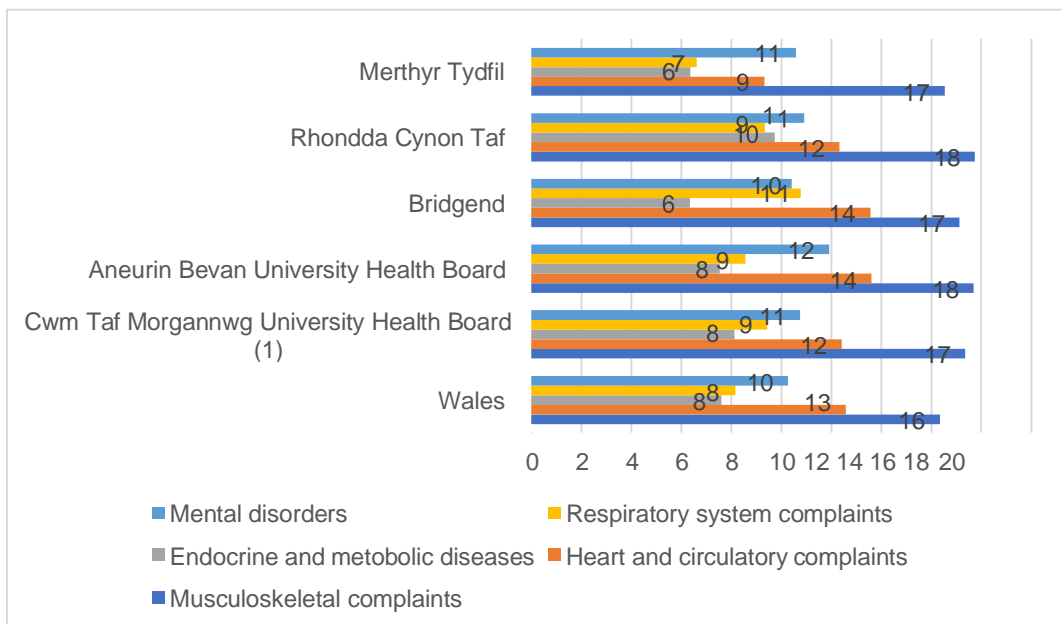
Illness is categorised in the below charts as general health, illness and type of illness:

**Chart 71: Illness - Percentage of adults (16+) 2018-19 & 2019-20**



Illness in the CTM area is close to the Wales average. Merthyr Tydfil show a slightly lower percentage with 2 or more long-standing illnesses compared to the other areas which are all higher.

**Chart 72: Type of Illness - Percentage of adults (16+) 2018-19 & 2019-20**



The types of illness that are recorded show that the highest rate relate to Musculoskeletal complaints, which are higher than the Wales average across the CTM area. The comparison between CTMUHB AND ABUHB is similar with CTMUHB having the same or slightly lower percentage across all types of illness.

**Community Based Wellbeing Support**

The need to have a community-based approach to supporting people of all ages is becoming more evident. Libraries, community centres and churches are used more and more to provide wellbeing services across a range of needs.

Social prescribing and community coordinators are key contacts for people to access advice and support to improve their health and wellbeing. Community Hubs are focal points for support, information and advice.

Community Hubs are present in all areas of CTM and bring services from local authority, health and third sector together to provide support to members of the community. They provide a range of support including health, employment, financial advice as well as activities to bring people together to develop skills, learn and socialise. All of these elements aim to support the physical and mental health of the communities, in the heart of their community, so that they are accessible, local and can encourage community cohesion.

The RCT hub structure aims to support the following:

- A single point of contact within communities to access good quality information, advice and assistance.
- A platform to develop community capacity and volunteering.
- Encouragement for people to stay active and connected to delay/prevent them needing statutory services.
- Opportunities for people to improve their mental health, wellbeing and confidence.
- Opportunities for people to improve or maintain their physical health.
- Opportunities for parents and families to improve their relationships and parenting skills.
- Opportunities for vulnerable people to seek support and be signposted to other services as appropriate.
- Opportunities for people to learn and develop skills in support of employment.
- Provide flexible community space for people to meet, share interests and socialise, thereby tackling loneliness and social isolation.

RCT Community Resilience Hubs are based in:

- Mountain Ash
- Ferndale
- Pontypridd
- Porth

Bridgend Community Hubs are based in:

- Maesteg
- Pyle
- Bridgend
- Sarn

Merthyr Tydfil Community Hubs are based in:

- Gurnos
- Twyn

## **Strengths**

- The development of the Community Hubs in each area provides a central point of support within the communities. The services provided are wide ranging with services working together to support the communities.
- The support provided during the Covid lockdown to reduce isolation in the communities is a strength, the project in Bridgend (Stronger Together Bridgend) being an example of



activities being delivered in different ways to support the mental health and well-being of those who were isolating

### Opportunities

- Building on the initiatives which were so beneficial to the community during the Covid restrictions will be an opportunity to engage people to support each other. People appear to be more aware of the services that are able to support them in some aspects, especially where local authority and voluntary services have kept in touch with those who were isolating.
- Loneliness is experienced by all ages, this was highlighted during the engagement with young people and adults stating that Covid had been difficult for them not seeing friends and family. The impact of Covid restrictions was more difficult for some as indicated by one respondent: *Socialising. It's been a really hard 2 years without properly seeing friends and family so I think we need to get back to being able to do that. I know my mental health has suffered and I've had times when I've felt quite alone* There are opportunities to support those who are feeling lonely as the feedback from engagement identified some undertake activities to avoid isolation. However, some experienced loneliness and isolation more in the evenings and weekends when transport was limited, and they were not able to travel to meet others or go to activities.

### Summary

There are many contributing factors to our understanding of the social pillar, including physical and mental health, community cohesion and family life, and how they link to the Wellbeing Goals

The health and wellbeing of people across our region can be measured in several ways. We know that we continue to see challenges in how people are supported to lead healthier lifestyles and that the socio economic, and environmental contexts are substantial determinants in our success, and this is as true for adults as it is for children. We also know that our population places a value on community, which was evident during the pandemic, and the importance of home.

Physical and mental wellbeing are important, and whilst we continue to face challenges in supporting people to be healthier, the impact of the pandemic on our mental wellbeing is a new factor which will be central in our work. The mental wellbeing scores suggest an improvement in peoples' experiences although anecdotally the recent period of the pandemic will have affected people in different ways, particularly those who have had direct experience of Covid, suffered financially or been out of work. As well as Covid, recent flooding tested the resilience of many communities. The likelihood is that extremes of weather under climate change will lead, for example, to more flooding, with both economic and health impacts.

Families in the region continue to access a range of support services. Early intervention services in a range of formats are clearly key and have been the subject of review and refinement to provide several different interventions to meet the needs of children and families.

Supporting a greater number of people to live healthier lifestyles is necessary if we are to tackle the rates of obesity in both adults and children. Whilst there has been increase in the appreciation of the outdoors, we know that our natural resources have the scope for us to do more to promote healthier lifestyles.

There are clear links between obesity and economic wellbeing. The rates are higher in the more deprived areas and levels of obesity in adults is increasing with more than 60% of adults being overweight or obese, with 24% of those being obese, indicating that if the trend continues the rate

will continue to rise to 64% by 2030. The potential impact on rates of diabetes for example and other ongoing health challenges is a substantial risk to the health of the population, and rates of ill health will impact the economy and demands for local services.

Our data and analysis shows that there are positives for us to build on and more can be done to utilise the impact of our work across the pillars as we continue our ambition for the region to be a safe, enjoyable, and healthy place to live.

## The Economic Pillar

### What do we know?

Economic activity, and inactivity of the adult population, together with a profile of employers and pay gives a picture for the region and allows us to compare within the region and more broadly with the picture across Wales.

According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021:

- The Welsh labour market continues to perform strongly, with the gap between Wales and the UK narrowing in historical terms.
- As across the UK, the growth in the economy and in real incomes has been sluggish since the recession of 2008, reflecting weak productivity growth. Over the longer run, since 1999, Wales has broadly kept pace with the UK, but its performance continues to be weak compared with many other parts of the UK.
- Latest data shows the gender pay gap has decreased to 4.3%, an all-time low. Latest data also shows the ethnicity pay gap has decreased. On average, employees from ethnic minority groups earn around 1.4% less per hour than white British employees, although there are large differences among different ethnic minorities.

### What does the data tell us?

#### Employment and Income

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) records estimated earnings on an annual basis. The table below shows the estimates for the CTM area:

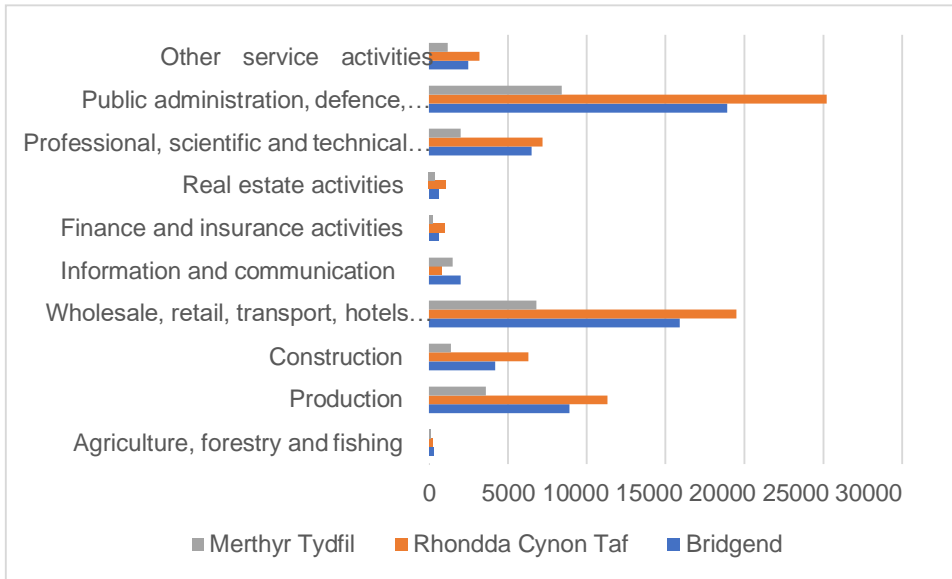
Table 31: Full time workers weekly pay (gross) – January 2022

| Area                      | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>           | 552.5 | 528.2 | 535.0 | 577.7 |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>     | 440.6 | 502.8 | 520.7 | 525.1 |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taff</b> | 521.6 | 509.8 | 535.8 | 560.3 |
| <b>United Kingdom</b>     | 568.3 | 585.2 | 585.7 | 610.7 |
| <b>Wales</b>              | 518.5 | 540.0 | 547.4 | 570.6 |

Source: Nomis [Data downloads - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#)

The numbers above show that the weekly pay is increasing in all the CTM areas. However, the weekly pay across Wales is lower than the UK. Both RCT and Merthyr Tydfil are also lower than the Wales average.

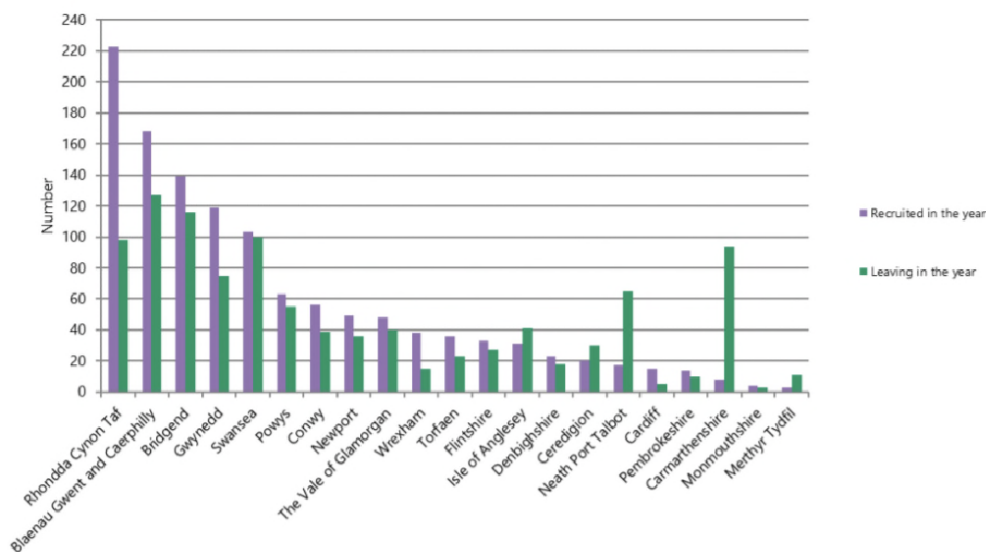
Broadly the industries within which people in the CTM area work are similar to Wales as a whole. chart 73 below illustrates the numbers in the different industries by the local authority areas:



Workplace employment for the area is highest in the category Public Administration, defence, education and health. This category incorporates ‘Human Health and Social Work’ which has the highest number employed in the area. The lowest is in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing.

The current situation relating to lack of staff entering the health and social care workforce will be a challenge for the near future. Whilst there are discussions within the UK and Welsh Government about how this can be resolved, the impact on provision is likely to be seen in the short to medium term. According to workforce profiles gathered by Social Care Wales the majority of the workforce employed in regulated services in Wales are care workers, care officers or care assistants with 64% being recorded in 2019 although this did increase from 62% in 2018. The age of those employed in regulated services across Wales is between 41 and 60 years old. This will be a challenge as an ageing workforce will mean the need to attract more in to cover for those leaving in the next 10 to 15 years. However, in 2019 the data shows that there was a higher number of staff coming into the services than leaving as seen in the chart 74 below (SCW 2019).

Figure 4: Number of staff who were recruited or left regulated services by local authority, 2019<sup>10</sup>



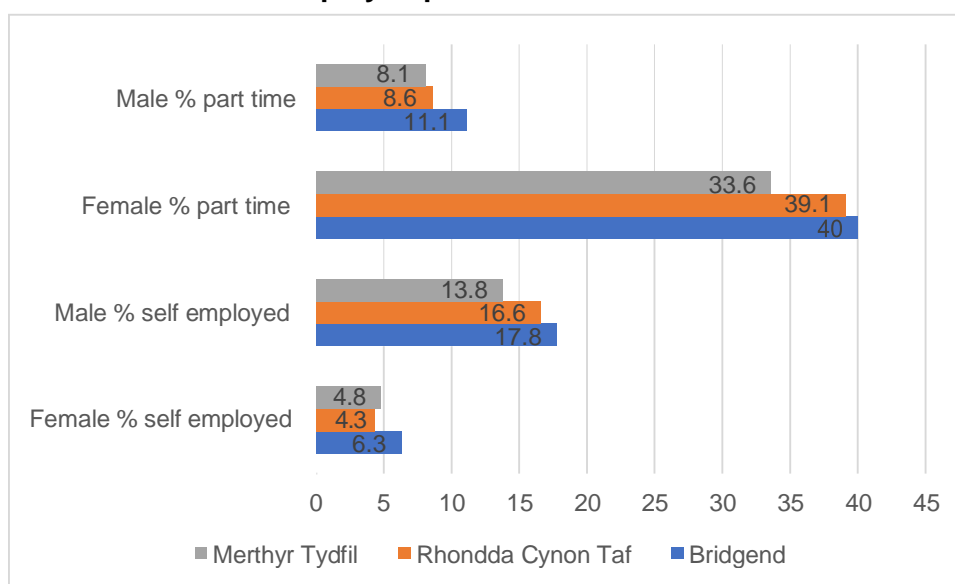
The chart shows that RCT recruited over 18% of the regulated services staff during the year compared to 0.2% being recruited in Merthyr Tydfil. The information provided identified that in RCT, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil there were no reported vacancies. This is in contrast to 68% of vacant posts across Wales.

There has been some evidence of lower rates of enrolments in health and social care from further to higher education for 2021/22. Anecdotally, reasons for the lower number are likely to be around the Covid pandemic and reported impact on workers as well as a different method of awarding GCSE results which means some students may have had higher results than anticipated and remained in school to study AS levels. The low numbers haven't been exclusively around health and social care but have been across a number of areas.

Based on the data for 2020 relating to people in employment by occupation there are a higher number of females in the 'professional occupations'. Professional occupations relate to occupations requiring a 'degree or equivalent qualification, with some occupations requiring postgraduate qualifications and/or a formal period of experience-related training' (Standard Occupational Classification 2020). Males are recorded higher in the 'skilled trades' in RCT and Merthyr Tydfil, in Bridgend they are higher in the 'elementary' occupations.

The following table shows the percentage of those who are self-employed and those who are employed part time.

**Chart 75: Status of employed persons 30 June 2021**



The percentage of females who are in part time employment is higher than males. The percentage of females who are self-employed is also lower than males.

The level of women who work part time also contributes to the gender pay gap according to the Office of National Statistics (April 2019) as illustrated below. This is due to the level of pay for part time workers being lower per hour than full time pay together with a higher percentage of women working part time compared to men as is shown in the table below:

Table 32: Gender pay gap comparison Men and Women

| Hourly pay excluding overtime, median, April 2018 (share of employees) | Men                     | Women                    | Pay gap |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| <b>Full time</b>   | £14.81<br>(85% of men)  | £13.54<br>(58% of women) | +8.6%   |
| <b>Part time</b>   | £9.07<br>(15% of men)   | £9.47<br>(42% of women)  | -4.4%   |
| <b>All</b>   | £14.00<br>(100% of men) | £11.50<br>(100% women)   | +17.9%  |

Childcare will be an issue for some families where they don't have family living locally to assist in caring for children. The cost of childcare can also be prohibitive for some families on low incomes. This element is covered in questionnaires relating to the Childcare Sufficiency assessment which is produced at least every five years. The last assessments were produced in 2017. New and up to date assessment are being developed in each local authority for 2022 and will be available in June 2022. These will assist in providing a more up to date picture of childcare provision and what prevents/stops parents from using childcare in the CTM area.

As discussed below **Economic Inactivity** rates are increasing which will impact on the local economy. With a higher number of people not working or on low income there will be an impact on the local economy due to lower spending levels.

## Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) provides a list of small areas in Wales at a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA). The list indicates where the most deprived areas are with rankings from 1 (most deprived) to 1909 (least deprived) with an overall ranking and different types of deprivation as listed below:

- Income
- Employment
- Health
- Education
- Access to Services
- Community Safety
- Physical Environment
- Housing

The top 10% are considered the most deprived areas in Wales, within the CTM area RCT has 28, Merthyr Tydfil has 8 and Bridgend has 7 areas. Some areas have been identified as areas of 'Deep Rooted Deprivation'. These are areas that have remained within the top 50 most deprived – roughly equal to the top 2.6% – small areas in Wales for the last five publications of WIMD ranks.

Table 3: LSOAs in Deep-Rooted Deprivation

|                          |                     | 2019 | 2014 | 2011 |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------|------|------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>          |                     |      |      |      |
|                          | Caerau (Bridgend) 1 | 5    | 6    | 8    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> |                     |      |      |      |
|                          | Penrhiwceiber 1     | 6    | 15   | 5    |
|                          | Abercynon 2         | 33   | 37   | 30   |
|                          | Pen-y-waun 2        | 15   | 9    | 15   |
|                          | Tylorstown 1        | 4    | 5    | 10   |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    |                     |      |      |      |
|                          | Merthyr Vale 2      | 34   | 8    | 17   |
|                          | Penydarren 1        | 7    | 14   | 4    |

The majority of those which are in the overall top 10% ranking are also in the same ranking for income, employment and education. There is a likely link between these elements as a good standard of education is more likely to result in employment and a decent wage.

Reference is made to the lower area data throughout the report and supporting data relating to each of the seven community areas is available in the data repository. This provides a breakdown across all indicators.

### Absolute Low Income

The data relates to children living in low-income families which is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. Data for 2019/20 is provisional and subject to revision in subsequent releases.

#### What does the data tell us?

Absolute low income indicates that the income for a family is below 60% of the 2010/11 median income with gross income measures before housing costs. There are a growing number of households who are working and are in absolute low income as can be seen in the table below:

Table 34: Absolute Low Income

|  | Status                         | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p) |
|--|--------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Bridgend / Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr</b>   | <b>In working families</b>     | 2886    | 2386    | 2700        |
|  | <b>Not in working families</b> | 1474    | 1681    | 1496        |
|  | <b>Total</b>                   | 4360    | 4067    | 4196        |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil / Merthyr Tudful</b> | <b>In working families</b>     | 1460    | 1249    | 1304        |
|  | <b>Not in working families</b> | 918     | 1033    | 843         |
|  | <b>Total</b>                   | 2378    | 2282    | 2147        |
|  | <b>In working families</b>     | 5604    | 4687    | 5251        |

|  |                                |      |      |      |
|--|--------------------------------|------|------|------|
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf / Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | <b>Not in working families</b> | 3244 | 3872 | 3254 |
|  | <b>Total</b>                   | 8848 | 8559 | 8505 |

Source: Stats-Xplore

Note: “in-work” status is defined as a family that have an accumulated period of at least 26 weeks paid employment or self-employment within the 52-week tax year.

The data shows that in working families in absolute low income are higher in numbers than those who are not in work. The numbers indicate that those who are working are still likely to be struggling financially even though they are working. The numbers did decrease slightly in 2018/19 but has increased again in 2019/20, this may be due to the impact of Covid and people not able to work or on furlough.

Absolute low-income data also provides data for ward areas, lone parent or couple households. The data range is large and so a snapshot is shown below taking the totals for each area as well as the wards with the highest levels (*full breakdown of areas is available in the data repository*)

Table 35: Total numbers living in Absolute Low Income – RCT

|                    | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p*) |
|--------------------|---------|---------|--------------|
| <b>Lone parent</b> | 3980    | 4459    | 4151         |
| <b>Couple</b>      | 4871    | 4096    | 4357         |
| <b>Total</b>       | 8851    | 8555    | 8508         |

Table 36: Wards with the highest number living in Absolute Low Income RCT

| Ward              | Family Type        | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p) |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Treherbert</b> | <b>Lone parent</b> | 116     | 114     | 102         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 183     | 154     | 184         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 299     | 268     | 286         |
| <b>Treorchy</b>   | <b>Lone parent</b> | 130     | 167     | 140         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 196     | 143     | 134         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 326     | 310304  | 274         |
| <b>Tylorstown</b> | <b>Lone parent</b> | 137     | 170     | 150         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 138     | 132     | 132         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 275     | 302     | 282         |
| <b>Ystrad</b>     | <b>Lone parent</b> | 111     | 152     | 145         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 170     | 155     | 147         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 281     | 307     | 292         |

Source: Department of Work and Pensions - Stats-Xplore

The overall numbers for the RCT area show that the number of families living in absolute low income is decreasing year on year. There is however a higher number of couples living in absolute



low income in 2017/18 and 2019/20 compared to lone parents. The areas which have the highest number of families living in absolute low income are all in the Rhondda cluster area.

Table 37: Total numbers living in Absolute Low Income – Bridgend

|                    | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p) |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Lone parent</b> | 1899    | 1927    | 1983        |
| <b>Couple</b>      | 2462    | 2141    | 2214        |
| <b>Total</b>       | 4361    | 4068    | 4197        |

Table 38: Wards with the highest number living in Absolute Low-Income Bridgend

| Ward            | Family Type        | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p) |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Brackla</b>  | <b>Lone parent</b> | 170     | 146     | 168         |
|                 | <b>Couple</b>      | 211     | 154     | 176         |
|                 | <b>Total</b>       | 383     | 300     | 344         |
| <b>Caerau</b>   | <b>Lone parent</b> | 140     | 168     | 156         |
|                 | <b>Couple</b>      | 177     | 172     | 167         |
|                 | <b>Total</b>       | 317     | 340     | 323         |
| <b>Cornelly</b> | <b>Lone parent</b> | 131     | 146     | 129         |
|                 | <b>Couple</b>      | 200     | 144     | 166         |
|                 | <b>Total</b>       | 331     | 290     | 295         |

Table 39: Total numbers living in Absolute Low Income – Merthyr Tydfil

|                    | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p) |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Lone parent</b> | 1124    | 1173    | 1096        |
| <b>Couple</b>      | 1257    | 1110    | 1051        |
| <b>Total</b>       | 2381    | 2283    | 2147        |

Table 40: Wards with the highest number living in Absolute Low-Income Merthyr Tydfil

| Ward              | Family Type        | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 (p) |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Gurnos</b>     | <b>Lone parent</b> | 156     | 213     | 164         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 182     | 139     | 137         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 338     | 352     | 301         |
| <b>Penydarren</b> | <b>Lone parent</b> | 157     | 153     | 146         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 164     | 118     | 125         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 321     | 271     | 271         |
| <b>Cyfarthfa</b>  | <b>Lone parent</b> | 134     | 124     | 125         |
|                   | <b>Couple</b>      | 138     | 124     | 131         |
|                   | <b>Total</b>       | 272     | 248     | 256         |

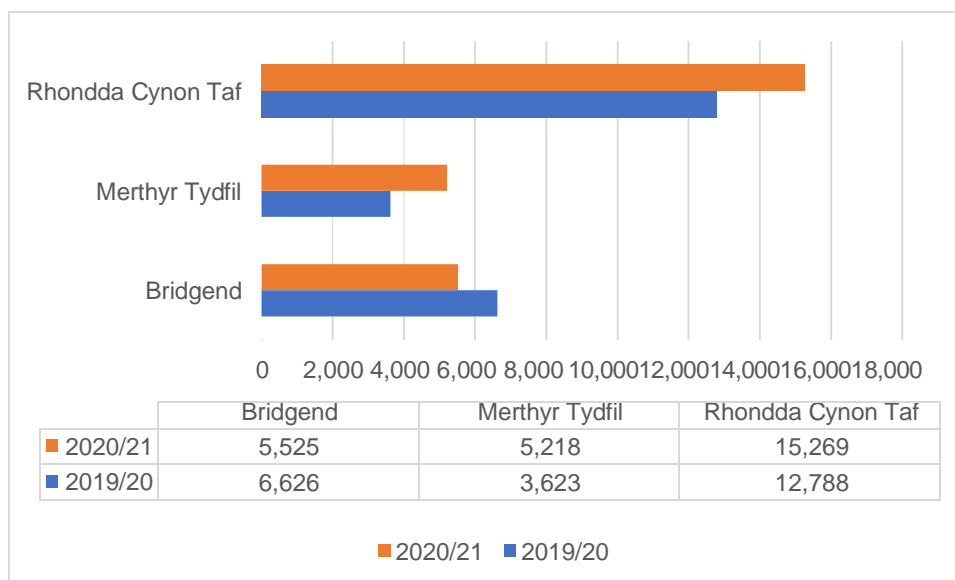
There is likely to be a further impact on this in the short term with the decrease in payments for Universal Credit and the furlough scheme coming to an end. The number of people who retain their jobs may be impacted once the Government scheme ends. However according to the Office of National Statistics, the trend appears to be that the unemployment rate is currently decreasing 0.5% for the current quarter and employment increasing at 0.4%. There is some evidence that the rise in employment is driven by part-time work seen to be increasing following a reduction at the start of the pandemic, and an increase in zero-hour contracts mainly with young people. Therefore, whilst more people are working it may not necessarily mean that they are able to afford as much due to lower wages being paid for part time work as indicated above.

## Foodbank Use

### What does the data tell us?

There has been an increase in the use of Foodbanks in recent years. The below chart shows the data from the Truseel Trust:

**Chart 76: Total number of parcels distributed**



Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be other local food banks operating in the CTM area the above numbers show that there has been an increase in both RCT and Merthyr Tydfil over the last 2 years. However, some of this may be as a result of the impact of Covid with people either losing their income entirely or being on reduced income e.g. due to furlough. Whilst use of foodbanks is increasing the likelihood of people being able to afford to spend in the local economy is reducing.

## Single Households

*The Challenge: Supporting single households with children in to work and provision of affordable childcare*

### What does the data tell us?

Household projections between 2018 and 2043 show that there will be an increase in 1 adult households with children and a reduction in 2 adult households with children. There is also predicted to be an increase in 1 person households.

This will impact on the type of housing required to accommodate the changing needs of people in the area. It may also impact on the number who need financial support with the increase in 1 adult with children households. Information relating to households can be seen on the following link <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Households/Projections/Local-Authority/2018-based/householdprojections-by-localauthority-householdtype-year>

The likelihood of those who are single for various reasons living in the 10% most deprived areas is higher than those who are living as a couple as seen in the below table:

Table 41: Analysis of protected characteristics by area deprivation - Marital Status

|  | <b>Single</b> | <b>Married / Civil Partnership</b> | <b>Divorced / Separated / Dissolved Civil Partnership</b> | <b>Widowed / Surviving Civil Partnership</b> |
|--|---------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Most deprived 10% of LSOAs in Wales (ranks 1 - 191) (2)      | 12.1          | 5.8                                | 10.2  | 7.7  |
| Most deprived 10-20% of LSOAs in Wales (ranks 192 – 382) (3) | 10.2          | 7.7                                | 10.8  | 9.3  |
| Most deprived 20-30% of LSOAs in Wales (ranks 383 - 573) (4) | 10.3          | 8.2                                | 11.2  | 9.1  |
| Most deprived 30-50% of LSOAs in Wales (ranks 574 - 955) (5) | 21.6          | 19.1                               | 20.4  | 21.6   |
| Least deprived 50% of LSOAs in Wales (ranks 956-1909) (6)    | 45.8          | 59.4                               | 47.5  | 52.4   |

Source Stats Wales

There is likely to be a challenge in supporting those single households with children to continue in work or to gain employment due to child caring responsibilities. Parents may need to seek part time employment which as previously discussed is lower paid and those who work full time may need to pay for childcare which can for some be prohibitive.

This will reduce their income, unless there is a childcare voucher scheme or support where they work. Some may be eligible for 30 hours free childcare, which will be some form of relief but again will need to fit with working hours. There is also likely to be an increase in the number of children receiving FSM for those in low-income families. As indicated below the attainment levels of those in receipt of FSM is lower than those who are not eligible. This could impact on their future thereby creating an intergenerational cycle of poverty.

## Education and Employment

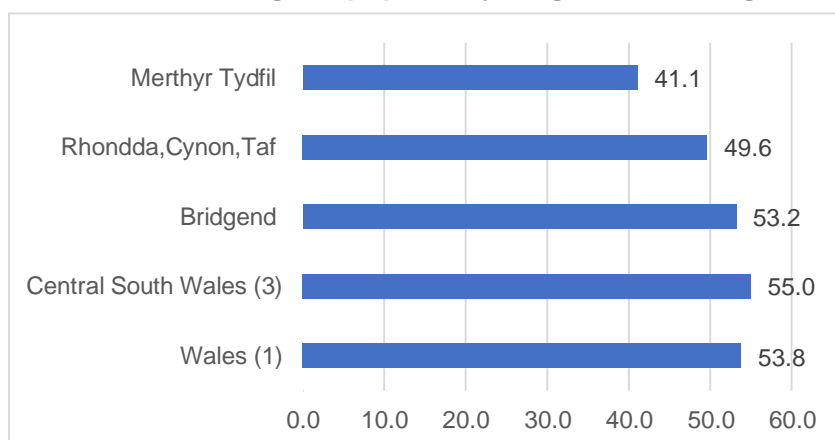
### What does the data tell us?

Local data from the Central South Consortium relating to this element is limited and therefore is not included here.

## Attainment Levels and Eligibility for Free School Meals

The chart below shows the percentage of pupils who have achieved level 2 qualifications.

**Chart 77: Percentage of pupils, key stage 4, achieving Level 2 2018/19**



The data shows that in all areas the levels are lower than the Wales average as well as being lower for the Central South Wales region. Neighbouring authorities in Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen also show a lower-than-average percentage achieving level 2.

The attainment gap between those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and those who are not remains. This can be seen in the table below:

Table 42: GCSE entries and results for pupils in year 11 by FSM status in all subjects

| FSM Eligibility      | Year    | Number of entries | Percentage of entries achieved at grade: |      |      |      |      |      |      |     |
|----------------------|---------|-------------------|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|
|                      |         |                   | A*                                       | A    | B    | C    | D    | E    | F    | G   |
| Eligible for FSM     | 2015/16 | 29,844            | 2.1                                      | 5.9  | 13.0 | 29.0 | 18.9 | 13.1 | 9.0  | 5.6 |
|                      | 2016/17 | 35,624            | 1.9                                      | 5.0  | 12.7 | 24.9 | 17.9 | 14.4 | 9.7  | 7.6 |
|                      | 2017/18 | 35,548            | 2.1                                      | 5.0  | 12.5 | 23.4 | 17.6 | 14.2 | 10.4 | 7.7 |
|                      | 2018/19 | 37,443            | 1.8                                      | 4.8  | 12.5 | 21.6 | 17.6 | 14.5 | 10.8 | 8.4 |
|                      | 2019/20 | 39,244            | 3.7                                      | 7.0  | 16.9 | 26.0 | 18.0 | 12.2 | 7.9  | 6.3 |
| Not eligible for FSM | 2015/16 | 214,819           | 7.3                                      | 15.3 | 22.5 | 29.8 | 13.2 | 6.2  | 3.3  | 1.6 |
|                      | 2016/17 | 238,180           | 7.5                                      | 14.2 | 22.8 | 27.2 | 13.0 | 7.6  | 3.9  | 2.3 |
|                      | 2017/18 | 236,988           | 7.6                                      | 14.1 | 23.2 | 26.0 | 13.0 | 7.6  | 4.1  | 2.6 |
|                      | 2018/19 | 245,130           | 7.6                                      | 13.9 | 22.8 | 24.6 | 13.5 | 8.1  | 4.5  | 2.8 |
|                      | 2019/20 | 245,782           | 12.4                                     | 16.0 | 24.6 | 25.3 | 11.5 | 5.5  | 2.7  | 1.6 |

Source: Welsh Government Statistics

The data for 2019/20 shows that the gap has increased for grades A\*-A but decreased for grades A-C. Due to the Covid pandemic the pupils were awarded grades without having to take

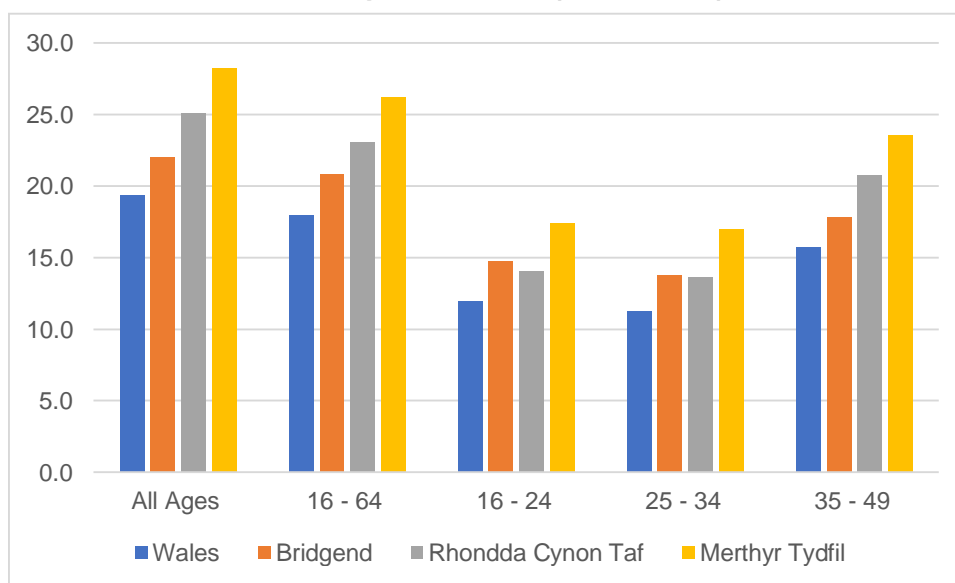
examinations which may have made a difference to the grading for 2019/20. The grades were based on the ‘teacher’s best professional estimate of what the pupil would achieve had they been able to sit an exam’.

The gap between pupils not eligible for FSM and pupils eligible for FSM awarded grades A\*-C between 2015/16 and 2018/19 widened, from 24.9 percentage points in 2015/16 to 28.1 percentage points in 2018/19.

Pupils on FSM in the CTM area shows some primary schools located in the more deprived areas as having over 40% of children eligible for FSM.

Adults with no qualifications is shown below, the data is from the WIMD 2014 and so will not be the most recent information but provides an indication. A comparison can be made with the release of the data for the most recent census.

**Chart 78: Adults with no qualifications (WIMD 2014)**

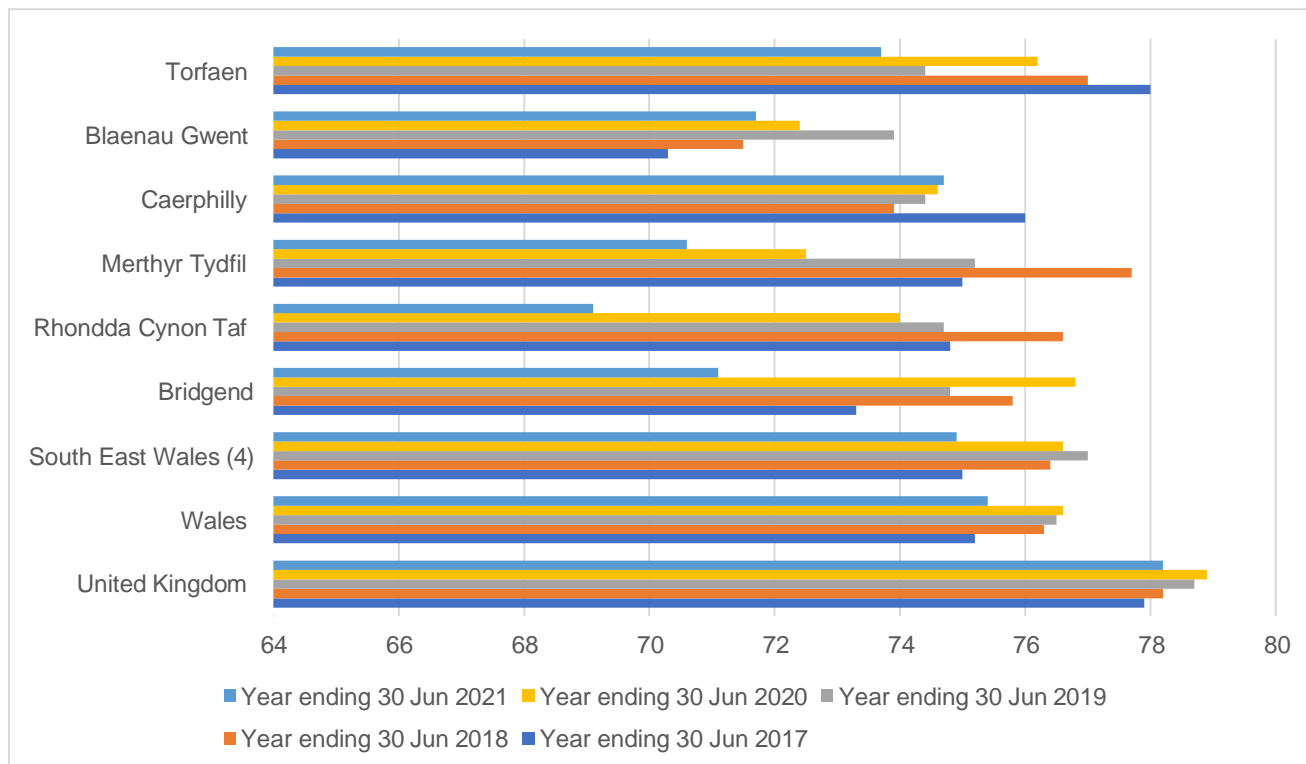


The data shows that across all ages Merthyr Tydfil has the highest level of adults with no qualifications. The higher-level overall is in the 35 to 49 age range.

## Economic Activity

Data relating to those who are economically active is shown below.

**Chart 79: Economic Activity Rate age 16 to 64**



The overall picture shows that Wales has a lower rate than the rest of the United Kingdom. The South East Wales area has seen an increase in economic activity between 2018 and 2020 with a decrease again in 2021. The decrease is likely to be due to the impact of Covid and is the same in all areas other than Caerphilly which did increase slightly. Merthyr Tydfil shows a significant increase in economic activity in 2018 with RCT also showing an increase compared to 2017.

The economic activity rates broken down to age ranges is shown for the CTM area below:

**Table 43: Economic activity rate: Age range 16 to 64**

|                          | Year ending 31 Mar 2017 | Year ending 31 Mar 2018 | Year ending 31 Mar 2019 | Year ending 31 Mar 2020 | Year ending 31 Mar 2021 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>United Kingdom</b>    | 77.8                    | 78.2                    | 78.5                    | 78.9                    | 78.5                    |
| <b>Wales</b>             | 74.9                    | 76.5                    | 76.7                    | 76.6                    | 75.2                    |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 73.4                    | 75.4                    | 74                      | 78.6                    | 71.9                    |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 74                      | 75.3                    | 76.4                    | 73.2                    | 69.3                    |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 74                      | 78.5                    | 77.1                    | 72.6                    | 70.2                    |

**Table 44: Economic activity rate: Age range 16 to 24**

|                       | Year ending 31 Mar 2017 | Year ending 31 Mar 2018 | Year ending 31 Mar 2019 | Year ending 31 Mar 2020 | Year ending 31 Mar 2021 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>United Kingdom</b> | 61.6                    | 61.3                    | 61                      | 61.1                    | 59.4                    |

|                          |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Wales</b>             | 57.1 | 62.7 | 61.7 | 60.5 | 55.4 |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 60.9 | 64.9 | 69.6 | 65.4 | 42.7 |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 64   | 62.2 | 64.2 | 55.2 | 45.8 |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 67   | 75.1 | 70.9 | 59.5 | 55.6 |

Table 45: Economic activity rate: Age range 25 to 49

|                          | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2017 | Year<br>ending 31<br>Mar 2018 | Year<br>ending 31<br>Mar 2019 | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2020 | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2021 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>United Kingdom</b>    | 86.1                       | 86.6                          | 87                            | 87.3                       | 87.4                       |
| <b>Wales</b>             | 85.1                       | 85.7                          | 86.2                          | 85.9                       | 85.4                       |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 84.6                       | 83.9                          | 82.7                          | 86.8                       | 87.7                       |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 83.8                       | 83.5                          | 85.2                          | 83.9                       | 78.1                       |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 83                         | 85.7                          | 85.1                          | 83                         | 82.3                       |

Table 46: Economic activity rate: Age range 50 to 64

|                          | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2017 | Year<br>ending 31<br>Mar 2018 | Year<br>ending 31<br>Mar 2019 | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2020 | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2021 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>United Kingdom</b>    | 72.5                       | 73.2                          | 73.8                          | 74.4                       | 73.8                       |
| <b>Wales</b>             | 69.2                       | 70.2                          | 70.5                          | 71.8                       | 71.3                       |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 61.8                       | 67.5                          | 63.3                          | 73.3                       | 66.1                       |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 63.2                       | 69.3                          | 69.5                          | 65.8                       | 66.5                       |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 63                         | 69.2                          | 65.4                          | 62.6                       | 60.5                       |

### Disabled Persons Employment

Table 47: Economic activity by disabled status 2021 persons aged 16 - 64

|                                       | Economic<br>activity<br>rate | Employment<br>rate | Economic<br>inactivity<br>rate |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>United Kingdom</b>                 | 57.5                         | 52.6               | 42.5                           |
| <b>Wales</b>                          | 52                           | 46.9               | 48                             |
| <b>West Wales and the<br/>Valleys</b> | 49.3                         | 44.7               | 50.7                           |
| <b>Carmarthenshire</b>                | 53                           | 50.4               | 47                             |
| <b>Swansea</b>                        | 53.6                         | 45.1               | 46.4                           |
| <b>Neath Port Talbot</b>              | 55.1                         | 51.4               | 44.9                           |
| <b>Bridgend</b>                       | 49.4                         | 43.7               | 50.6                           |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>              | 38.9                         | 34.8               | 61.1                           |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>                 | 43.8                         | 37.5               | 56.2                           |
| <b>Caerphilly</b>                     | 52                           | 48.8               | 48                             |
| <b>Blaenau Gwent</b>                  | 37.1                         | 33.2               | 62.9                           |
| <b>Torfaen</b>                        | 42.1                         | 34.6               | 57.9                           |

The above table shows that there is a difference between those who are economically active (able and want to work) and those who are employed. The rate who are economically active is higher than the employment rate across all areas, this is also reflected UK wide. Compared to those who are not disabled the rates are much higher as the below table shows.

Table 48: Economic activity by non-disabled status ages 16 to 64

|                                   | <b>Economic activity rate</b> | <b>Employment rate</b> | <b>Economic inactivity rate</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>United Kingdom</b>             | 83.8                          | 80.1                   | 16.2                            |
| <b>Wales</b>                      | 82.5                          | 79.7                   | 17.5                            |
| <b>West Wales and the Valleys</b> | 81.9                          | 79.1                   | 18.1                            |
| <b>Carmarthenshire</b>            | 79                            | 75.9                   | 21                              |
| <b>Swansea</b>                    | 81.3                          | 77.8                   | 18.7                            |
| <b>Neath Port Talbot</b>          | 81.7                          | 79.8                   | 18.3                            |
| <b>Bridgend</b>                   | 78.3                          | 77.5                   | 21.7                            |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>          | 80.4                          | 77.1                   | 19.6                            |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>             | 82.8                          | 79                     | 17.2                            |
| <b>Caerphilly</b>                 | 85                            | 82.7                   | 15                              |
| <b>Blaenau Gwent</b>              | 86.3                          | 82                     | 13.7                            |
| <b>Torfaen</b>                    | 86.5                          | 83.2                   | 13.5                            |

Whilst the Economic activity rate is still higher than the employment rate there is a much higher rate of employed and economically active compared to disabled.

The data indicates that those who are disabled are wanting and willing to work but are not in employment. The Community Impact Assessment undertaken for Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent and RCT identified that people with learning disabilities wanted:

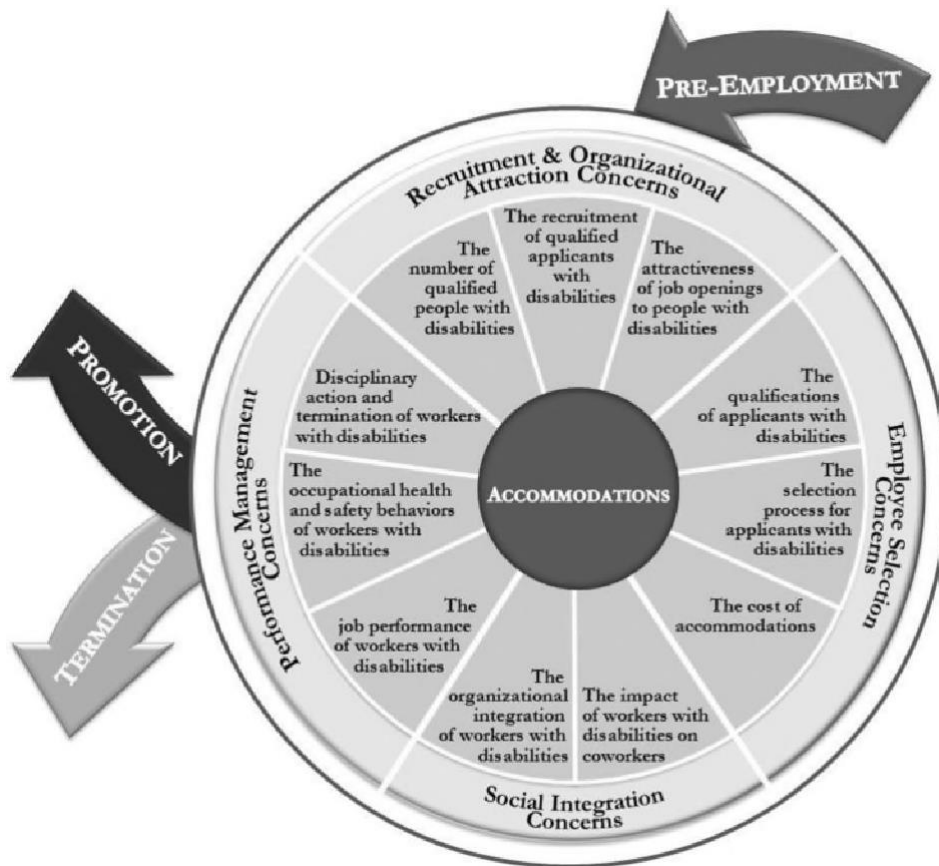
*'More opportunities and choice regarding the daytime activities they engage with, with a focus on innovative employment, volunteering, and education options that help people with learning disabilities to integrate in the community. These routes were also highlighted as means to increase individual self-worth and value and reduce loneliness and isolation.'*(p36)

There were other considerations that the contributors identified for them to be able to integrate into the community relating to transport. Particularly having regular public transport particularly between 8am and 6pm also timetables to be converted to Easy Read so that they are able to plan their own journeys and be more independent. This was not only for them to meet friends but for developing skills to have more ownership of their lives.

Research has identified that across the world the employment rates between disabled and non-disabled people is wide *'The bottom line is that, all over the world, a person with a disability is less likely to be employed than a person without a disability, often much less so'* (quoted in Bonaccio et al 2019).

The below diagram illustrates the employment cycle including the relevant concerns of managers may have in each stage of the relationship relating to employing a person with disabilities (Bonaccio et al 2019 p3)





Visibility of disabilities is another element discussed in the article above which identifies that employers may not 'see' a person who has a disability as there is no 'visible manifestation' or features. Also, those who have a disability may not disclose this for fear of being rejected or negative repercussions in their career. It states in the discussion that:

*'The invisible or variable nature of many disabilities often places the onus of disclosure on employees. Disclosure is a personal decision that can be difficult, and employers are often ill-prepared to participate in a disclosure discussion that will result in positive long-term outcomes for both parties involved. (p4)'*

There are ways of pro-actively recruiting people with disabilities, these include partnership with vocational agencies and community-based organisations who specialise in supporting people with disabilities. These organisations can assist potential employers in adapting and understanding the needs of people they could employ.

A qualitative study undertaken by the Department of Work and Pensions looked at the recruitment behaviour of small and medium sized enterprises (2011). Linked to the above some employers suggested a 'job broker' to match disabled applicants to specific employment vacancies would assist them in employing the best person for the job. Other elements they considered would be needed were:

- Wider workforce would need to be educated about disability issues to combat potential discriminatory attitudes
- A channel to provide them with information about health conditions and capabilities of applicants with different kinds of impairments and health conditions
- Work trials to assess the persons suitability for a particular role

There were some financial barriers considered by some of those taking part in the study to be able to adapt the environment for some who may require it. This would be at an extra cost which could be difficult for some small businesses.

Whilst these elements were highlighted by those taking part there are initiatives in place to support some of these already which the employers did not appear to be aware of such as Access to work scheme and Disability Employment Advisors and job brokers. There may be a mixture of support that is required including knowledge of what is already available.

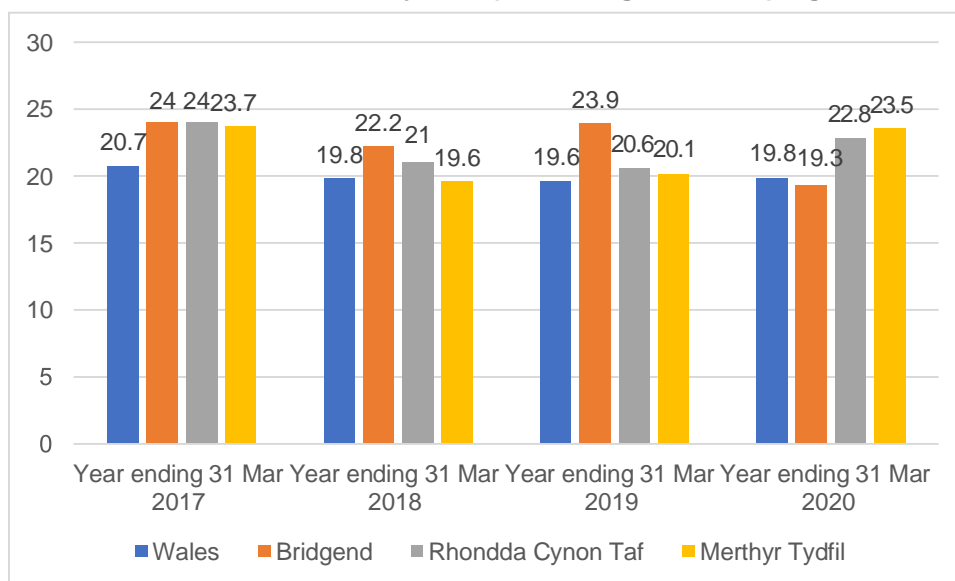
## Economic Inactivity

*Challenge: The impact of Covid has been difficult for some businesses which could result in more people being economically inactive. Identifying the areas of need and providing skills and training to fill gaps where there are opportunities.*

### What does the data tell us?

Economic inactivity rates for the area are increasing with the highest increase seen in March 2020 and 2021. These figures are likely to be impacted by the Covid pandemic. The chart below shows the trend from 2017 onwards:

**Chart 80: Economic inactivity rate (excluding students) Age 16 – 64 years (all persons)**



Source: Stats Wales

Data shows that RCT economic inactivity rates have gradually reduced between 2017 and 2019 whilst Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil decreased in 2018 but then increased again slightly in 2019. Those aged between 25 to 49 years have the lowest inactivity rate overall which would show that they are more likely to be working and earning.

The table below show the economic inactivity rates of males and females in different age categories:

Table 49: Economic inactivity rate (excluding students) Age 16 to 64

|                          | YE<br>31 Mar 2017 |        | YE<br>31 Mar 2018 |        | YE<br>31 Mar 2019 |        | YE<br>31 Mar 2020 |        | YE<br>31 Mar 2021 |        |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|
|                          | Male              | Female | Male              | Female | Male              | Female | Male              | Female | Male              | Female |
| <b>United Kingdom</b>    | 12.4              | 24.2   | 12.2              | 23.3   | 12.2              | 22.9   | 12.4              | 22.1   | 13.1              | 21.6   |
| <b>Wales</b>             | 16.1              | 25.2   | 15                | 24.5   | 14.8              | 24.5   | 15.6              | 24     | 18                | 23.1   |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 20                | 28     | 15.9              | 28.2   | 17                | 30.6   | 14.2              | 24.1   | 16.8              | 27.9   |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 20                | 28     | 16                | 25.8   | 17.4              | 23.7   | 18.2              | 27.3   | 22.8              | 30     |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 20.3              | 26.9   | 14                | 24.9   | 15.6              | 24.5   | 20.6              | 26.6   | 22.9              | 26.5   |

Table 50: Economic inactivity rate (excluding students) Age 25 to 49

|                          | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2017 |        | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2018 |        | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2019 |        | Year ending<br>31 Mar 2020 |        |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
|                          | Male                       | Female | Male                       | Female | Male                       | Female | Male                       | Female |
| <b>United Kingdom</b>    | 6.7                        | 19.6   | 6.6                        | 18.7   | 6.5                        | 18.3   | 6.8                        | 17.6   |
| <b>Wales</b>             | 9.5                        | 18.8   | 9.2                        | 18.2   | 8                          | 18.5   | 8.7                        | 18.1   |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 10.4                       | 20.1   | 8.3                        | 22.9   | *                          | 24.8   | 6.8                        | 18.3   |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 11.8                       | 19.4   | 10.6                       | 22     | 10.7                       | 17.9   | 11.2                       | 19.5   |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 13                         | 20.4   | 8.6                        | 19.6   | 8.6                        | 20.1   | 12.3                       | 20.2   |

\*Data item is disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication

Source: Stats Wales, Business Economy and Labour Market

As can be seen the inactivity rates for females compared to males is higher across all areas, this is particularly significant in the 25 to 49 age group. There is some anecdotal evidence to show that women within this age group are more likely to have caring responsibilities with either children or relatives. This may account for the higher level of inactivity rates for females.

## Universal Credit

The benefits system changed with the introduction of the Universal Credit which was implemented on a phased basis. It amalgamated a range of benefits and is paid whether you are in work on a low income or out of work. The benefit replaced:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Working Tax Credit

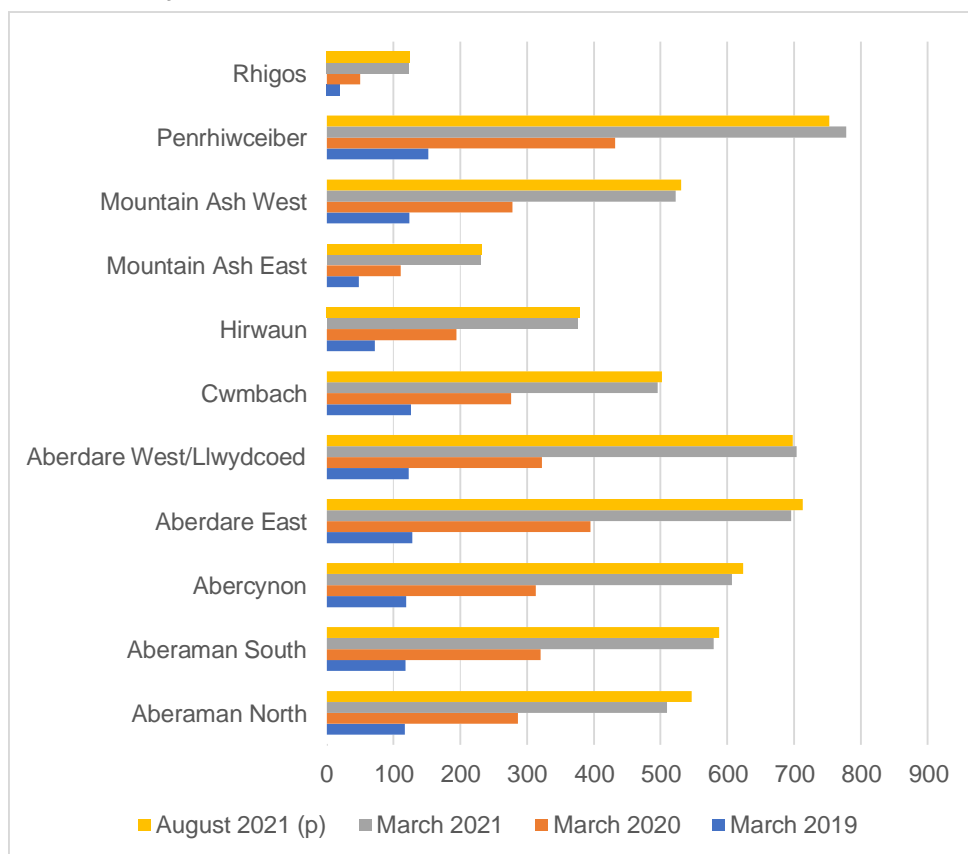
The claimant rate for Universal Credit in each area has increased overall between 2019 and 2021 as shown in the below table:

Table 51: Number of Universal Credit claimants

|                       | March 2019 | March 2020 | March 2021 | August 2021 (p) |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b> | 2113       | 3786       | 6469       | 6605            |
| <b>Bridgend</b>       | 4510       | 7538       | 13103      | 13027           |
| <b>RCT</b>            | 4520       | 11209      | 21506      | 21594           |

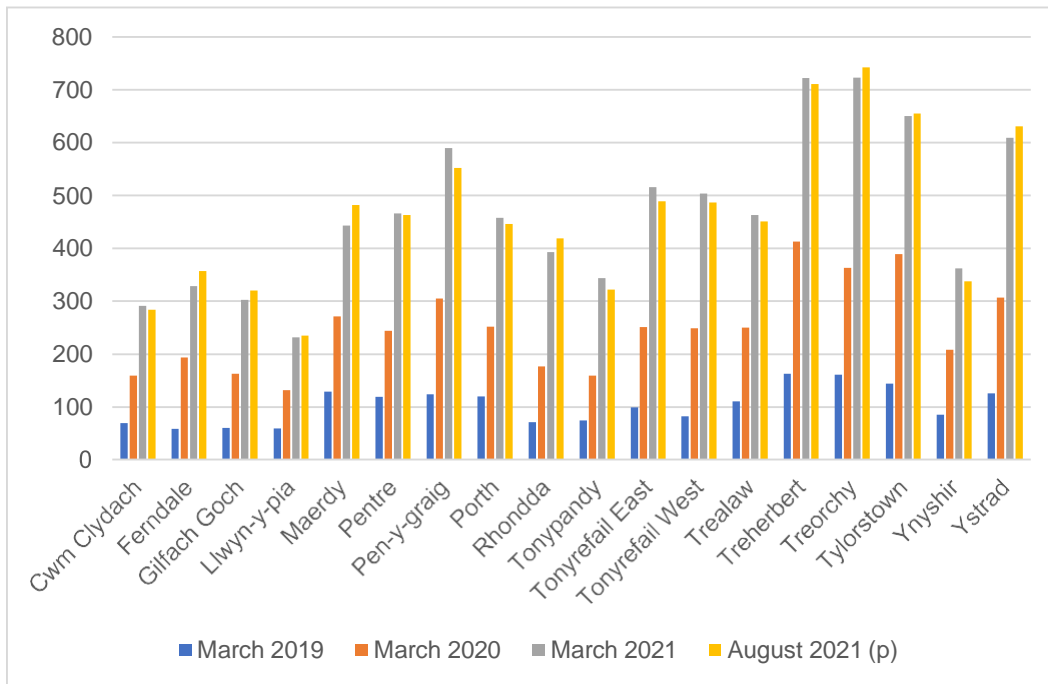
The breakdown for each of the cluster areas is shown in the below charts. The date range is from 2019 to 2020 as the earlier dates were the transition period between the old benefits and universal credit.

Chart 81: Cynon Cluster



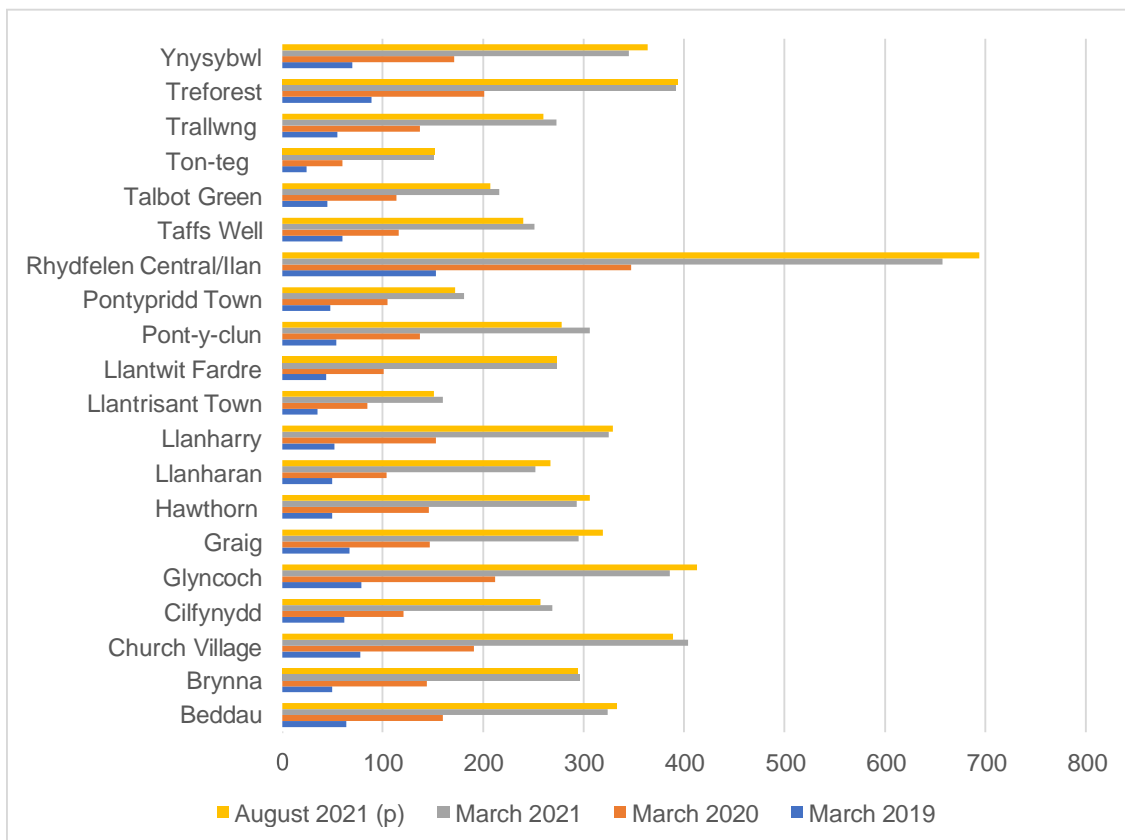
Penrhiwceiber has one area which is 6th in the overall index of multiple deprivation and is 12th overall for income deprivation which is in the top 10%. Aberdare areas are in the 20% to 40% areas of deprivation.

**Chart 82: Rhondda Cluster 2019 - 2021**



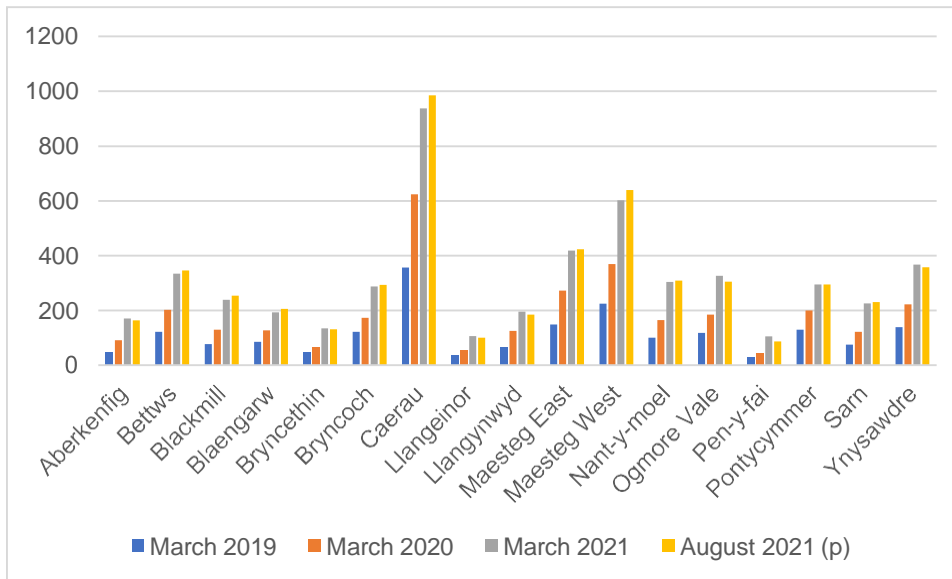
Treorchy, Treherbert and Tylorstown show a higher level of Universal Credit claimants. Tylorstown is in the 10% most deprived areas but is showing lower levels of claimants compared to Treorchy and Treherbert which are within the top 20% to 40% of the areas with the exception of one area in Treherbert (Treherbert 2) which is in the top 10% most deprived.

**Chart 83: Taf Cluster**



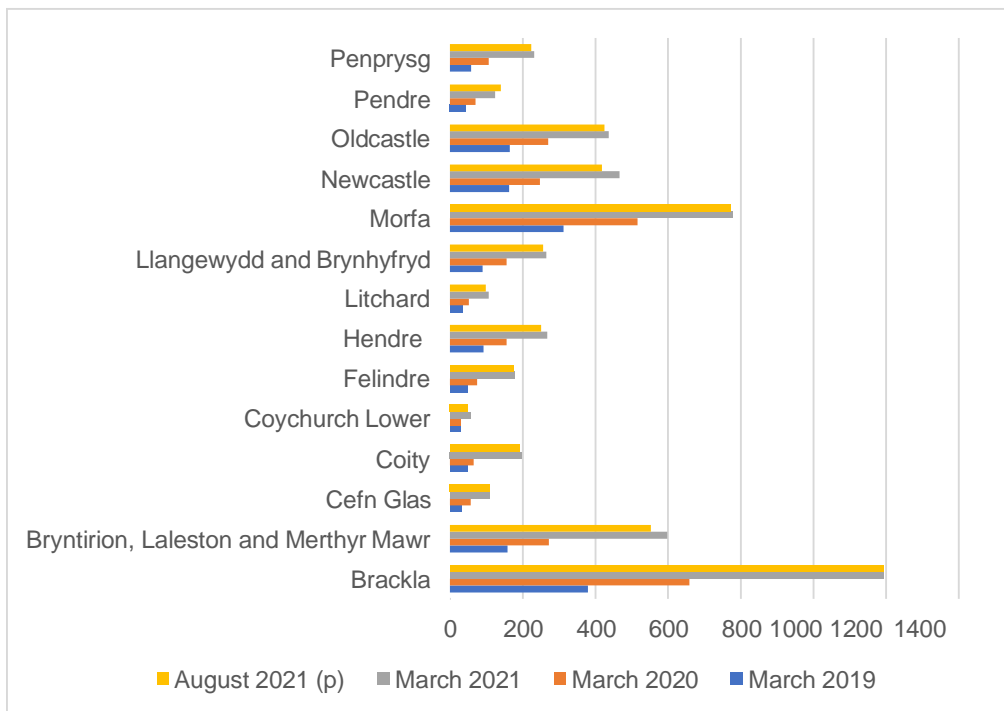
Rhydfelen Central/Llan 2 is in the top 10% areas of deprivation ranking 26 overall and 32 in the income domain.

**Chart 84: Bridgend North Cluster**



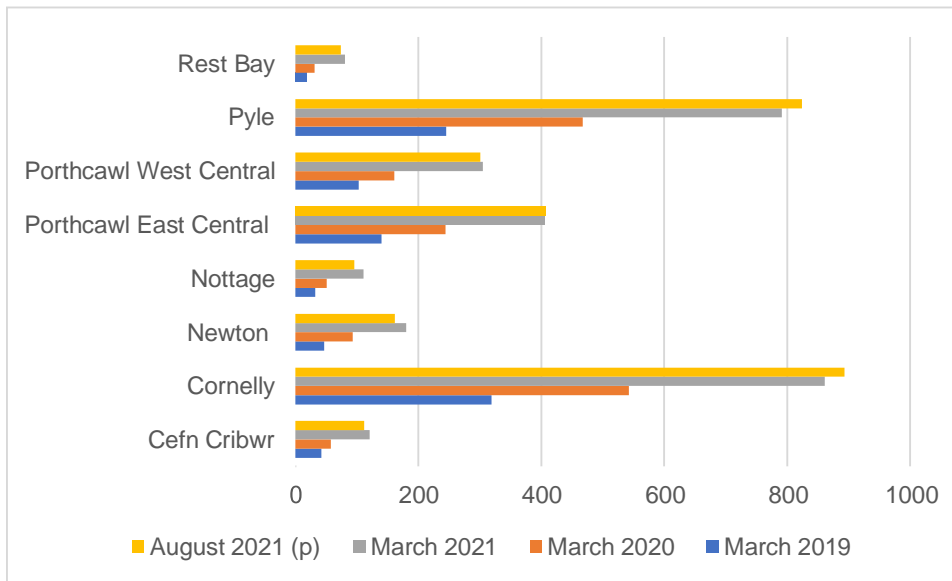
Caerau has four of its LSOAs in the top 10% most deprived areas overall. This also applies across the other domains of income and employment.

**Chart 85: Bridgend East**



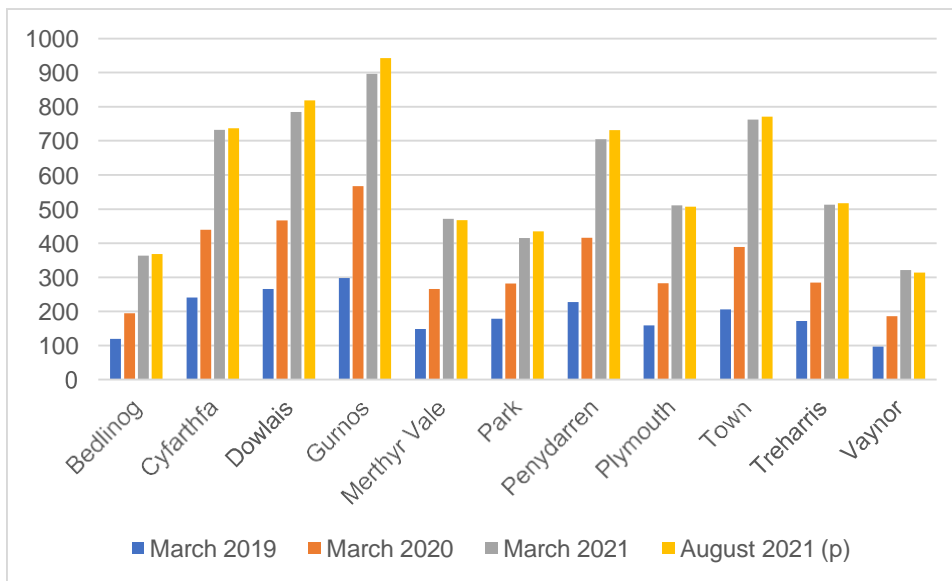
Brackla has the higher level of claimants and one area is in the top 10% most deprived areas overall as well as in the income and employment domain.

**Chart 86: Bridgend West**



Pyle and Cornelly are both showing a high number of claimants for Bridgend West. There are two areas which are within the top 20% of most deprived areas, which is also reflected in income and employment domain.

**Chart 87: Merthyr Tydfil**



The areas showing higher levels of claimants are all in the top 10% areas of deprivation overall. The Town and Penydarren areas are also higher for claimants, but they are in the 20% range of deprivation, although they do have areas which are considered less deprived.

The information above indicates that there is a propensity for those receiving Universal Credit to be living in the more deprived areas. However, this does not necessarily mean they are not working, it may be that they are on a lower income for which they can top up with the Universal Credit. There is also a significant increase in 2020/20 which is likely to be attributed to the impact of Covid and

the need to claim Universal Credit to either top up their earnings or if they have lost their employment.

There have been various initiatives to support people in the more deprived areas such as Communities First related to getting people into work through skills development and education. Communities First was ended in 2011 and replaced by a Legacy Fund which provided funding to support the most effective aspects of Communities First. This included close working with the Communities for Work which helps those furthest away from the labour market into employment.

Communities for Work is a programme which targets:

- long-term unemployed people aged 25 and over living in the old Communities First post code areas with low skills, work limiting health conditions or long term unemployed
- young people aged 16-24 not in employment, education or training (NEET) in old CF postcode areas

Data from RCT from April 2020 shows that the majority of those involved are aged 25 years (280) and above with the majority being male (261). There are a lower number of those aged 16 to 24 years (83). The cumulative figures from the start of the programme up to March 2021 are shown in the table below (RCT):

Table 52: Communities for Work RCT

| <b>Participant information</b> | <b>Number</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Male</b>                    | 1714          |
| <b>Female</b>                  | 1156          |
| <b>Age 16 – 24 yrs</b>         | 386           |
| <b>Age 25+ yrs</b>             | 2484          |
| <b>Employed</b>                | 174           |
| <b>Unemployed</b>              | 2696          |

The majority of those who have been involved in the programme had been out of work for 0-6 months (n1265). There were 769 who had no qualifications; however, the majority had some qualifications between level 1 and level 3. There were 948 participants who found employment through the programme.

Bridgend also have a range of employability projects which are run in the county the majority of which come to an end in 2022. The European Social Fund (ESF) projects are listed below:

- Bridges in to work 2 – for those 25 and above living outside old Community First (CF) post code areas
- Working Skills for Adults 2 – those who are employed with level 2 or below as highest qualification
- Nurture, Equip, Thrive - Underemployed - i.e. under 37 hours per week, fixed term or temporary contract
- Communities for work (as above)
- Inspire to work – 16 and above NEET living outside CF post code areas

Funding for the above employability programmes is about £2m per year, with more than 50 staff members which is a significant amount of funding and staffing for these initiatives. Whilst the projects have started at different times, the earliest start date was 2015. Since this time the projects have helped 4,637 residents of Bridgend achieve 1,599 accredited vocational qualifications, and 1,571 employment outcomes as of the end of October 2021.



Loss of these projects will have a significant impact on the residents of Bridgend. These is likely to be a loss of experienced, targeted support out in communities, especially for those that have multiple, complex barriers to work and have been out of work for many years, loss of free access to more expensive vocational training courses. There may also be an impact on community venues which may close due to lack of funding.

There is no clear information relating to what will be available to fund similar projects in the future and therefore this is a risk. There will also be a risk of losing the staff in the projects if there is no clarity regarding future funding. This will not only impact on Bridgend but all such projects in the area and across Wales.

## Strengths

- Data shows that weekly pay is increasing in all CTM areas which is positive. Respondents in the engagement activities were concerned about pay and this was an important factor for them. A living wage was important to lift people out of poverty and would help in the face of rising costs for household essentials and property. Whilst this is a strength there is still more that is needed to bring the wages in the area up to the Wales average.
- The attainment gap for pupils in receipt of FSM compared to those who are not is reducing. The data for 2019/20 shows that the gap has increased for grades A\*-A but decreased for grades A-C.
- Economic Activity rates are higher in the 25 to 49 age group showing that they are more likely to be working and earning. Bridgend rates are higher than the Wales average in 2020 and 2021.
- The role of not-profit organisations and charities in supporting the local economic wellbeing was highlighted by several respondents in the engagement. Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Hub and social enterprise services providing advice on financial management and benefits were valued.

## Opportunities

- Data shows that there are more women than men in part time employment and that this is contributing to the gender pay gap. This is due to part time hours being paid at a lower rate per hour. Females between the ages of 25 and 49 are also more likely to be economically inactive. There is anecdotal evidence to show that women in this age range are more likely to have caring responsibilities either for their own children or parents. In relation to childcare this is a barrier for some in being able to work full time due to the cost and availability at hours to suit some employment. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is currently being prepared and the link with the assessment will be important to consider the needs of working parents and those who want to work but are unable to due to childcare issues including affordability.
- There is predicted to be an increase in single households with children. This will be a challenge where single parents want to continue working as they are likely to need to access childcare to enable a return to work or training. This again can be linked to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment above.
- There are a growing number of households who are working and are in absolute low income. There was a concern from the respondents to the engagement activities that

training and improving skills was key to improving job prospects and confidence. There was also concern about the cost of living increasing with wages not being in line with the increase one respondent stated, *'The cost of living is going up but my wage isn't'*.

Others nearing retirement were concerned about their pension and being able to afford things in their retirement. With the number of challenges to be considered for this element it will be important to ensure the relevant partners are engaged in tackling this issue for now and the future generations. There is an opportunity to work with the Cardiff Capital Region with their ambition to create 25,000 new jobs and £4bn investment in the private sector. They already have a strategy which has priority skills to be developed for the workforce which is a positive move forward. The Employment and Skills Plan highlights the types of skills and support that are a priority to support both those coming into employment and developing their skills and employers. This may address some of the comments made during the engagement relating to low skilled jobs and zero-hour contracts resulting in low wages.

- Economic inactivity rates are increasing, but there are currently a range of initiatives to support people into work which have had some success over the last few years. The funding is from the European Social Fund, this will be finishing for most in the next year due to Brexit. There is uncertainty about the future funding to support such initiatives. Depending on the funding allocation which is likely to be from central government there is again an opportunity to work with the Cardiff City Region to plan how this may be addressed, possibly with some opportunities for pooling funds.
- Economic activity rates for disabled people is high, but their employment rate is lower. There is evidence from engagement with disabled people that they want the opportunity to work and develop their skills through volunteering, education and training. Also, more equal opportunities were needed which included people with disabilities. One parent stated *'I foresee difficulties with support for my son who has autism as an adult in the community. He will be finishing his life skills course at college in the summer, and I worry about what the future holds, how independent he will be and whether he will be a statistic of the high percentage of people with autism who are unable to find work.'*

## Businesses

*Challenge: Supporting businesses in the sectors most affected by Covid such as the leisure and tourism industry. Supporting businesses to diversify with the environmental challenges and changes to construction and utilities.*

### What does the data tell us?

Active Enterprises recorded in each area shows the construction industry with the highest levels of activity between 2018 and 2019. The level of 'births' in the construction industry also increased in this time across all authorities. Bridgend shows a higher level of 'production' in the area compared to the other two local authorities, although this did decrease between 2018 and 2019 from 530 to 515 respectively.

The table below shows the increase in the construction sector across CTM local authorities:

Table 53: Business births, deaths and active enterprises CTM Construction industry

| Area           | Year | Births | Deaths | Active enterprises |
|----------------|------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Bridgend       | 2018 | 65     | 55     | 550                |
|                | 2019 | 80     | 60     | 570                |
| RCT            | 2018 | 165    | 140    | 1205               |
|                | 2019 | 180    | 125    | 1255               |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 2018 | 55     | 45     | 365                |
|                | 2019 | 55     | 55     | 370                |

Retail has a higher level of activity in RCT compared with the other two authorities, however there was a decrease between 2018 and 2019 as seen in the table below:

Table 54: Business births, deaths and active enterprises RCT Retail industry

| Year | Births | Deaths | Active enterprises |
|------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| 2018 | 535    | 160    | 1410               |
| 2019 | 150    | 220    | 1215               |

Whilst the retail sector is decreasing in the CTM area this is a trend overall in Wales. This will reduce the income coming into the economy.

Covid has had an impact on businesses across the UK and the world. The data from the ONS shows that between the 18 and 31 May 2020 in Wales there was a 64% decrease in turnover from what businesses would normally expect at that time with 23% of businesses reporting a decrease of more than half. The sector having been impacted most was the food and accommodation and arts and recreation with more than half being temporarily closed. The small coastal towns were seen to be most impacted by the lock down and this included Porthcawl (<https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/coronavirus-the-impact-on-the-welsh-economy/>)

### Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

This is a collaborative programme agreed between the 10 local authorities of the Cardiff Capital Region, Welsh and UK governments which has a £1.3bn investment fund for the region. The outcomes of the programmes they invest in is to deliver 25,000 new jobs to the area as well as generate an additional £4bn of private sector investment into the region over 20 years (started in 2016).

The work includes projects to improve transport links in the region with the development of the South Wales Metro. This will increase the accessibility to transport making it more convenient to use public transport to get around for work, school, socialising etc.

There are also initiatives for more homes for the region to unlock stalled residential developments. This is in place across the CTM areas with sites identified for support. Skills and work force are another element to prioritise skills with strategy to develop the skills in line with the needs of employers. Supporting the development of the industrial sites as well as new and progressive technology is also included in the work being progressed (<https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/>).

## Strengths

Bridgend are currently undertaking work relating to 'Economic Futures' which has highlighted areas of strength, opportunities and emerging themes. The outcome and recommendations from this work is both a strength and opportunity for development. The interim findings have identified 10 emerging themes from data analysis and stakeholder engagement which are summarised below:

- Digital Connectivity – future economic growth supported by excellent digital connectivity
- Low Carbon – significant economic **opportunities** to be gained by regions and economies which take a **lead in championing and developing expertise in low carbon technologies**.
- Place – three main towns within Bridgend Borough, each has its own community and a strong sense of place
- Natural Capital – All stakeholders highlighted the importance of the natural beauty of the areas, valley's mountains, the coastline, including areas of specific scientific interest
- Advanced Manufacturing – Advanced Manufacturing is clearly important to the local economy, with major manufacturing employers such as Sony
- Public Sector – The public sector is a **significant employer and investor** in Bridgend; important role to play locally, having a significant impact on carbon emissions, the supply chain, and in supporting inward investment and business growth through being a significant landlord
- Skills Development – The supply of an **appropriately skilled workforce** is acknowledged to be a **key driver of economic growth**.
- Active Travel and Public Transport – issue regarding the **lack of public transport running at times to support people getting to their place of work** was raised many times
- Marketing – Whilst advertising for tourism was more developed, stakeholders believed there wasn't the same level of marketing to business or people as Bridgend Borough being a great place come and set up a business and for people to live and work – a lifestyle destination

Throughout the CTM area there are success stories.

In 2020 the high street in Treorchy was named the best in the UK and praised for its bustling centre and thriving community. The high street has about 100 shops - with the vast majority being independents and 60% run by women. The occupancy rate is currently at 96% with two empty shops being refurbished. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-51234575>

The area has also been successful in attracting significant investment. Using the natural beauty and cultural history of the former Tower Colliery in the Rhondda Valley, Zipworld Tower <https://www.zipworld.co.uk/location/tower> has been established as an attraction to augment existing tourism opportunities.

During the engagement exercise people valued their local communities, town centres and high streets as the below extract shows:

*'Local businesses, the High Street and the Town Centre were all raised as important to economic wellbeing in the area. The High Street and Town Centre were referred to as the 'heart of the community'*

## Opportunities

- Covid has had an impact on businesses with many having to close. During the engagement activities it was suggested that more investment is needed in the High Streets, Town

Centres and local businesses generally, some local businesses responding to the survey reported being adversely affected by Covid. There are opportunities for businesses and the community to work together to support each other to support local.

- Suggestions for improving economic wellbeing during engagement included 'Bring industry in – not small units but large employers to generate more income and keep it local'. Suggesting that it is kept local provides for income to be earned as well as spent locally. This would help to improve the local economy and possibly improve wages. People also identified that local businesses were important to local culture, especially in less affluent areas.
- There was a concern that without good local job opportunities young people would migrate out of the area. It was important to those involved in the engagement activities that improved jobs and skills would bring more income to the local economy as well as retaining 'local talent' providing opportunities to younger people. This again can link to schools, further and higher education as well as the local businesses and Cardiff City Region skills partnership.

## Summary

The Economic pillar is a significant collection of data and analysis which shows that we have seen some progress despite a significantly challenging economic backdrop. What we do know is that the legacy of industrial development continues to present structural challenges as we have moved away to a different economic profile, and working collectively with government, business and trade unions there is an appetite to refocus our efforts to make the region attractive to invest, to work and start a business.

Our population face financial challenges with:

- Higher than average levels of economic inequality, where despite witnessing an increase in weekly pay across the region, weekly pay packets remain lower than the Welsh and UK average.
- Higher numbers of people claiming universal credit with a significant increase in 2020/21 which is likely to be attributed to the impact of Covid and the need to claim Universal Credit to either top up their earnings or if they have lost their employment.

We also know that despite having traditional challenges to us in how we can increase the number of people in work and reduce the rate of unemployment:

- We have over a four-year period seen some fluctuation in economic inactivity, with rates in RCT getting gradually better between 2017 and 2019 with Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil also improving in 2018 but then worsening again slightly in 2019.
- The data gives us confidence that with the right measures we can return to improved rates of activity that make the region more competitive than the Wales average.

In understanding our business footprint, and the potential for growth, we know for example that our region has:

- Seen growth in its base of construction enterprises over the three years from 2018
- Continued to be the home to those in the advanced manufacturing sector such as Sony
- An ambition to address public transportation to support those in work and seeking work
- Recognised that skills Development and the supply of an appropriately skilled workforce is a key driver of economic growth.
- Identified the importance of the natural beauty of the areas, valley's mountains, the coastline, including areas of specific scientific interest as we seek to attract investment for projects that can rely on our assets
- Seen the high streets in our towns continue to be popular with increasing footfalls and high rates of property occupancy demonstrating the value of local shops and services.

## The Environmental Pillar

### What do we know?

The CTM area remains characterised by an industrial legacy that has brought wealth and prosperity in the past but also associated impacts on health and the environment.

The natural resources, for example, water, coal, lumber that fuelled an industrial revolution has the capability to support a similar 'wellbeing' revolution that values the environment. There has for some time been a 'greening of the valleys' that aimed to tackle this industrial legacy. Bringing in its place, sites that are world class, green spaces that provide economic opportunities from tourism, havens for wildlife and places where communities can connect, supporting physical and wellbeing.

According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021:

- Wales is a world leader in household recycling, but we continue to use up resources faster than they can be replenished.
- Air quality has improved greatly since the 1970s but remains a risk to human health.
- Greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by nearly a third since the 1990s, despite some periods of increases. More rapid change will be needed in future to meet targets.
- Installed electrical capacity from renewable energy continues to increase but at a slower pace than in recent years.
- The latest comprehensive assessment of Welsh natural resources (SoNaRR) shows that overall, biological diversity is declining. Most habitat types have seen a reduction in diversity over the last 100 years, with the rate of decline increasing from the 1970s onwards.

There are a range of key indicators which highlight the importance of the environment including how people are able to make use of the outdoor spaces such as woodlands, coastal areas. The impact of the population on the environment such as recycling, waste and fly tipping, can also provide a regional view as to some of the challenges to be addressed along with some pressing issues of air quality and flooding. Both are substantial matters affecting not just this region but the whole of Wales.

### Introduction

In the first round of Wellbeing Assessments and Wellbeing Plans, climate change and the position regarding Wales' natural resources were significant matters for consideration.

Since that time, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change has published its sixth assessment report (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>) It states that:

*"It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred" and;*

*"Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has strengthened since the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)." and;*



*“Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered. Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.”*

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has produced the second State of Natural Resources Report (<https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/state-of-natural-resources-report-sonarr-for-wales-2020/?lang=en>). This report went further than the first report in 2016 and identified 4 main aims - Stocks of Natural Resources are Safeguarded and Enhanced; Ecosystems are Resilient to Expected and Unforeseen Change; Wales has Healthy Places for People, Protected from Environmental Risks; Contributing to a Regenerative Economy, Achieving Sustainable Levels of Production and Consumption.

In April 2019 Welsh Government declared a climate emergency, noting that climate change threatens our health, economy, infrastructure and our natural environment. A nature emergency was declared on 30 June 2021 which calls on Welsh Government to introduce legally binding requirements to reverse biodiversity loss through statutory targets.

Welsh Government have an ambition for the public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030 in response to climate change and the UK has a legally binding target to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050.

The impact of climate change is being felt across all aspects of the environment as is discussions of how we manage the environment and natural resources in the future, and so frames the discussion that follows. Reference has also been made to the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 Evidence Report- Summary for Wales. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/national-summaries/wales/>

At the time of drafting this report the impact from the United Nations Climate Change *Conference of the Parties* (COP26) is not known but is likely to have an effect in the future.

## Overview

The CTM area remains characterised by an industrial legacy that has brought wealth and prosperity in the past but also associated impacts on health and the environment. The natural resources, for example, water, coal, lumber that fuelled an industrial revolution has the capability to support a similar ‘wellbeing’ revolution that values the environment.

There has for some time been a ‘greening of the valleys’ that aimed to tackle this industrial legacy. Bringing in its place, sites that are world class, green spaces that provide economic opportunities from tourism, havens for wildlife and places where communities can connect, supporting physical and mental wellbeing. The CTM coastline has also seen similar improvement and is recognised for its high quality of amenity.

NRW produced environmental information packs for the first wellbeing assessments. Since that time it has developed the Wales Environmental Information Portal ([NRW map view /data portal](#)) together with a corresponding portal ([SMNR data /storymap](#)) which links to the opportunities for meeting environmental challenges.

These maps allow information to be interrogated. These maps are regularly updated and should provide a good entry point for discussion on the condition of the environment and opportunities. The maps within the initial assessment and the position in 2021 are broadly similar. The discussion that follows is, therefore, an assessment of considerations that are considered important for the development of the wellbeing assessment. Like the first assessment, it uses some national wellbeing data set (see Annex 1) supplemented by local information.



Collectively, this gives an overall picture identifying challenges for the CTM area, strengths and opportunities for the future.

## An assessment of environmental wellbeing

### Access and recreation

**The challenge:** *Providing more opportunities for safe access and recreation for all by using the natural assets of the CTM area can bring benefits not just to local communities but also the environment and the economy.*

There is evidence of how and why our relationship with nature is so important and beneficial to our mental health. How much we notice, think about, and appreciate our natural surroundings is critical in supporting good mental health and preventing distress.

(<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/nature/nature-research>). Such spaces need to be safer for users if we are to maximise the benefit.

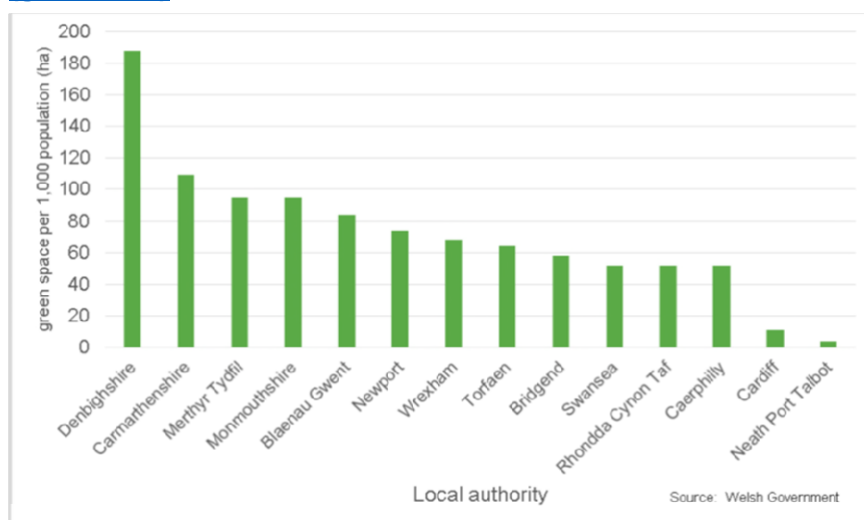
The CTM area has a significant amount of free, accessible space which has been dedicated through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. This includes public footpaths, public bridleways, restricted byways, and byways open to all traffic. People with sight and mobility issues are specifically mentioned by the CRoW Act and additional requirements of the Equality Act 2010 also apply (<https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/recreation-and-access-policy-advice-and-guidance/managing-access/public-rights-of-way/?lang=en>).

The CTM area has over 1,550 km of public rights of way.

The use of and proximity to accessible natural space is a key indicator of healthy places for people, free from environmental hazards. Within the CTM area, 67% of households in Bridgend, 57% in Merthyr and only 27% in Rhondda Cynon Taf live near accessible natural green space, that is within 300m walk of any site ([Welsh Government, Accessible natural greenspace standards by local authority, 2011](#)).

However, in Bridgend there is 58 (ha) of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 population, 52 (ha) in Rhondda Cynon Taf 11 (ha) and 95 (ha) in Merthyr Tydfil. Merthyr Tydfil has the third largest area by population in Wales ([WG, 2011](#)). The opportunity for better access to green space in Merthyr Tydfil is significant. It also has 15 Green Flag and Green Flag Community awards for green spaces ([Green Flag Awarded Sites 2020/21](#)). The picture for the whole CTM area is shown later in this report.

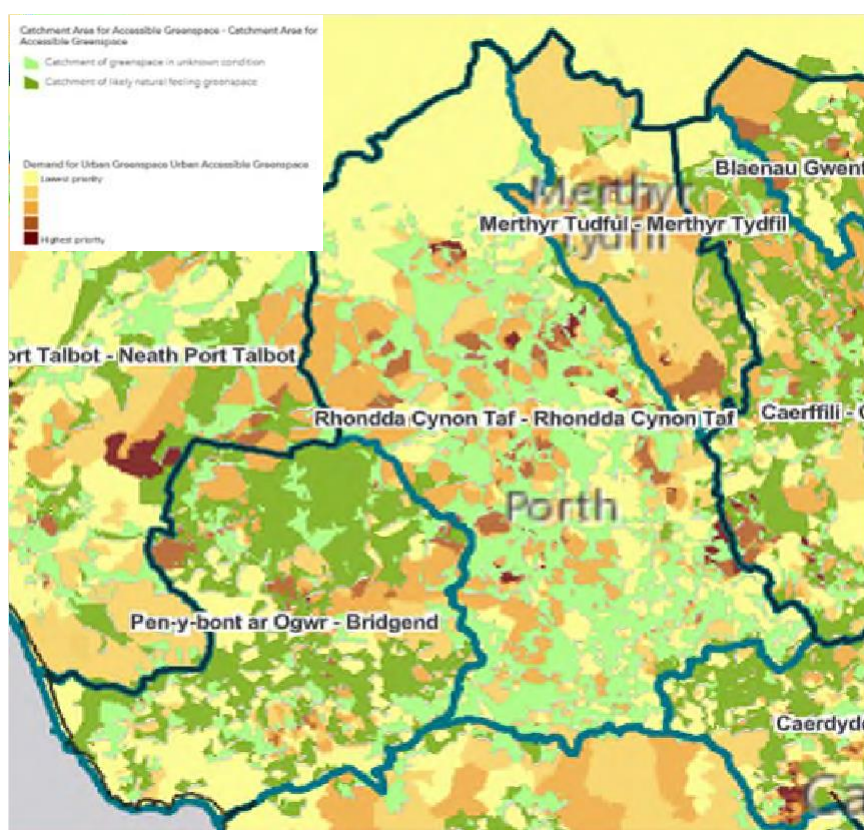
**Chart 88:** [Welsh Government, Accessible natural greenspace standards by local authority \(gov.wales\)](#)



<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/State-of-the-Environment/Our-Local-Environment/AccessibleNaturalGreenspaceStandards-by-LocalAuthority>

This feature of access to natural green space being unequal is a challenge for the CTM area.

The map below (Source NRW – Welsh Information for Nature-based Solutions (WINS), Green Infrastructure) shows greenspace accessibility according to the number of people and the overall deprivation in the area. The map below (Source NRW – Welsh Information for Nature-based Solutions (WINS), Green Infrastructure)- shows greenspace accessibility according to the number of people and the overall deprivation in the area.



In the first Wellbeing Plans, the significance of green, open space for people's physical and mental wellbeing was identified. Its significance was reinforced during the COVID 19 Pandemic.

In the Bridgend PSB Green and Open Space Survey

(<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/9802/bridgend-public-service-board-open-and-green-spaces-survey-infographic-2020.pdf>) and a similar study for the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) (survey detail is shown later in the VRP section) there was a clear view that people visited green and open space more frequently during lockdown, that such space had been more important, green space close to their homes was appreciated and had helped with personal mental health and to better appreciate nature.

This has similarly been borne out in a report covering England, Scotland and Wales that outlines how nature helped with mental wellbeing during the pandemic. The research also showed that socio-economic factors play an important role in who is visiting natural spaces, with adults on lower incomes, with lower education, the unemployed and those living in the most deprived areas making fewer visits. (<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/why-society-needs-nature-lessons-from-research-during-covid-19/>).

Positive change in behaviour during the pandemic has been corroborated in mobile telephone data. Analysis by local authority area shows how mobility patterns changed with a significant

upward trend on visiting parks, public gardens and beaches.

(<https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>)

Further insights in to where there were positive benefits came from a survey commissioned by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC), together with food charity The Food Foundation. It found a number of social and environmental changes during lockdown, including people valuing food more and noticing cleaner air, with only 9% of Brits wanting a total return to “normal” after lockdown. <https://www.thersa.org/press/releases/2019/brits-see-cleaner-air-stronger-social-bonds-and-changing-food-habits-amid-lockdown>

Despite there being an undeniable challenge in getting more people across Wales to benefit from being outdoors, there are many examples in the CTM area where positive inroads are being achieved. These are viewed as strengths.

The sand dunes along CTM coast highlight how in a single place, environmental, cultural, economic and recreation can, with careful management, co-exist. The sand dunes at Kenfig between the south edge of Swansea Bay between Port Talbot and Porthcawl have a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation. It has a number of coastal and species feature but only one marine feature – Atlantic salt meadows. Although only representing 2% of the site, the latter is rare along that coast and has an indicative unfavourable condition due to livestock grazing and litter. <https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/684390/kenfig-sac-ica-2018.pdf>. The site has a history of military use as well as providing a significant place for recreation and access. The Sand of LIFE, <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/nature-projects/sands-of-life/?lang=en> covers Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr in the CTM area as well other sand dune systems across Wales.

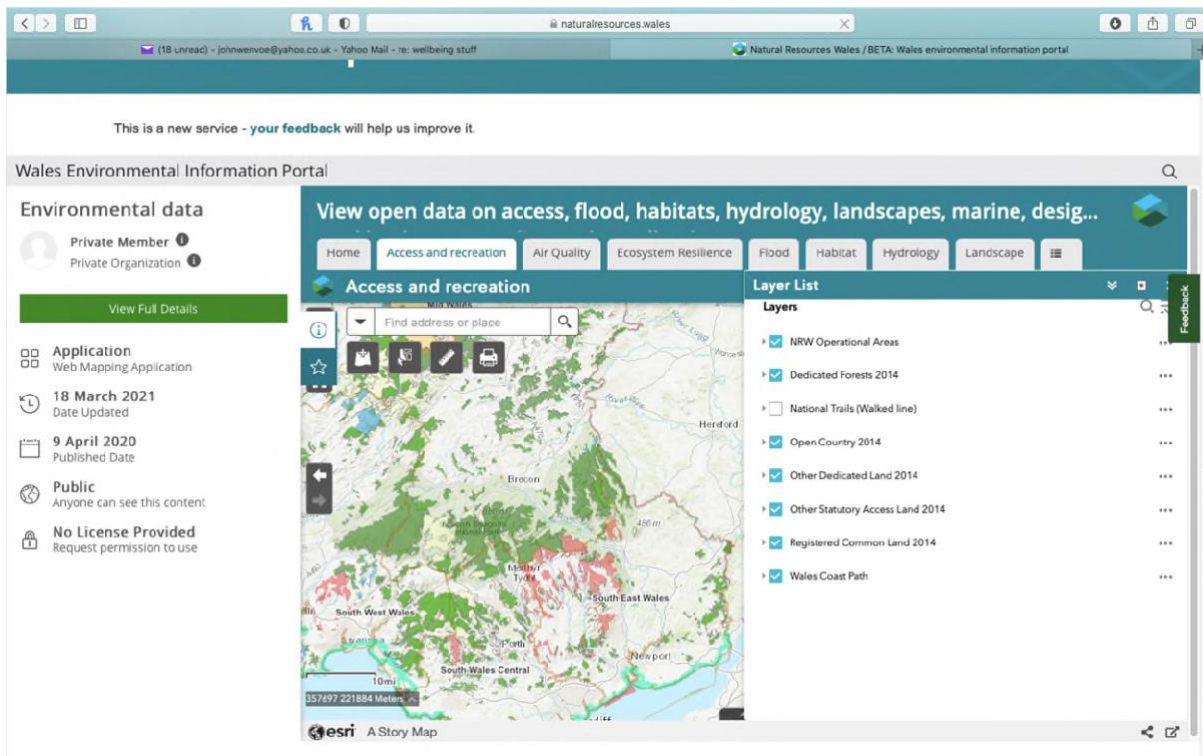
It has been estimated that there have been £18.2 million in health benefits to people and £2,870 million in tourism to Wales from people walking the All-Wales Coast Path. (State of Natural Resources Report 2016)

The 12m/19km section of the All-Wales Coast Path that stretches along the south of the CTM area brings economic benefits to the Bridgend area and beyond. Sections in the west include the sand dunes of Kenfig Burrows and Merthyr Mawr Warren in the east, with a rich and varied biodiversity and opportunities for amenity.

There is always the challenge of achieving a balance between experiencing the wildness of nature, with for example, shifting sand dunes and accessibility. Along the Bridgend stretch at Rest Bay, there is a section with 1km of boardwalk with surfaced paths and pavements which allows for access to a wider group of users.

There are clear opportunities for even more people to benefit from the advantage of being outdoors, improving the experience for users and visitors and generating more income for the local economy.

Opportunities do not just exist with the All-Wales Coast Path. The NRW Environmental Information Portal has an interactive map shown below for Access and Recreation. This allows greater analysis of the existing areas for recreation but also can help identify opportunities in the future.



It follows that the quality of the environment is important. The Green Flag is the international mark of quality for a park or green space with the corresponding Community Green Flag recognising the strength of volunteering.

In Wales, in 2020, 224 parks and green spaces received Green Flag and Green Flag Community Awards. <https://www.keepwalestidy.cymru/pages/category/greenflag>

Within the CTM area, 13 sites received Green Flag Awards and 21 sites were awarded Green Flag Community Awards. Such sites not only provide a place for recreation and economic generation but also provide opportunities to support flora and fauna in the face of the challenges from climate change and nature emergencies.

**Green Flag Awards 2020**

Aberdare Park, Taff's Well Park, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.  
Bryngarw Country Park, Coychurch Crematorium, Maesteg Welfare Park,  
Wildness Lake Portcawl, Glanrhyd Hospital.  
Cyfarthfa Park, Parc Taf Bargoed, Aberfan Cemetery, Thomastown Park,  
Garwnant Forest Centre.

Another mark of a 'gold standard' in 2020 is for bathing water quality in the area. Three Porthcawl beaches, Rest Bay, Trecco Bay and Sandy Bay have been recognised for their excellent bathing water quality over a four-year assessment period between 2017 to 2020 with minimal levels of pollution being recorded during monitoring. <https://gov.wales/bathing-water-list-wales-2020-html>

There are elements which may affect the pollution levels from various catchments in the area including agricultural, urban and industrial areas into the River Ogmore. There is a risk from heavy rainfall overwhelming the sewerage system resulting in emergency storm overflows being utilised to prevent flooding to properties in the area. Additionally, there are 'storm outfalls' which discharge into the River Ogmore which can cause pollution levels to increase. Both these events would result



in potential for an adverse effect on bathing water following periods of heavy rainfall. There is a project underway as indicated below:

*'A project known as Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) is underway to install telemetry on Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) within 2km of a bathing water by 2020 so that Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) know when the CSOs are operating and can work to reduce spills. One CSO near Rest Bay Porthcawl is included in the project' (Natural Resources Wales)*

The ongoing work to ensure bathing water quality is maintained is a good indication that the environmental impacts are minimised through good pollution management.

Water quality in the CTM area is discussed elsewhere in this document.

There are many examples of opportunities where positive steps are occurring to address the wellbeing of people through, for example, social prescribing and the improvement of the environment. Bringing more people and nature closer together has been a feature of previous Wellbeing Plans.

One example which appears to have gone from strength to strength is 'Welcome To Our Woods' (<https://welcometoourwoods.org>), an instance of where the natural assets, in this case the Welsh Government Woodland Estate in the Upper Rhondda Fawr, can be brought closer to the local community. This is a partnership of local private sector businesses and landowners, statutory government and agencies, voluntary sector organisations, local community groups and individuals who offer their time and skills. Sustainably managing local resources and local spaces for health, wellbeing, recreation, training and employment outcomes, their work focuses on finding solutions to overcome related social problems. As such it represents a different model of working.

There is scope to further exploration of how local people in the CTM area can be better connected to their surroundings.

One example is Skyline, a feasibility study, ([https://skyline.wales/sites/default/files/attachments/2019-11/skyline-final\\_1.pdf](https://skyline.wales/sites/default/files/attachments/2019-11/skyline-final_1.pdf)) involving communities in Treherbert, Ynysowen and Caerau. This examined mechanisms for delivering landscape-scale community land stewardship, which benefitted nature with a business model that would allow communities to break free from a culture of grant dependency.

The learning from Skyline is now being taken forward in a further study involving the community around Treherbert, the Welsh Government and NRW. The study will use the National TOMs Wales (<https://www.nationalsocialvaluetaaskforce.org/national-toms-wales>) which is designed to help organisations measure and maximise the social value they create. This work is specifically looking at co-designing a vision for a piece of forestry woodland, establishing a community forestry enterprise and the future transfer of forestry assets to the community. This would include economic rights from timber through an examination of social value. The learning could be applied elsewhere.

Stretching across the South Wales Valleys, the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) (<https://valleysregionalpark.wales/>), very much at the ideas stage at the time of the first Wellbeing Plans, is now launched. Learning from similar sites in mainland Europe, 5 of its 12 Discovery Sites (Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare; Cyfarthfa Park and Castle, Merthyr Tydfil; Bryngarw Country Park, Bridgend, Parc Slip Nature Reserve, Bridgend and Ynysangharad Park and National Lido, Pontypridd) are in the CTM area.

The aim of the VRP is to make the most of the wonderful landscape, natural resources, and cultural assets.

During the Covid pandemic there was a rise in the use of outdoor spaces as restrictions were put in place. The Valleys Regional Park Green Open Space survey undertaken between, July and September 2020, identified prior to the pandemic the majority of people mainly used country parks and woodlands followed by urban green spaces and common/open land. The majority of people responding to the survey stated they spent between 1 and 3 hours in the areas. Whilst there were a high number using cars to reach these destinations (45%) there were as many walking (44%) which, from an environmental perspective, is positive. Prior to lockdown 23% of respondents stated they used the areas daily and 33% 2-5 times per week. During lockdown this changed to 56% and 30% respectively. Using the open spaces more during lockdown the respondents (n421) also noted that they had become more aware of wildlife (53% strongly agreed; 29% agreed).

Whilst the survey was positive in respect of people engaging with their natural environment there was a high percentage (46%) who were disappointed with the 'behaviour of other users' such as littering and community safety. However, 50% of respondents (n416) would consider becoming a volunteer taking part in activities such as litter picking or tree planting in the open green spaces. Equally those who had a garden had made improvements including making their garden more wildlife friendly and installing a pond. The following link provides an infographic overview of findings <https://valleysregionalpark.wales/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/VRP-GREEN-SPACES-INFOGRAPHIC.pdf>

## Opportunities

The Community Engagement exercise identified green spaces (as well as safety and climate change) as being the most important issues when thinking about environmental wellbeing in the Area.

Green spaces and the outdoors, including parks, gardens and allotments, featured heavily in responses, identifying uses ranging from family time to running, dog walking and cycling. The feeling was that people were fortunate to have free and accessible access 'on our doorstep'.

The health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors were important and people stated how being able to access them during lockdown helped them to get through it. The same work drew attention to the concern that some green spaces were being lost to housing developments and the need to protect and maintain these areas was a priority for many.

In addition, accessibility was an issue with some green spaces being inaccessible to those with mobility issues. Whilst disabled people find nature good for mental wellbeing many felt excluded. The deaf community said accessing information through sign language was hard, transport links to green areas was poor and being able to use public transport is an issue for many.

Safety was important with regard to environmental wellbeing for many. Personal safety was raised, where some felt unsafe themselves or concerned for the safety of others, including children and partners/spouses.

The same exercise identified the opportunity of walking groups introducing people to their green spaces, thus connecting people and helping them learn about heritage and the area.

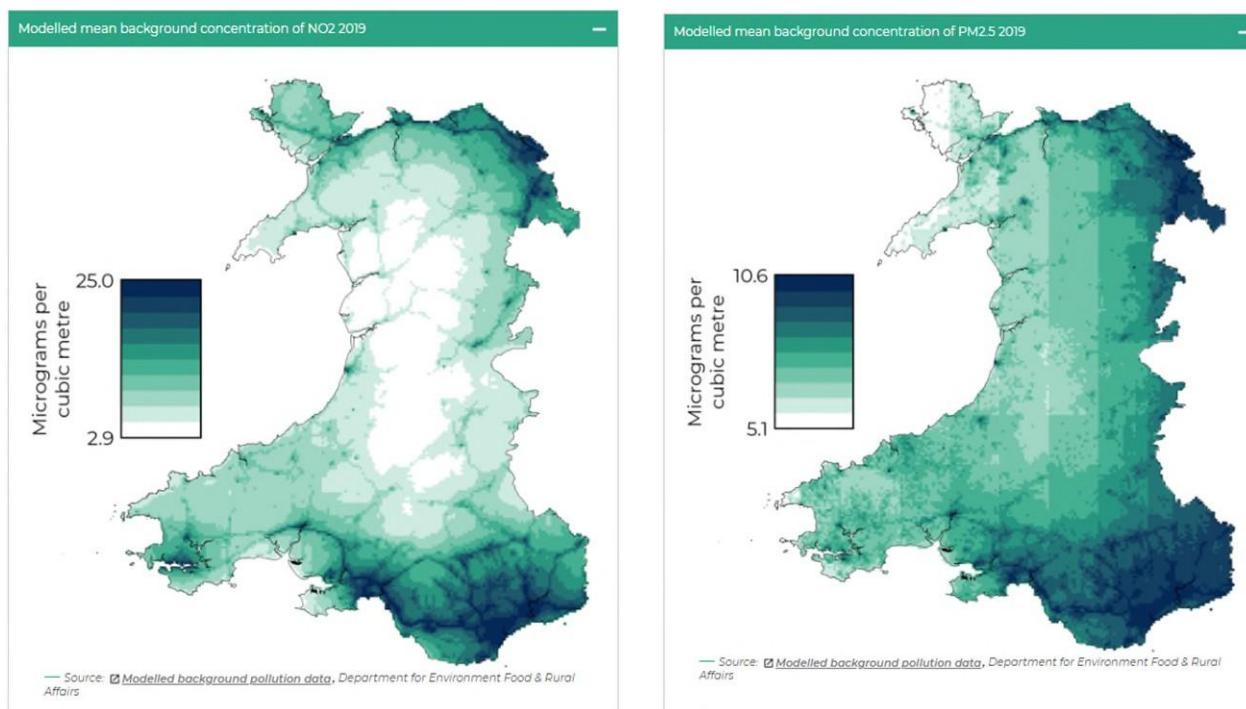
Safe access to green space has been identified as being important to the community and to some, the green natural landscape and the coast, are some of the best things about living in the area. There is an opportunity to further meet that need.

Information is available showing hot spots where people do not have ready access to green space or where pollution and noise may have elevated levels. Targeted interventions through 'opportunities mapping' may allow investment of funding or voluntary action.

## Air Quality

**The Challenge:** *Poor air quality has huge social costs through its impacts on health, and adverse effects on wildlife and biodiversity.*

Wales has some of the worst air quality in the UK. The air pollutants of greatest public health concern are particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>). The map below shows modelling background concentrations for NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> across Wales.



In Wales each year, the equivalent of around 1,604 deaths is attributed to PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure and 1,108 deaths to NO<sub>2</sub> exposure, (based on 2011/12 data; McCarthy and Brunt, 2018).

A wide range of adverse health effects have been linked to exposure to PM outdoors.

<https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/knowledge-directorate/research-and-evaluation/publications/making-a-difference-reducing-health-risks-associated-with-road-traffic-pollution-in-wales/>

There is no evidence of a safe level of exposure to PM, or a threshold below which no adverse health effects occur (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2013). Short-term exposure can result in eye, nose and throat irritation, asthma symptom exacerbation, and headaches and nausea. Long-term exposure increases morbidity and mortality risks from heart disease and strokes, respiratory diseases, lung cancer and as well as other harmful health effects (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2013).

It is not surprising that Public Health Wales described air quality as an urgent public health crisis, second only to smoking. They also recognise the link that air pollution has with poor health and deprivation. Researchers have described a 'triple jeopardy effect' (Brunt and Jones, 2019) at play – where those from a low socio-economic status are exposed to higher levels of pollution because of where they live or work. A 2016 study (Brunt et al), found air pollution to be higher in Wales' most deprived areas. It concluded that air pollution, deprivation and health are inextricably linked.



Not only are there inequalities of the impact of air pollution but it has been estimated that air pollution costs Wales £1 billion every year in terms of lost workdays and costs to the health service.

Road traffic emissions account for two-thirds of air pollution at urban monitoring sites. Road traffic produces PM and NO<sub>2</sub> from engine emissions, tyres and brake wear, re-suspended road dust and chemical reactions in the air. Air pollution from traffic causes a problem both locally and further away, as pollutants are able to travel long distances and spread over wide areas.

<https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/knowledge-directorate/research-and-evaluation/publications/making-a-difference-reducing-health-risks-associated-with-road-traffic-pollution-in-wales/>

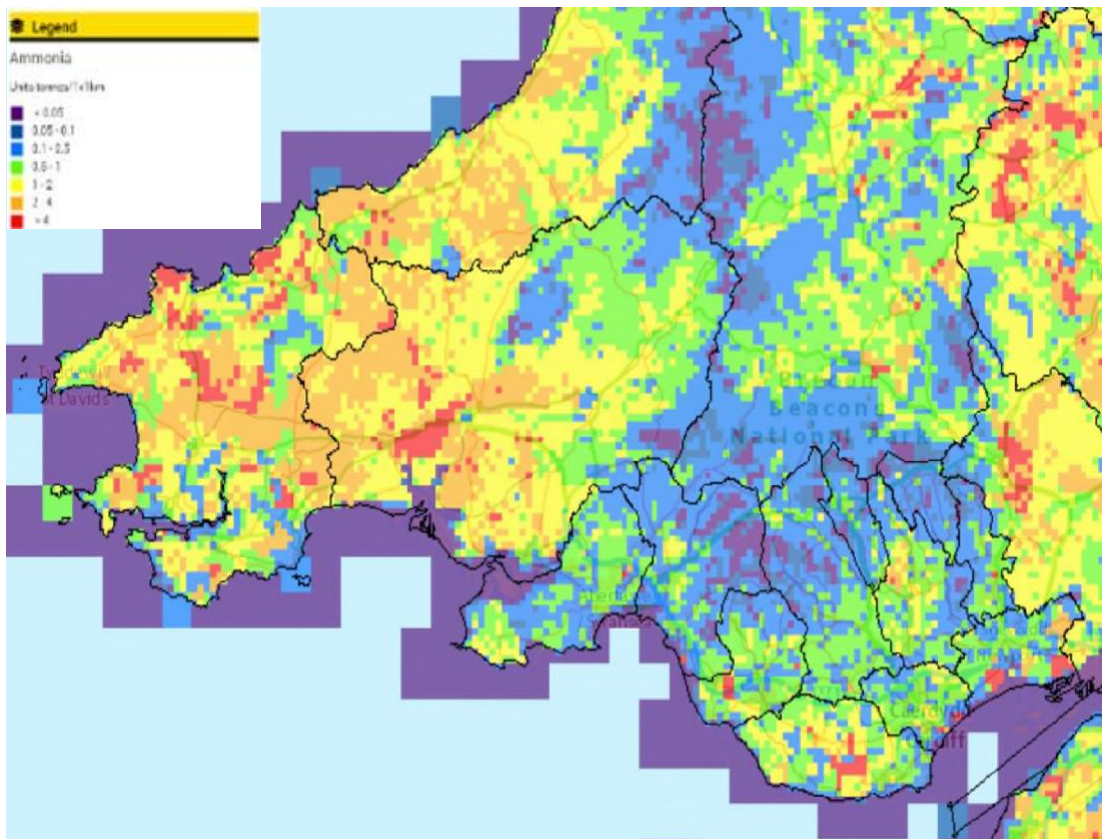
PM and NO<sub>2</sub> are not the only pollutants of concern. Concentrations of ammonia continue to steadily increase, impacting the natural balance of our ecosystems. Ammonia emissions can transform in the atmosphere and contribute to increased levels of particulate matter and ozone causing harm to human health. Agriculture contributes 85% of the total ammonia in Wales.

The National Wellbeing Indicators 2020 record that Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) decreased between 2010 and 2015, followed by a small increase between 2015 and 2016. In 2017 the concentration decreased again with 2018 recording the same average level as 2017.

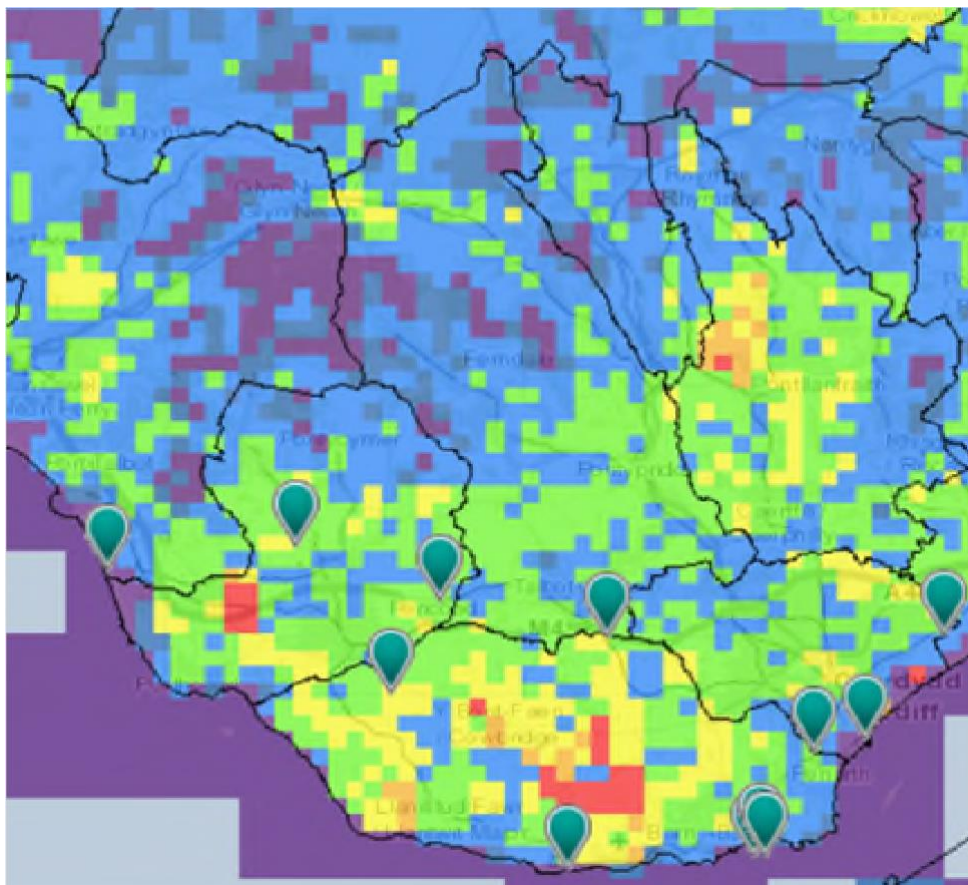
Poor local air quality and associated impacts on community wellbeing can also arise from wildfires. The CTM area has a history of wildfires. This is examined in a later section and the actions being taken through the Healthy Hillside project.

Using the [UK Emissions Interactive Map \(beis.gov.uk\)](https://beis.gov.uk) emissions data can be examined.

A hot spot for ammonia is shown in the Bridgend area.



(Source of information NRW)



(Source of information NRW)

For the vast majority of the CTM area, air quality is good.

However, there are a number of locations where Air Quality Management Areas have been declared. This is where the levels of N02 exceed the National Air Quality Objective. There is one in Bridgend (<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/equalities-and-engagement/consultations/closed-consultations/park-street-air-quality-management-area/>), one in Merthyr Tydfil (<https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/resident/pests-pollution-food-hygiene/air-pollution>) and sixteen in Rhondda CynonTaf (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Business/LicencesandPermits/Pollutionrelatedlicences/Airquality.aspx>)

All are associated with busy urban road junctions.

### Opportunities

There are opportunities to tackle this problem through promoting and implementing active travel and sustainable transport solutions.

Undertaking shorter journeys such as trips to shops or schools by walking and cycling has a return of £8 for £1 invested. For longer journeys, use of public transport, together with walking and cycling also supports improvement. Linking places where people live and work through walking and cycling infrastructure has a return of £10 for every £1 invested. There are incentive schemes such as corporate low emission travel plans like cycle to work schemes which have a return £6 for every £1 invested.

Reducing urban speed limits from 30mph to 20mph would reduce PM emissions, crash casualties and fatalities as well as supporting better community cohesion. <https://phw.nhs.wales/services->

[and-teams/knowledge-directorate/research-and-evaluation/publications/making-a-difference-reducing-health-risks-associated-with-road-traffic-pollution-in-wales/](#)

## Soundscapes and Noise Pollution

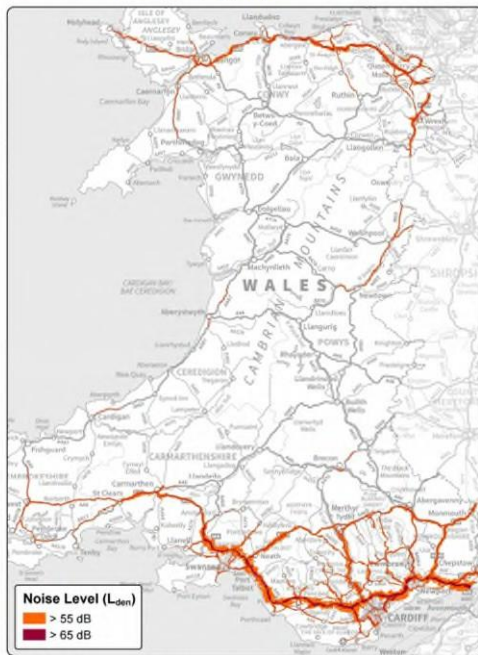
**The challenge:** *Noise is increasingly becoming a concern for people and their wellbeing.*

In urban areas across Wales, 27% of people are bothered by noise ([National Survey for Wales, 2018](#)). Those who were bothered by noise were far less likely to be satisfied with their accommodation.

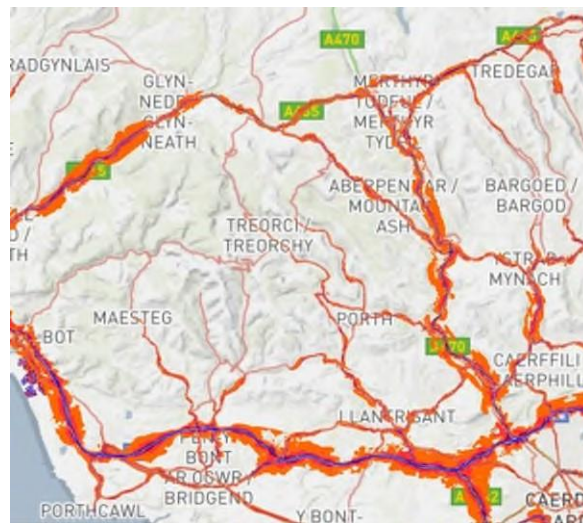
However, this is not the principal underlying cause. Road traffic is the major contributor to urban noise, and greater noise levels are recorded in deprived areas ([SoNaRR, 2020](#)). South Wales has noise pollution hotspot in and around Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. Noise pollution increases the risk of ill health and poor quality of life. After air pollution, noise causes the second highest pollution-related burden of disease in Europe, and is responsible for more life years lost than lead, ozone or dioxins ([Environment Agency, 2021](#)).

[Noise from Major Road 2017, Welsh Gov Noise and Soundscape Action Plan](#)

Map 2 Noise from major roads (2017)



Noise from Road Traffic noise (dB) and Industrial Noise (dB) (LAeq 16hr 2017) Environmental Noise



## Flooding

**Challenge:** *to reduce the risk to people and business from the impacts of flooding*

The most acute impacts of climate change are often felt during extreme meteorological events such as heavy rain and snow, droughts, heatwaves, cold waves, and storms. These can lead to or exacerbate other high impact events such as flooding, landslides, wildfires, and avalanches. In 2018, 61% of all internal displacements were triggered by weather-related disasters. (Evidence base of long-term trends for UK policy makers, Spring 2021" UK Trend Deck Spring 2021 (published 28 June 2021)



Flooding has a significant negative and lasting impact on people's mental and physical wellbeing, their homes and their businesses. The extreme weather that causes flooding also has other adverse impacts on the wider landscape due to landslides. Infrastructure that all communities rely on such as roads, bridges, rail networks, public services and public buildings can be affected. It was recognised as a challenge in the first Wellbeing Plans and areas at risk were identified.

Over 40,000 properties (>10,000 properties in Bridgend CBC; >5,000 in Merthyr Tydfil CBC and > 25,000 in Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC ) are at some level of risk from flooding. This number is almost certain to increase under climate change projections.

**Table 55: Flood Risk**

| Flood Risk Summary in CTM  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Bridgend   | Merthyr Tydfil  | Rhondda Cynon Taf   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3,147 residential properties are at risk of fluvial flooding (369 at high risk)</li> <li>• 6,053 residential properties are at risk of surface water flooding (1872 at high risk)</li> <li>• 632 residential properties are at risk of tidal flooding (32 at high risk)</li> <li>• Surface water flooding is the source with the largest number of properties at high risk with 2066 (1872 residential and 194 non-residential)</li> <li>• *Approximately 1,100 non-residential properties are at risk of either fluvial, tidal or surface water flooding.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 918 residential properties are at risk of fluvial flooding (90 at high risk)</li> <li>• 3,963 residential properties are at risk of surface water flooding (1707 at high risk)</li> <li>• Surface water flooding is the source with the largest number of properties at high risk with 2129 (1707 residential and 422 non-residential)</li> <li>• *Approximately 650 non-residential properties are at risk of either fluvial, tidal or surface water flooding.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5909 residential properties are at risk of fluvial flooding (692 at high risk)</li> <li>• 18,853 residential properties are at risk of surface water flooding (7730 at high risk)</li> <li>• Surface water flooding is the source with the largest number of properties at high risk with 8472 (7730 residential and 742 non-residential)</li> <li>• *Approximately 2450 non-residential properties are at risk of either fluvial, tidal or surface water flooding.</li> </ul> |

**Note:**

The numbers of properties at risk may vary over time; they will reduce with new flood alleviation schemes and other improvements to standards of protection; and with improved modelling techniques and local modelling (generally the responsibility of NRW), numbers may increase or decrease.

The geography and topography of the CTM area heavily influences the risk from flooding. It is important to note that surface water flooding can impact those outside of traditional river floodplains and as such people may be unaware of the risk.

The Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC area is largely characterised by steep sided valleys, with the many communities forming almost continual linear urban areas along the narrow valley floors and lower slopes. The many tributaries and consequently, the main rivers (Rhondda, Cynon and Taff) have a rapid response to heavy rainfall events. Many of the watercourses running off the hillsides are culverted beneath the communities (including key infrastructure) prior to main river entry. The

reduction of culvert conveyance capacity due to the build-up of debris plus the exceedance of channel capacity during heavy rainfall events are significant issues.

The greatest flood risk source almost throughout the area is from surface water; the community areas of Pentre, Treorchy, Treherbert, Rhydfelin, Penygraig, Tonypany and Blaenrhondda are all in the top 20 ranked areas in Wales at risk from surface water flooding. Pentre is ranked as most at risk of surface water flooding in Wales, with Treorchy 3rd.

Community areas at significant risk of fluvial (river) flooding are Pentre, Treorchy and Aberdare.

When the surface water and fluvial flood risks are considered together there are 9 community areas in the top 50 (out of 2000+ in Wales); Pentre, Treorchy, Treherbert, Rhydfelin, Aberdare, Penygraig, Blaenrhondda, Trycynon and Tonypany.

In the Merthyr Tydfil CBC area, there are several community areas at significant flood risk. For fluvial flood risk, there are 3 areas in the top 100, Merthyr Tydfil, Troedyrhiw and Merthyr Vale. For surface water flood risk, there are 5 in the top 100, Merthyr Tydfil, Troedyrhiw, Abercanaid, Pentrebach and Cefn-coed -y -cymmer. The combined risks from fluvial and surface water ranks Merthyr Tydfil and Troedyrhiw as 6th and 16th most at risk in Wales.

In the Bridgend CBC area, the community most at risk of tidal flooding is Porthcawl – ranked 16th in Wales.

There are 5 community areas – Maesteg, Dyffryn, Ogmores, Bridgend and Pencoed in the top 100 ranked communities for both fluvial and surface water flood risk. (Source of data NRW's Communities at Risk Register 2019).

However, since the last wellbeing assessment there has been significant flooding across the CTM area. During February and March 2020 Wales was hit by four major storms which had a significant impact on communities.

In the local authority areas covering Bridgend, 29 properties were flooded, in Merthyr Tydfil it was 225 but the most significant impact was within Rhondda Cynon Taf where 1,576 properties were inundated with flood waters.

The cost within Rhondda Cynon Taf alone was estimated to be in excess of £91m. It is felt that as the UK climate becomes significantly wetter, warmer and unpredictable as a result of climate change, very extreme weather events will be more likely in the near future.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2020/12/18/Reports/Item6ReviewoftheCouncilsResponsetoStormDennis.pdf>

Through local community engagement campaigns, areas at risk of flooding have been encouraged to produce their own Catchment Flood Plans. The plans are voluntary, community led and supported by NRW. There are 4 active plans within the Bridgend area involving a total of 219 properties - at Pyle, Bridgend (Llyss Faen and the Beeches) and 2 at Pencoed (Heol y Croes and Penybont). There are 3 in RCT, Ynysddu (Pontyclun), Treorchy and Robertstown covering in total only 6 properties. There are no community plans in the Merthyr Tydfil area.

Getting communities engaged and better prepared for the possibility of flooding is a long-term aim. Home or business owners whose properties are at risk of flooding can receive NRW warning messages by phone, email or text message in the event of possible flooding.

The number of properties / addresses signed up and % of properties receiving the flood warning service within NRW's Flood Warning Areas is:

- Merthyr Tydfil area: 533 – 30.9%
- Bridgend area: 1879 – 48%

- Rhondda Cynon Taff area: 5017 – 63%

NRW's Area Statement for South Wales Central sets out how, in one of its four priorities, Working with Water, it is looking to work with others for catchment restoration interventions to work alongside our physical flood defences, reducing the peaks in flow and where possible, the need for additional or larger more expensive physical flood defences, together with preparing for the increased risk of flooding.

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/south-central-wales-area-statement/introduction-to-south-central-area-statement/?lang=en>

Parts of the CTM area are coastal and as such at risk from flooding from the sea.

Maps have been produced by Climate Central predicting possible scenarios of the impact of climate change on the coastline. In one scenario if there is a predicted global temperature rise of two degrees, parts of the area around Porthcawl might be under water by 2030.

[https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/9/-2.9198/51.2952/?theme=sea\\_level\\_rise&map\\_type=year&basemap=roadmap&contiguous=true&elevation\\_model=best\\_available&forecast\\_year=2030&pathway=rcp45&percentile=p50&return\\_level=return\\_level\\_1&slr\\_model=kopp\\_2014](https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/9/-2.9198/51.2952/?theme=sea_level_rise&map_type=year&basemap=roadmap&contiguous=true&elevation_model=best_available&forecast_year=2030&pathway=rcp45&percentile=p50&return_level=return_level_1&slr_model=kopp_2014)

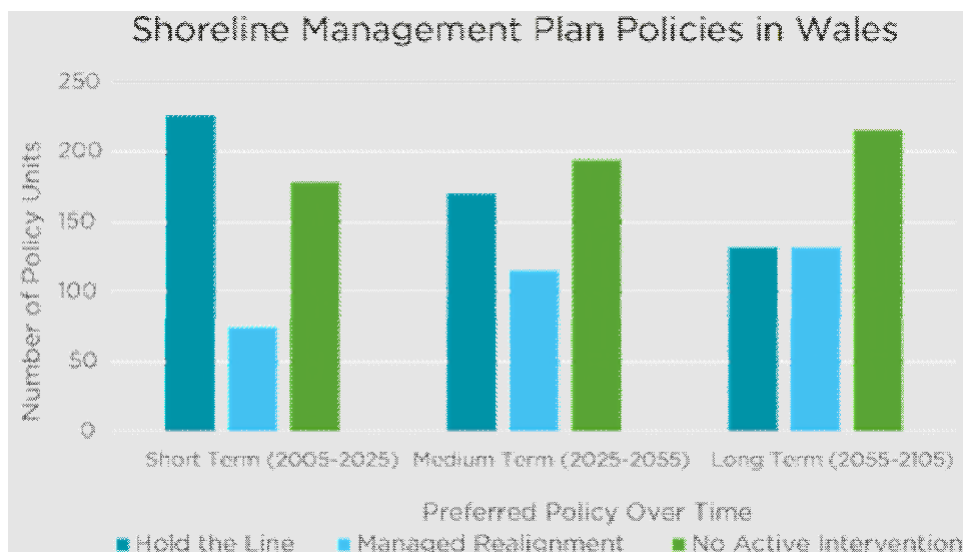
It should be noted that Climate Central's Sea level rise and coastal flood maps are based on peer-reviewed science in leading journals. The map has a qualifying statement that, as these maps incorporate big datasets which always include some error, these maps should be regarded as screening tools to identify places that may require deeper investigation of risk.

Shoreline Management Plans are high-level plans that set out where we should continue to defend the coastline and where it would be more sustainable to adapt over time.

(<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/marine-area-statement/nature-based-solutions-and-adaptation-at-the-coast/?lang=en>) They explain how the coastline should be managed over the short-term (2005-2025), the medium-term (2025-2055) and the long-term (2055-2105) with one of the following management policies for each period of time:

- **Hold the line** by maintaining or changing the existing standard of protection
- **Advance the line** by extending new defences into the sea (none applied in Wales)
- **Managed realignment** which allows the shoreline to move backwards and forwards, with management to control or limit the movement
- **No active intervention** where there is no investment in coastal defences and natural processes are allowed

The figure below demonstrates the preferred management policies across the three time periods. It clearly illustrates the planned shift from continuing to defend to a more adaptive approach in some locations.

**Chart 89: Shoreline Management**

Where there are planned changes to 'managed realignment' or 'no active intervention', sections of coast will lose their current protection. Difficult decisions will need to be made and significant evidence gathering, engagement and resource investment is required to begin preparing for coastal adaptation.

Newton near Porthcawl is considered potentially at risk and concern has been raised at the prospect of no longer protecting properties after 25 years. Inevitably there will be issues of anxiety for those living in communities that will no longer be defended.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/sea-defences-eventually-fail-newton-8181728>. Key to how the situation moves forward will be the engagement of those potentially affected.

Coastal defences are being improved in the area. At Porthcawl, work has begun on a new £6.4m scheme that will defend Porthcawl from flooding and any potential future rise in sea levels (<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/news/work-to-begin-on-porthcawl-s-64m-flood-defence-scheme/>

Many flood defences already provide an important access and recreation opportunity. Moving forward there are opportunities to design in habitat and associated environmental features into such essential infrastructure. Such nature-based solutions, unlike traditional solutions, can provide many other benefits. For instance, we can replenish beaches or protect saltmarshes as a way of defending our coast. This approach can simultaneously create habitats for wildlife, protect carbon stores, be places for us to enjoy and can attract tourism to boost local economies. Saltmarshes, in particular, are important habitats and incredibly efficient carbon stores, making them potentially very useful in our efforts to combat climate change.

There are also 'hybrid approaches' which can bridge the gap between green and grey infrastructure. Examples of this include installing structures on the sea-facing side of an existing defence to trap sediment and encourage saltmarsh growth. This saltmarsh then protects the defence structure as well as providing other benefits for the ecosystem.

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/marine-area-statement/nature-based-solutions-and-adaptation-at-the-coast/?lang=en>

This is an example of how nature-based solutions can address challenges such as flooding in an adaptive way that provides wellbeing and biodiversity benefits.

In addition to the large schemes there are many local initiatives that can be effective in tackling flooding. Two examples in RCT are looking at natural ways we can tackle the effects of Climate Change.

- the 'Pretty Ponty' rain garden scheme in Mill Street, which is funded by the Welsh Government Town Centre Initiative, and
- managing Pant Marsh, near Y Pant school, Pontyclun, to maintain this important floodplain.

Source. Draft RCT Corporate Performance Report 2021-22

## Opportunities

The changing climate and the devastating effect of flooding was reinforced through the community engagement work. People were worried about the impact on their standard of living as a result of climate change and future flood events. Already floods had impacted on homes, businesses and the environment.

*I don't know if it's climate change but those floods were awful and I think we're going to see more of them but I can't afford to move* was one comment.

Many wanted to see more investment in flood prevention.

Totally removing the risk of flooding is not possible and so adaptation, developing greater community and business resilience will be key features of how we move forward. Understanding the extent of the risk by modelling the whole water catchment will be an important factor in planning for the future. This will examine the headwater, valley sides, the opportunity for green infrastructure within urban environments as well as traditional flood defences. There will be the inevitable considerations for ongoing maintenance and cost, and this will need to be agreed at the time developments are proposed.

The updated guidance (Technical Advice Note 15) with flood maps showing both current and future risk is likely to be available in June 2023. This will allow decision makers to identify the areas that are at the risk of flooding now and in the future.

There is a significant need to better understand how catchments react within extreme meteorological events. One significant area of work will be centred around the River Taff catchment following the floods of 2020.

Opportunities for natural flood management will be explored. This is whereby working with nature (nature-based solutions) land can be better managed so that soil can absorb more water or salt marshes on the coast can be created to absorb wave energy. This has assisted with protecting communities and enhancing habitat for nature.

Building resilience within communities will enable them to become better prepared for potential flooding.

## Water health

**The Challenge:** *improving the quality of our rivers is important for people and making nature more resilient to change*

Water health (quality) in rivers and along the coast is a good indicator of the condition of the wider environment. The importance of clean rivers for people is recognised as it supports a significant



number of outdoor activities ranging from angling to boating and general recreation. There are, therefore, close links to human wellbeing and the economy.

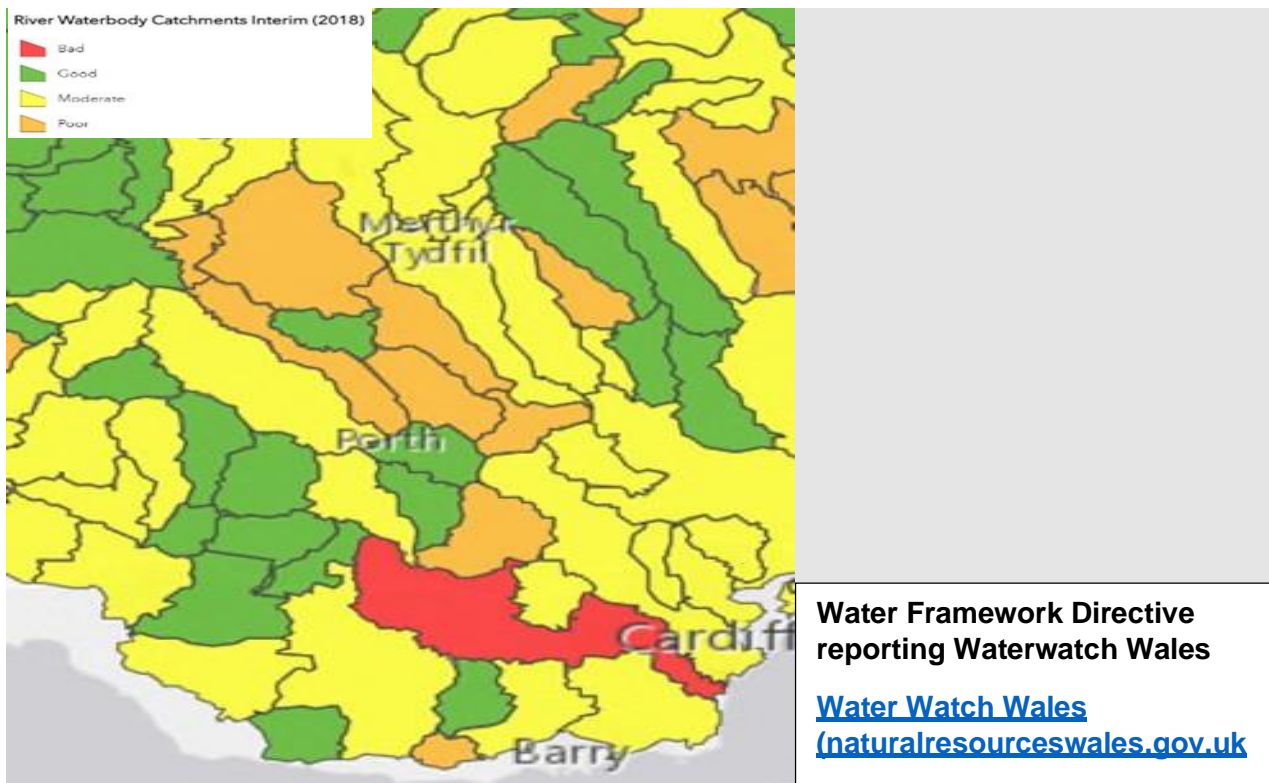
The system for classifying the health of a water body (rivers, canals, lakes, estuaries, and coastal waters) is based around a consideration of what is termed Good Ecological Status (GES). The range is from 'Good', to Moderate, to Poor to 'Bad'. The elements that make up GES include consideration of biological elements such as the presence of fish, macro invertebrates and chemical components such as ammonia and dissolved oxygen. The more diverse a water ecosystem, the healthier it is. This means it is more likely to be able to respond to change in the future and continue provide benefits for people and the environment.

There are a total of 26 waterbodies within the CTM area. These are located within 5 separate catchments associated with the rivers Ogmore, Ewenny, Kenfig, Ely and Taff.

The health of water bodies in CTM is shown in the table and map below.

| Water Body Health (GES) in CTM |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Good                           | 6  |
| Moderate                       | 11 |
| Poor                           | 8  |
| Bad                            | 1  |

Information source NRW



The reasons for not achieving Good Ecological Status are due to low fish and invertebrate populations. The causes are primarily due to physical modifications including barriers to migration but also poor habitat, sedimentation and natural processes. Other causes are organic pollution from both diffuse and point sources, including agriculture and misconnections in the sewerage

system ([Water Watch Wales](#)). Data for pollution incidents across the CTM broken down by local authority is shown later in this section.

The worst of these rivers are within the Ely and Taff catchments – the Afon Clun is one of only three rivers in Wales with a Bad ecological status ([Water Watch Wales](#)) and they have been identified by NRW as a focus for attention for the next 7 years. The work will tackle physical modifications and improvement to habitat and water quality. A particular focus for attention will be the excessive releases (spilling) from combined sewer overflows (CSO).

Data from the Rivers Trust shows there were significant times for spilling in 2020. Lanelay Park CSO spilled 127 times for a total of 433 hours, Penygawsi CSO spilled 45 times for a total of 199 hours and Rhiwsaeson Wastewater Treatment Works spilled 239 times for a total of 2657 hours. ([Rivers Trust, 2020](#)).

Such practices are not unique to the CTM area and legal and illegal discharges of sewage are a concern across Wales and the UK. (<https://www.riverstrust.org/key-issues/sewage-in-rivers>). The map below illustrates the large number of discharge points.

**The Rivers Trust map of Discharge points** [Is my river fit to play in? \(arcgis.com\)](#)  
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e834e261b53740eba2fe6736e37bbc7b/>



Pollution can affect a water body in two main ways. One situation is where the impact is sudden and severe, and the other is where the impact may be relatively minor but the impact over a longer time can be devastating. This is often referred to as ‘death by a thousand cuts’.

Within the CTM area, between 2016 and 2020, RCT has had the largest number (402) of reported environmental pollution incidents. 10% of these incidents were High – Significant impact.

The figures for Bridgend were 203, and in Merthyr Tydfil it was 76. The likelihood is that the impact would be felt across the river catchment and not confined to a specific area.

Map showing the number of pollution incidents substantiated by NRW within each local authority in 2019.

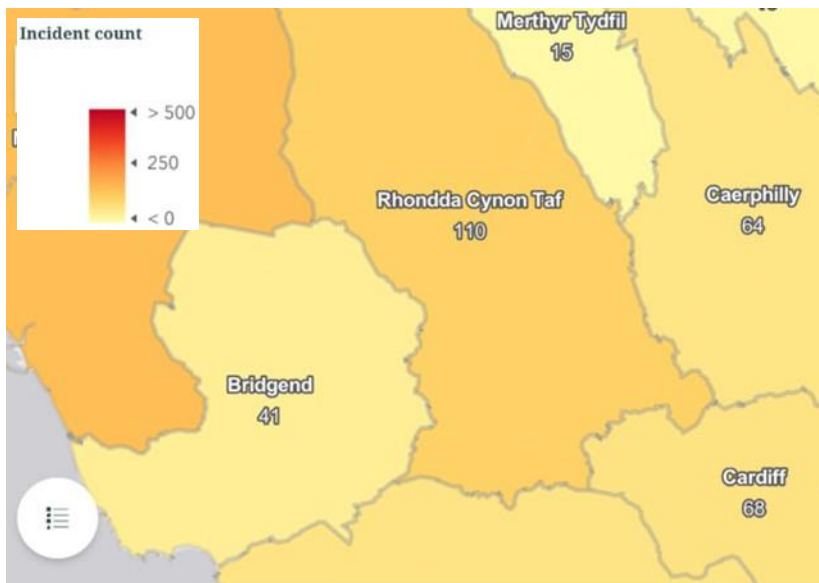
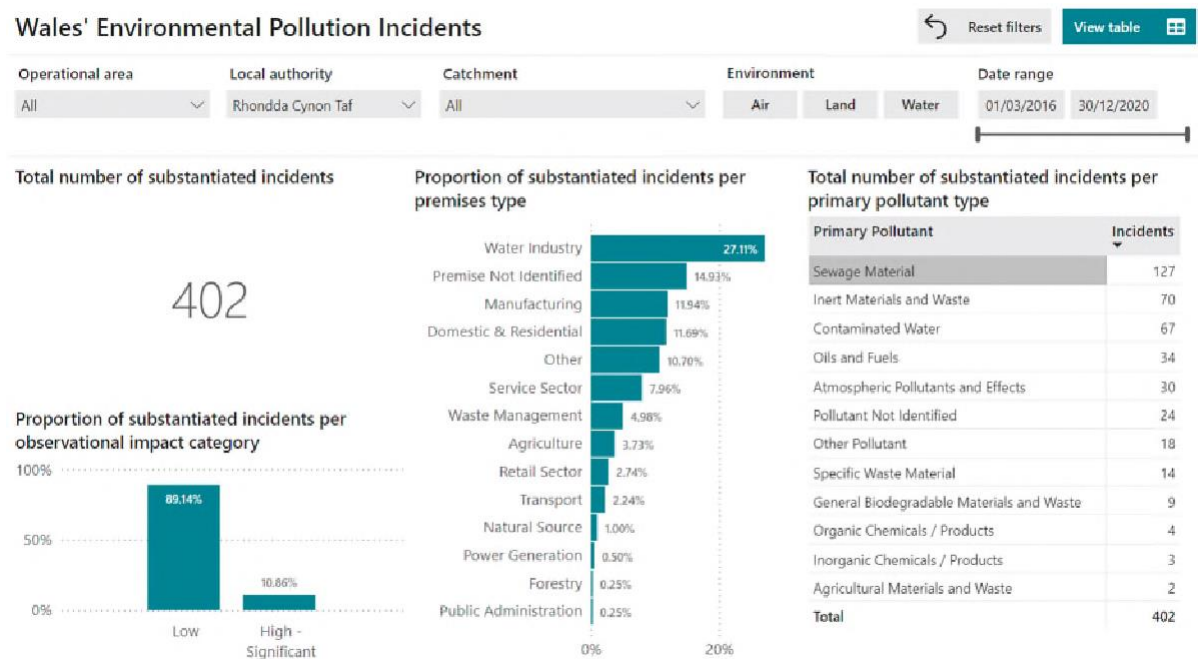


Chart 90: Environmental Pollution



Although there has been a period of recovery from the area's industrial past which has seen an improvement in water health, new sources of pollutants from a growing urbanisation have occurred. Microplastics have been found within the water environment in the Taff catchment showing that plastics have been transferred from prey to predator and adult to offspring.

Plastic concentrations were higher in more urban areas. (D'Souza et al. 2020). Again, this is not unique to the CTM area and demonstrates the wide and diffuse impacts of an urban environment on the health of freshwater ecosystems.

As can be seen, the picture of water health is mixed across the CTM area. Six of the twenty-six water bodies (23%) are in good ecological status whilst over a third are in a Poor or Bad condition meaning their capacity to be resilient to change is weakened.



However, projects to improve water health have been underway for some time.

One example concerns the Taff-Bargoed River, a sub-catchment of the Taff catchment near Merthyr Tydfil. This is a typical post-industrial river catchment which has had significant physical modifications, disrupting the natural processes, resulting in poorer water quality and a loss of physical and biological diversity. There is a 3-year river restoration project underway within this sub-catchment, tackling the issue of increased sedimentation, which has resulted in the loss in recreational value of the Taff-Bargoed Lakes.

Working with the community and other agencies, NRW is looking at how to best restore natural processes to minimise the sedimentation issues, improving the ecological value of the river and maintaining and restoring the important recreational use of the lake. The benefits do not just extend to improving the health of the river. The lakes are valuable community assets attracting visitors to the area including hosting national kayaking events.

Projects at a significant scale have the opportunity to make the greatest impact. The Lost Peatlands Project (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/south-wales-lost-peatlands-given-new-lease-life>) extends across RCT and the neighbouring Neath Port Talbot area on the Pen y Cymoedd windfarm site. The aim is to increase the area of peatland and associated upland habitats including part of the headwaters of the Taff catchment.

There will be improvements to the management of both the quality and quantity of water as well as habitat improvement. An important component is an education facet which will involve working with the local communities as well as supporting the decarbonisation ambitions in response to the challenge of climate change.

Although the overall picture of water health in the area's rivers is not good, water quality at three bathing beaches in Porthcawl (see map below) remain excellent. Such excellent water quality supports the achievement of Blue Flags for those beaches and an important tourist destination. Information on the work being undertaken to protect these beaches is shown elsewhere in this report.



## Opportunities

As with flooding, there is a need to better understand the water catchment from the headwaters onwards, as well as examining the principal inputs of contamination. Using nature-based solutions will assist with building an ecological resilience in a particular catchment

There needs to be ambition to improve all water bodies in the CTM area on a prioritised basis. Current and future work will look at removing physical modifications to improve migration, identifying and resolving point source and diffuse pollution and improving habitat improvement. Attention will extend beyond the water body itself and look at the wider catchment to identify sources of pollution. This will require close working between the various agencies and organisations who have an interest in seeing an improvement in water health.

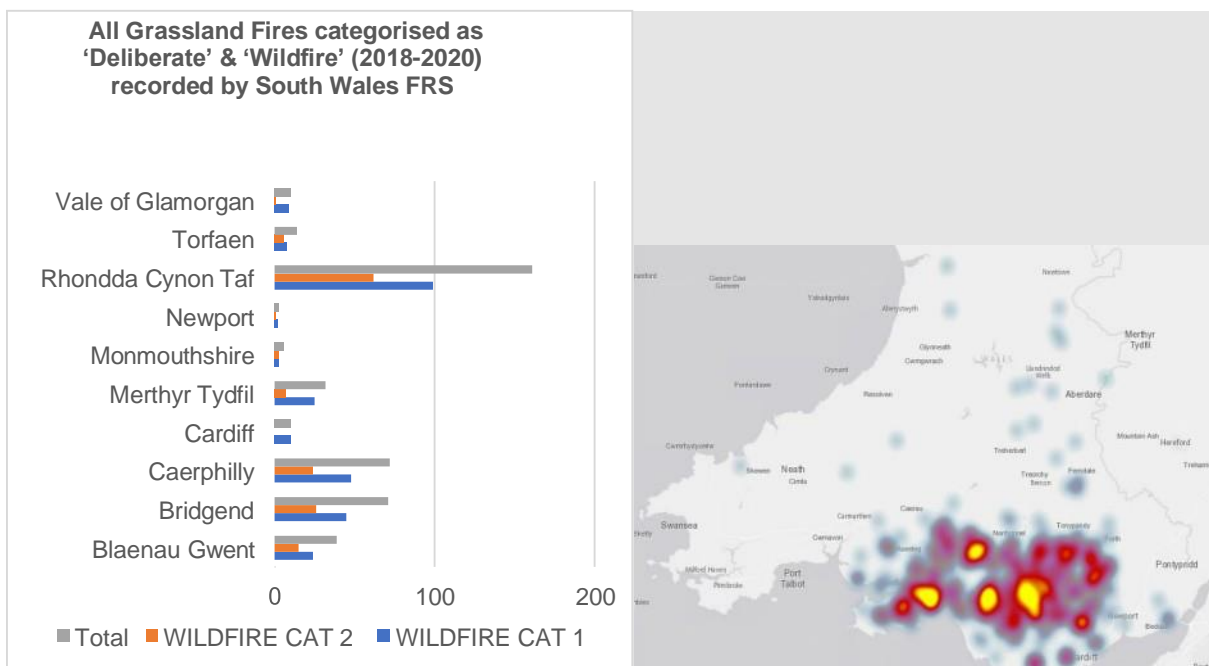
## Wildfires

**The Challenge:** *Wildfires are having an increasing impact in the area*

Across the world there has been an increase in the incidents of wildfires (<https://www.carbonbrief.org/explainer-how-climate-change-is-affecting-wildfires-around-the-world>), which has been attributed in part to the impacts from climate change. Wildfires have an impact not only on the environment but also communities. This trend is being reflected in Wales and in the CTM area.

In 2020, Fire and Rescue Services across Wales dealt with 2,253 grass fires, a slight increase from 2019 with the number of accidental fires increasing by 20%. Operation Dawns Glow, a multi-agency task force has been set up across Wales and Healthy Hillides. A partnership between the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, (SWFRS) Wildlife Trust and NRW, it has focussed action across parts of the CTM area.

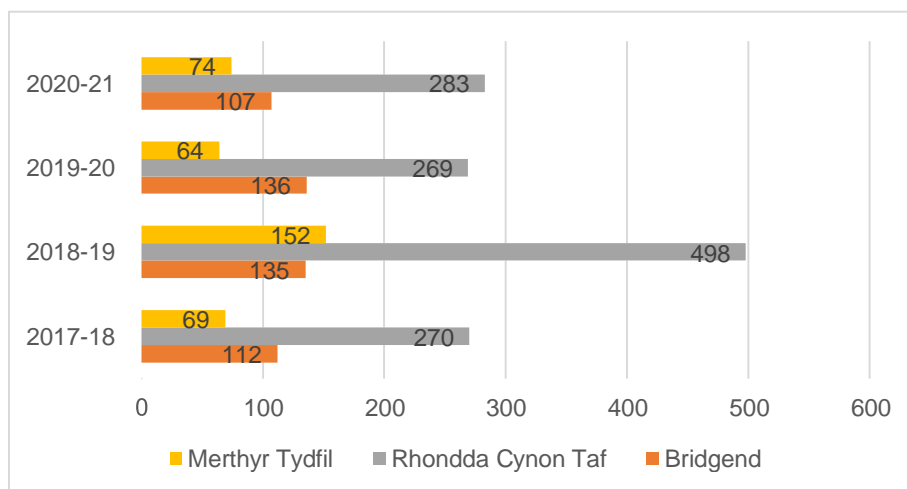
Between 2018 and 2020 the SWFRS reported 418 deliberate wildfires. It also reported that the scale and frequency were increasing with over half (264) incidents in the RCT and Merthyr Tydfil areas. The heatmap map below highlights the worst affected areas in yellow.



## Maps and chart from SWFRS and NRW Briefing note

The number of accidental fires in the three local authority areas is low compared to those which are deliberately caused. The data shows that the number of deliberate wildfires has remained fairly consistent apart from a spike in 2018/19. The below chart shows the prevalence in each county since 2017/18:

**Chart 91: Deliberate – Grassland, woodland and crop fires**



Source: Stats Wales last update Sept. 2021

## Opportunities

The impact of wildfires goes beyond air pollution to include water quality and biodiversity to anxiety within communities. A collaborative project, the learning and sharing from Healthy Hillides (<https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/679661/rhondda-case-study-healthy-hillsides.pdf?mode=pad&rnd=131503023880000000>) is an opportunity for the CTM to be at the forefront in the response to the impacts from climate change. Its focus on prevention and education as well as response to the incident will be seen via a toolkit that is being developed. The hillside at Tylorstown tip (Penrhys) has been chosen as a demonstration site.

Management of land so that material is not as freely available as a fuel source or as a run-off would be a preventative measure as well as supporting habitat improvement and biodiversity.

## Biodiversity

**The challenge:** *Responding to the loss of biodiversity and the nature emergency*

Valuing nature, both for what it does for us in terms of benefits (ecosystem services) and for its own sake is important. Without a healthy ecosystem of insects pollinating crops, healthy soils supporting the supply of food and thriving water systems providing drinking water, our world would slowly grind to a halt.

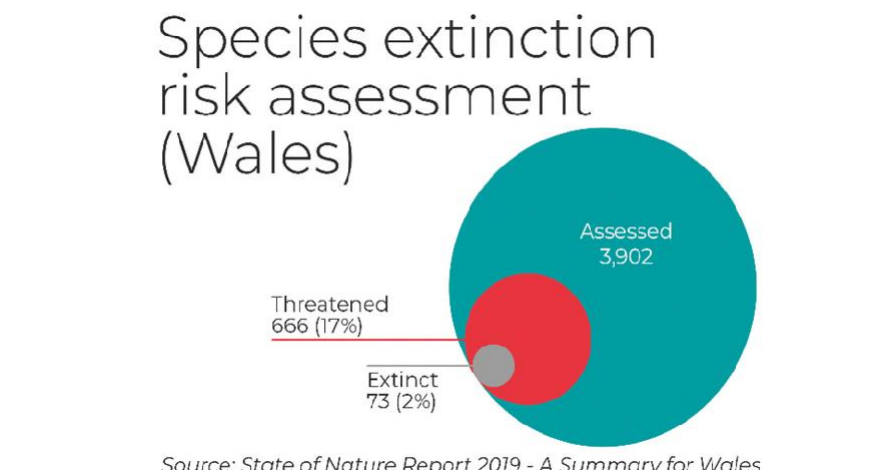
Declining ecosystem resilience in Wales threatens the ability of natural resources to provide a sustainable flow of benefits to current and future generations (Future Trends Report 2021 – Draft Evidence Pack V2).

The CTM area is home to nearly 450,000 people who depend on nature for those basic needs as well as providing opportunities for recreation and protection from flooding.

Across the world, land degradation through human activities is negatively affecting the wellbeing of people through biodiversity decline and extinction of species from habitat change and loss, pollution, climate change, invasive species and road building.

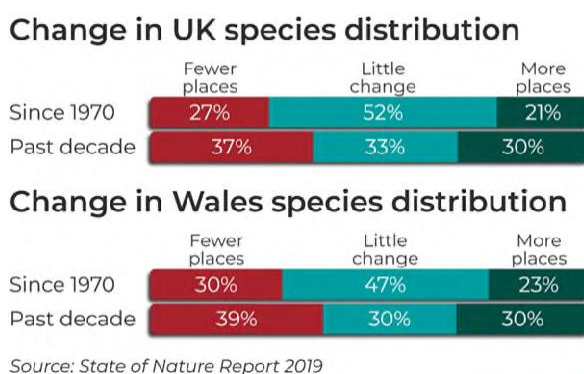
[Media Release: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’ | IPBES secretariat](#)  
[Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services | IPBES secretariat](#)

Closer to home, according to the State of Nature 2019 Report (<https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>), wildlife in Wales continues to decline, with the latest findings showing that **17% of species in Wales are at risk of extinction**.



The same report reveals that since scientific monitoring of UK species began in 1970, there has been a 13% decline in the average abundance of wildlife, with **6% of that fall happening in the past decade**. On average the distribution of UK species has declined by 5% since 1970, with a 2% loss happening in the past decade.

Wildlife in Wales has also been found at fewer sites, with a 10% fall in average species distribution since 1970. This is double the rate of average species distribution decline (5%) seen in the UK as a whole.



There is no overall average figure for changes in species abundance for Welsh wildlife.

However, there is data on certain groups: the average abundance of butterflies has declined in Wales since 1976, while average trends in mammals and some bird groups are increasing.

<https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/the-state-of-nature-2019-report-17-of-species-in-wales-are-at-risk-of-extinction/>

The major pressures that have caused the loss of wildlife include farm management, woodland management, pollution from fertiliser and plastic, increasing urbanisation, hydrological change, climate change and invasive species. It states that at sea, climate change and fishing have the greatest impact upon marine biodiversity.

Changing agricultural management was identified as having the greatest single impact on nature. The report highlights that with 72% of UK land used for farming, and 88% in Wales, there is less space for wildlife to exist free from the influence of agricultural practices. Changes to land management in Wales have caused the loss of more than 90% of semi-natural grassland habitats since the 1930s, negatively affecting species that rely on this habitat.

(<https://research.senedd.wales/research-articles/the-state-of-nature-2019-report-17-of-species-in-wales-are-at-risk-of-extinction/>)

Designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) show the best of our natural heritage in terms of flora and fauna or geological and physiological features. Their conservation value is high and require a high level of protection. They represent what is termed the 'core zone' of [Resilient Ecological Networks](#) and provide a significant opportunity for Wales to respond to the Climate Change and Nature Emergencies. They can provide buffered areas connected through corridors as part of a zone that is being managed for recovery through, for example agri-environment schemes. It is important to consider the ecosystem resilience of these networks together as well as individually, to facilitate species range movement over a larger area due to climate change and the cross-boundary nature of ecological networks.

Therefore, potentially the designated sites in the CTM area complement the other world class assets to be found such as Green Flag sites and excellent bathing water quality.

The table below shows the number of designated sites in the CTM area with a comparative analysis of their condition compared to the NRW South Wales Central Area (in which the CTM area is a part) and Wales as a whole. The CTM area and Wales as a whole does not tell a positive story with respect to the condition of these designated sites and for providing a base for nature recovery.

**Table 56: Designated Sites SSSIs and SACs**

| CTM Area  | NRW South Central Area   | Wales   |
|---|--|---|
| 37 SSSIs<br>119 features  | 78 SSSIs<br>211 features   | >1000 SSSIs<br>3756 features  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% unfavourable condition</li> <li>• 34% unknown condition</li> <li>• 13% favourable condition</li> <li>• 2% destroyed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 42.2% in unfavourable condition</li> <li>• 39.3% unknown condition</li> <li>• 17.1% favourable condition</li> <li>• 1.4% destroyed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27.5% unfavourable condition</li> <li>• 51.6% unknown condition</li> <li>• 20.1% favourable condition</li> <li>• 0.8% destroyed</li> </ul> |



|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>5 SACs<br/>12 features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 83.4% unfavourable condition</li> <li>• 0% unknown condition</li> <li>• 8.3% favourable condition</li> <li>• 8.3% destroyed</li> </ul> | <p>7 SACs<br/>16 features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 86.6% in unfavourable condition</li> <li>• 0% unknown condition</li> <li>• 6.7% favourable condition</li> <li>• 6.7% destroyed</li> </ul> | <p>95 SACs<br/>339 features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 63.1% in unfavourable condition</li> <li>• 21.2% unknown condition</li> <li>• 14.7% favourable condition</li> <li>• 1% destroyed</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|

Source: Protected Sites Baseline Assessment (2020)

[Natural Resources Wales / Protected sites baseline assessment 2020](#)

This suggests that overwhelmingly the sites both within Wales and CTM are not in favourable condition, or the condition is not known. It is claimed that this is due to a funding shortfall in monitoring such important sites with a call to the WG to set out a plan to save biodiversity to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.

<https://community.rspb.org.uk/getinvolved/wales/b/wales-blog/posts/failure-to-protect-nature-at-most-special-sites>.

However, the fact that there are features in favourable condition is important as this shows a basis to work on for nature recovery on that designated site.

The sand dunes along CTM coast highlight how in a single place, environmental, cultural, economic and recreation can, with careful management, co-exist. The sand dunes at Kenfig between the south edge of Swansea Bay between Port Talbot and Porthcawl have a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation. It has a number of coastal and species feature but only one marine feature – Atlantic salt meadows. Although only representing 2% of the site, the latter is rare along that coast and has an indicative unfavourable condition due to livestock grazing and litter. <https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/684390/kenfig-sac-ica-2018.pdf> . The site has a history of military use as well as providing a significant place for recreation and access. The Sand of LIFE <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/nature-projects/sands-of-life/?lang=en> covers Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr in the CTM area as well other sand dune systems across Wales. Dynamism in sand dunes is the key to improving resilience to climate change and rejuvenate habitats which are home to some of our rarest wildlife. The work brings together many of these considerations with the aim of restoring biodiversity through appropriate land management for grazing, recognition of the historical significance and recreation usage. Striking that balance for the many uses e.g. cultural, environmental and economic underlines the challenges as well as the opportunities in responding to the climate and nature emergencies.

Although that recovery has some way to go there are examples across the CTM area where progress is being made.

In 2018 the final major barrier to fish migration on the river Taff at Merthyr Vale was removed. This gave improved access to over 10km of good quality spawning and juvenile habitat on the Taff Fechan and Fawr upstream of Merthyr Vale. The benefits were not just to wildlife as there were improvements to local amenity and the community. (<https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/barrier-to-fish-migration-removed/>). This was an example of improving water health and biodiversity whilst respecting the historical significance of a former colliery site.

It is not just public and third sector organisations that are making a difference. An example of where young people are making their mark, highlights how nature is reclaiming industrial land <https://www.collieryspoil.com/>. Colliery spoil sites, an iconic feature in the landscape of the South

Wales Valleys, are sometimes misunderstood with the perception of dereliction. What should be seen as an ecological asset is still often viewed as a problem in need of 'fixing'. The 'Colliery Spoil Biodiversity Initiative' was founded by a young entomologist to raise awareness of the important biodiversity value of colliery spoil sites. This revealed an astonishing array of invertebrate species from bees to bugs, beetles to millipedes.

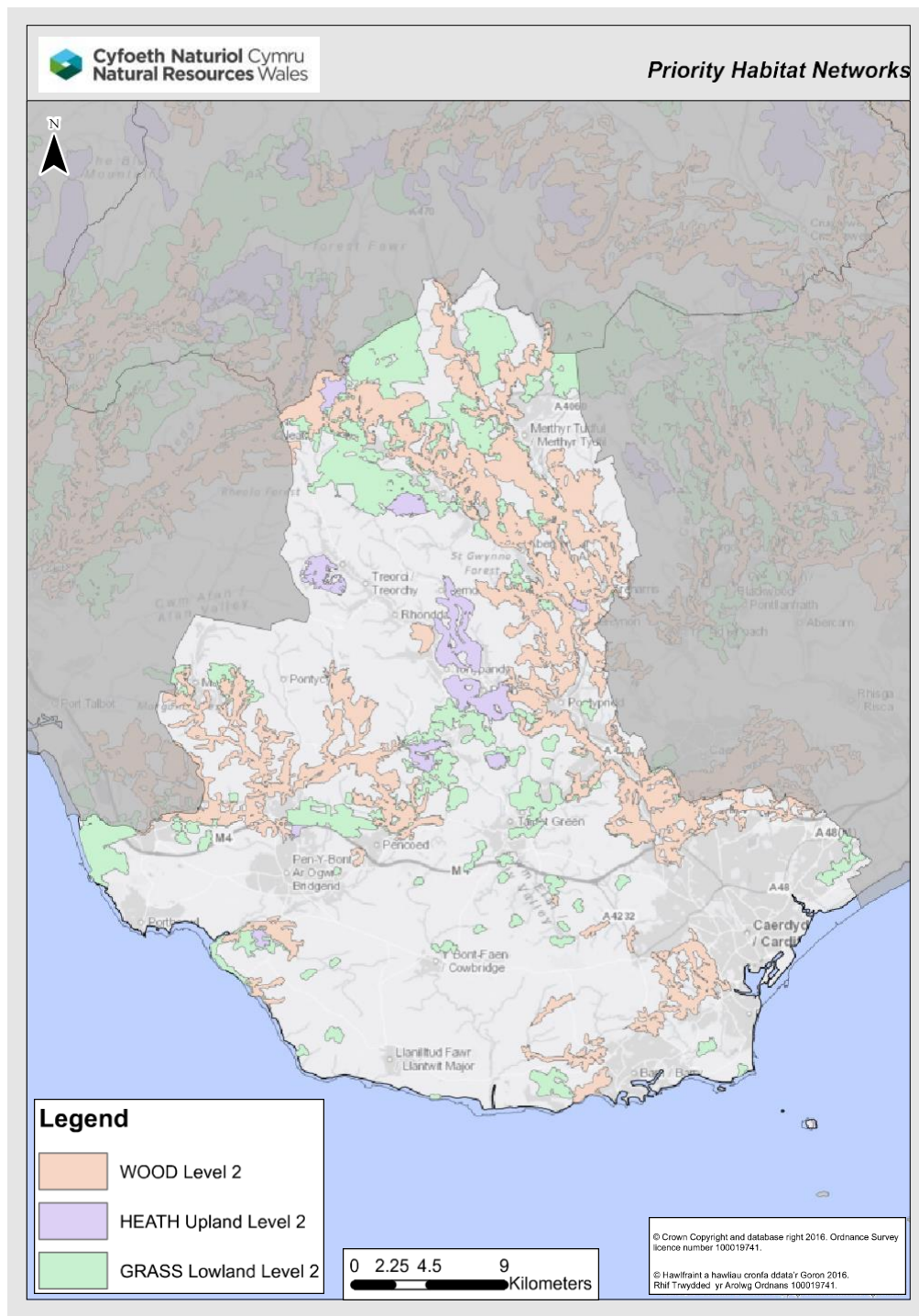
RCT has reported that 85 different kinds of bee, alongside a wide range of other insects, lichens, fungi and flowers, have been found on old tips in its area. (Source- RCT Corporate Performance Report 2021-22). The colliery spoil sites across CTM provide examples of where biodiversity can thrive in otherwise non designated sites.

### **Opportunities**

The local community engagement work identified the importance of protecting wildlife and biodiversity to give environmental wellbeing with suggestions to create habitats and connected greenways, planting trees and forest and reducing litter that poses a risk to wildlife.

Raising awareness of the environment and educating people in the importance of valuing and protecting the natural environment was a key issue for many. Concern was not only directed at open green space. Regeneration of the town centre, the impact of building developments and the need to protect the environment for future generations were raised by communities.

By better connecting important habitat (designated and non-designated) there is the opportunity to build and improve the ecological resilience of species. The map below, although not showing information for the coast gives a sense of where the opportunity may lie in the CTM area. It is understood that further work on resilient ecological networks is being undertaken by NRW and will be available in April 2022.



Restore/re wet peatlands that have degraded is a way of both supporting the recovery of biodiversity and tackle climate change. In RCT work is underway to look at how this can occur on wind farm land as well as other publicly owned land (Source of information- RCT Draft Corporate Performance Report 2021-22) (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/south-wales-lost-peatlands-given-new-lease-life>)

Other opportunities include supporting better connections between people and nature, improving the condition of designated sites, the creation and delivery of local Nature Recovery Action and the fulfilment of the duty on public bodies to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions.

The way that public land is managed can be an effective way to support biodiversity – i.e. 'reducing the negatives and increasing the positives. Reducing the timing of cutting grass verges is already very beneficial in creating wildlife corridors.

Wales needs to increase its woodland creation. At present in Wales our level of planting is not sufficient to meet the targets set by the UK Climate Change Commission. This will assist not only biodiversity but also tackle climate change.

## Resources

**The challenge:** *to make better use of our natural resources and develop a regenerative economy*

Wales is using both renewable and non-renewable resources in an unsustainable way. This means that if everyone in the world were to consume the same as the average Welsh citizen, it is estimate that just over 2.5 planets would be required (Future Trends Report 2021 – Draft Evidence Pack V.2).

It is broadly accepted that Wales is overconsuming its share of global resources at a rate of 2.5:1. There is no evidence to support that a similar position does not occur across the CTM area.

If society is to be sustainable then careful consideration needs to be given to how we manage the planet's finite resources, minimising waste production and ensuring as much recycling is done as possible. Also, the cost of providing our food does not include the cost of dealing with negative environmental impacts.

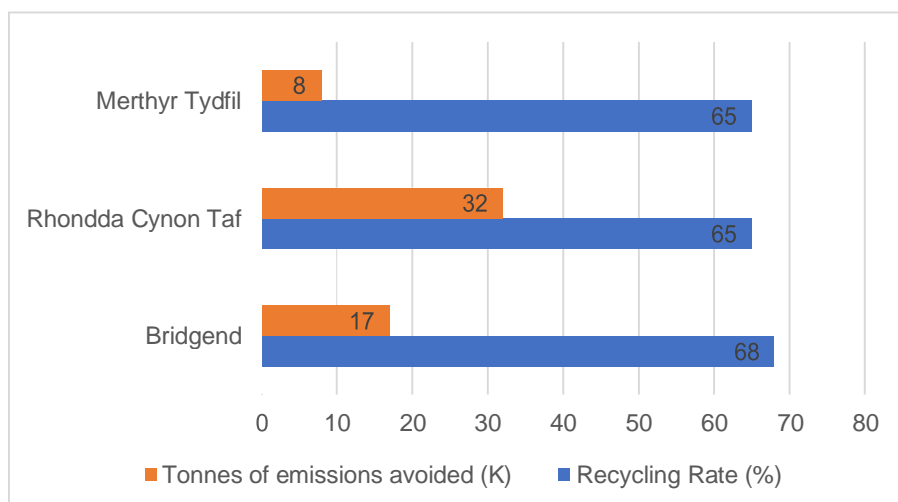
Since the first wellbeing plan the three local authorities within the CTM area have seen an improvement in the amount of residential household waste per person that is not collected for reuse, recycling or composting.

The actual figures for 2018/19 year were Bridgend, 126 kg/person, Merthyr Tydfil, 196 kg/person and Rhondda Cynon Taf 189kg/person. In Annex 1, graphs show the trend position over the last few years against a baseline figure of 794kg/person in 2012.

There is a 64% target set by the Welsh Government for the percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted. The figures for 2019/20 show that Bridgend achieved 68%, Merthyr Tydfil achieved 65% and Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 65 %. This shows positive progress to achieving the WG target of zero waste by 2050 and moving towards a circular low carbon, regenerative economy.

The achievement of rising targets is a positive and shows that engagement is working.

Understanding the reasons behind this will assist with meeting the aim of zero waste.

**Chart 92: Recycling Rate and Emissions Avoided**

Energy is a key part of delivering our climate goals. It is also an important consideration with respect to fuel poverty. We must decarbonise our energy system in a way which improves wellbeing in Wales. We must use energy more efficiently, reduce emissions from fossil fuel generation and increase generation from renewable and low carbon sources. We will need more renewable energy generation if we are to meet the increased electricity demand resulting from decarbonising heat and transport. We have had considerable success in increasing renewable generation in Wales: in 2018 enough renewable electricity was generated to meet half of our electricity use.

Our target is 70% by 2030. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/energy-use-in-wales-2018.pdf>

Across the CTM area work has been underway to decarbonise. In 2018 in RCT it is reported that 3,862 projects were underway in low carbon energy generation (Source: [Statswales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/)), whilst Bridgend was taking steps to develop innovative demonstration projects focussed on the creation of low carbon communities including district heat networks in Bridgend and Caerau.

<https://democratic.bridgend.gov.uk/documents/s23531/Bridgend%202030%20DECARBONISATION%20STRATEGY%20v1.1%20JN%20070121.pdf>

The South Wales Police (SWP) has also taken similar steps to look at the way it manages natural resources. Within its overall Environmental Strategy (and Green Dragon Level 3 Environmental Accreditation), it has developed a Climate Change Strategy. This aligns with ambition set by Welsh Government for all public sector in Wales to achieve a target of Carbon Neutral by 2030.

In addition to setting a direction, SWP has targets for the use of resources, a programme of decarbonisation and other works to cover all its operations from fleet management and procurement to site infrastructure and buildings. The overall plan also incorporates the development of open green space and tree planting, where wellbeing initiatives for staff can be promoted and biodiversity enhanced to strengthen nature.

Learning from all this decarbonisation work can be shared and used to inspire other organisations.

The Pen y Cymoedd wind farm lies in part of the CTM area within the Welsh Government Woodland estate managed by NRW. Its 76 turbines can produce enough electricity to power 15% of Welsh homes annually. It is therefore a significant player in meeting the challenge of climate change and de-carbonising the way we live. That is not all, the **Pen y Cymoedd Community Fund** (<https://penycymoeddcic.cymru/home/>) has been established by energy company Vattenfall



for the benefit of the communities hosting the wind farm in and across the upper Neath, Afan, Rhondda and Cynon Valleys. The Rhondda and Cynon Valleys are within the CTM area. The Fund has an annual budget of £1.8 million until 2043 and offers an opportunity for local people to invest in themselves and their ideas – building on all that is best in their communities. Projects that have received funding range from those delivering skills and education development, wetland conservation and nature trails to refurbishing community assets for the benefit of local people.

## Opportunities

The need for individual and collective action to live more sustainably was identified in the community engagement work. Behaviour change for a sustainable future was deemed necessary with measures to reduce carbon and produce sustainable energy sources suggested. However, despite identifying that all round action was needed, there was a general sense of feeling powerless and uninvolved in green movements and a mistrust and frustration towards politicians and people in power from young people.

Decarbonisation can have a significant impact and can be focussed on a number of areas: energy, transport, buildings and open spaces. The focus would be to reduce the amount used and shift energy production to clean sources. Buildings could be better used, new ones designed to be energy efficient and open spaces used for carbon offset and to generate renewable power. Looking at how natural resources can be reused time and time again will support a circular, regenerative economy.

We can look to learn from the Cardiff Capital Region’s collaboration with Welsh Government to create pioneering Energy Vision and Strategy for South East Wales: <https://www.cardiffcapitalregion.wales/news-events/latest-news/cardiff-capital-region-and-welsh-government-collaborate-to-create-pioneering-energy-vision-and-strategy/#:~:text=To%20meet%20the%20targets%2C%20CCR,reduction%20in%20road%20transport%20emissions>.

## Fly tipping

**The challenge:** *to reduce the amount of fly tipping and its effects on the environment and communities*

The occurrence of fly tipping was identified by residents as a major concern in the first environmental assessments and wellbeing plan. It affects us all. It is a serious crime that is visual, spoils our local neighbourhoods and can impact on the local community’s quality of life. It also poses a threat to humans and wildlife through disease transmission, pollution and soil contamination, making areas more liable to drainage and flooding problems. Money that is spent on clearing fly tipping could be better spent in other areas of work such as social care and education.

A depleted natural environment blighted by fly-tipping impacts not only on our long- term health and wellbeing, but also on our ability to grow our economy. It can affect both the tourism and inward investment potential of an area <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2018-01/140604draft-fly-tipping-strategy-en.pdf>

A comparison of the figures recorded for fly tipping by local authority is shown in the table below. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/Fly-tipping/recordedflytippingincidents-by-localauthority>

**Table 57: Fly Tipping**

| Local Authority | 2019/20 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|
|-----------------|---------|---------|

Wellbeing and Population Needs Assessment Analysis of Cwm Taf Morgannwg

|                   |        |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Bridgend          | 1,788  | 1604   |
| Merthyr Tydfil    | 1,850  | 2273   |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 2,946  | 3,349  |
| CTM Total         | 6,584  | 7,226  |
| SE Wales          | 20,037 | 20,910 |



|       |        |        |
|-------|--------|--------|
| Wales | 33,542 | 35,434 |
|-------|--------|--------|

For the most part across CTM, there has been a slight reduction in the number of reported instances of fly tipping since 2017/18. This is broadly in line the national picture across Wales.

For comparison purposes, in 2019/20, the respective figures for Cardiff, Newport and Caerphilly were 5,378; 2,725 and 2,214 cases of fly tipping reported.

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/Fly-tipping/recordedflytippingincidents-by-localauthority>

Although by no means the only indicator of success in tackling fly tipping, the number of prosecution outcomes across Wales is 2017/18 (75 cases); 2018/19 (122 cases) and 2019/20 (32 cases). <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Environment-and-Countryside/Fly-tipping/flytippingprosecutionoutcomes-by-year>

Although over the whole CTM area there is a reduction of reported fly tipping instance to the local authority, fly tipping continues to be an issue and is likely to remain a concern for residents and their wellbeing. In fact, a feature of the COVID 19 pandemic was that whilst many people rediscovered, reconnected and gained a greater appreciation for their local areas, there were incidents reported in the media of increased littering at local beauty spots and rubbish being dumped when various facilities were closed. <https://gov.wales/written-statement-litter-and-fly-tipping-prevention-plan-wales-consultation>

There are examples of targeted action to tackle fly tipping. In one instance, fines of £1331 were imposed on a skip company fly tipping waste in RCT. Such action sends out important messages to those who would wish to profit by blighting the landscape.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Newsroom/PressReleases/2020/August/SkipCompanyOwnerCaughtFlyTipping.aspx>

## Opportunities

The community engagement exercise demonstrated a real desire to clean up the environment for the benefit of communities as well as wildlife.

People said they wanted cleaner streets, with less litter and dog mess.

*'Get fast food places to put names, addresses or something on wrappers so that people can't drop it on the floor or throw it from cars.'* *'Clear litter and dog excrement, there are still people who do not clean up and never seem to be caught.'*

There is an opportunity for the various agencies to work together to target hot spots and support communities that are subject to fly tipping and littering. The actions required are not just enforcement but also monitoring and evaluation of the problem, education and awareness raising leading to a change of behaviour.

## Landslips

**The challenge:** *to protect people and the environment from landslips.*

The CTM area, as with other parts of Wales, has a legacy from its industrial past in the form of colliery spoil tips from coal mining. Such sites have the potential to impact on the safety of communities and the environment. At the same time, they are sites that have social history, cultural

and environmental value that goes back many decades. This brings both complexity but also opportunities for finding long term solutions.

Some of the most acute impacts of climate change are linked to extreme meteorological events such as heavy rain and snow, droughts, heatwave and storms. These can cause or exacerbate other high impact events such as flooding, landslips, wildfires and avalanches (Future Trends Report 2021- Draft August 2021). The likelihood is that such events will become more frequent across the CTM area.

There is a history of tragedy from coal tips in the CTM area. At Aberfan in 1966, 144 people died as a result of a landslide, a national disaster that to this day holds a significance across communities. More recently (2020) following storms, there were landslips at Tylorstown and Wattstown in RCT ( <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/welsh-government-refuses-list-most-21822545>). Whilst the concern with respect to coal tips has never gone away, the recent events refocused attention on the safety of tips and the likely impact on communities and the environment.

The impacts from such events are widespread and not just limited to safety and the environment. There can be impacts such as homelessness, general wellbeing of people and the short- and long-term viability of the local economy whilst placing a heavy draw on the resources of the local authorities and emergency services. At the same time, the strong sense of community can be seen (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2020/12/18/Reports/Item6ReviewoftheCouncilsResponsetoStormDennis.pdf>).

After the first land slip at Tylorstown, a Coal Tip Safety Taskforce was established by the WG working with the UK Government, to assess the immediate status of coal tips in Wales and review the existing policy and legislative framework relating to disused coal tip management. The Coal Authority (CA) was commissioned to undertake urgent ground inspections of coal tips in Wales, identifying any urgent works and the risk status of each tip.

The CA supported Local Authorities by undertaking some of the inspections on these high-risk tips. The inspections identified the maintenance requirements and the timescales within which they need to be completed. In a small number of cases, the inspections highlighted works, which were immediately required to ensure the tip was being maintained at a standard necessary to enable routine monitoring (<https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-coal-tip-safety>).

Through this partnership approach between the Coal Authority, Local Authorities, WLGA and Natural Resources Wales, the taskforce made significant progress in gaining a detailed picture of the coal tip landscape across Wales, with 2144 coal tips identified, predominately in the South Wales Valleys. The majority of coal tips are in private ownership, with others under the management of Local Authorities, Natural Resources Wales and the Coal Authority.

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-coal-tip-safety>

The position within the CTM area is shown below.

**Table 58: Coal Tips**

| Local Authority Area   | Number of High Risk Sites |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bridgend CBC           | 31                        |
| Merthyr Tydfil CBC     | 59                        |
| Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC | 75                        |

Source of information – Welsh Government

A review of the current legislation undertaken by the taskforce concluded it is neither sufficiently robust nor fit for purpose, in relation to inspection and maintenance regimes. The current legislation does not mandate regular inspections of disused tips or once a tip becomes disused. The Law Commission were formally invited in November 2020 to undertake an independent review of the relevant legislation and provide recommendations for a future Bill. It is anticipated that the Law Commission will report in March 2022.

The taskforce is developing policies in parallel to the work of the Law Commission. The longer-term policy objective is to develop a consistent approach for use across Wales for risk assessments and risk categories. Management controls, including a central database, for all tips will also be developed.

The WG has said that a robust inspection and maintenance regime will ensure safeguarding our communities remains a priority, with people living near coal tips feeling safe and secure. The long-term remediation programme is likely to run for up to 10 years and will require a comprehensive funding package. Works such as monitoring tip stability and implementing necessary action will be part of the way forward to deal with those tips that pose the higher risk. <https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-coal-tip-safety>

### **Opportunity**

There is no doubt that coal tip safety remains a concern for communities and the environment. It was identified as an issue through the community engagement exercise. There is an opportunity to develop a long-term plan.

For some, only removal of the coal tip will allay their concerns (<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/coal-tips-should-removed-after-17877334>), whilst for others the extensive work from the various agencies to monitor and maintain stability and carrying out necessary works will be enough. Integral to any plan is the opportunity to build on the strong sense of community that was demonstrated following the most recent storms causing landslips (and flooding). The plan can also ensure that cultural and environmental opportunities can be integral to matters of safety.

### **Summary**

In summary, this section has sought to bring together and assess available environmental information.

This has been presented to set out the challenges within the CTM area but at the same time identifying the strengths of the work underway and the opportunities for the future.

The things that are important to the community with respect to environmental wellbeing have been identified and as such supports a willingness to want to see things change. Communities valued the place they live in, and the free accessibility to the natural landscape and the coast. The mental and physical benefits were identified and recognised as important by communities. People wanted green space to be protected identifying concerns from housing development. Similarly, they want to see change of how people value the environment.

At the same time, challenges have been identified by communities. Climate change and its local manifestation of flooding, the threats to the natural environment which provides clean water and food for people, and pollution of the air and rivers have been highlighted. However, there are examples of world class amenity which provide environmental, economic and social wellbeing. Also, recycling of waste by local authorities is a success. Some of our most important habitat sites

may be under significant stress and despite their poor health, there is an opportunity to rebuild as people recognise their significance.

Nevertheless, by the definition of environmental wellbeing being reflected by the state of natural resources in an area, 'environmental wellbeing' cannot be said to be in a healthy state. This is no different to other areas in Wales and can be seen as a product of all Wales, UK and local actions past and present.

The assessment shows the interrelated nature of the pillars and how, when addressing one particular issue, there is the need to understand how a positive impact can be made to another.

As such, this assessment presents a picture of environmental wellbeing and how it is linked to and supports the health, cultural identity and economic prosperity of the area. There are clear links to the Wellbeing Goals, and this demonstrates how the CTM area is playing its part.

# Cultural Pillar

## Introduction

What does 'Culture' mean to people and communities? This is a broad concept and means different things to different people, there is no definition of the term in the Act. The Act identifies wellbeing goals of 'A Wales of cohesive communities' and 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' which both relate to culture. Bringing these together to consider what they relate to, there are a range of factors which link these in the CTM area which include the industrial heritage and landscape, communities which have grown and developed from their industrial past, music through singing including choirs and Eisteddfod, sporting activities and clubs as well as community theatre, arts and libraries and enjoying the natural environment and castles and buildings of the past. All of these elements are linked to Welsh culture and Welsh language which are embedded into the communities in the area.

Communities themselves can be defined in different ways with large communities within which people are embedded such as where they live. Communities can be on a smaller scale, such as communities with the same interests or background such as faith, interests, leisure activities etc. It is therefore also important to differentiate between how communities and culture interact and engage to come together in small or larger groups.

The Wales Centre for Public Policy (2021) considered the below definition from New Zealand used by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage:

*"The vitality that communities and individuals enjoy through participation in recreation, creative and cultural activities [and] the freedom to retain, interpret and express their arts, history, heritage and traditions."* (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, n.d)

This definition incorporates the activities mentioned above taking account of the individuals and the communities they make up.

The industrial legacy of the past of Wales is summed up by Cadw:

*'The country was a leading player in Britain's Industrial Revolution, a white-hot force that changed these islands – and the world – forever.'*

*In Wales, it was a total revolution, embracing metal producing and mining. 'Black gold' poured out in untold quantities from mines in the Rhondda Valleys and elsewhere in south Wales.'*

Addressing the Cultural wellbeing is therefore a wide-ranging perspective which takes account of the individual and community and how they define and experience their own cultural identity from the past, now and future.

## What we know

According to the [Wellbeing of Wales](#) report published by Welsh Government in September 2021:

- Prior to the pandemic, there was no change in the share of adults or children regularly taking part in sport. More recently, the pandemic has widened inequalities in sports participation.
- Latest survey data suggests that there are increases in the percentage of people who say they can speak Welsh, but not fluently. Use of the language remains steady.
- Conditions of listed buildings in Wales have generally been stable, but fewer recently assessed monuments are in a stable condition.

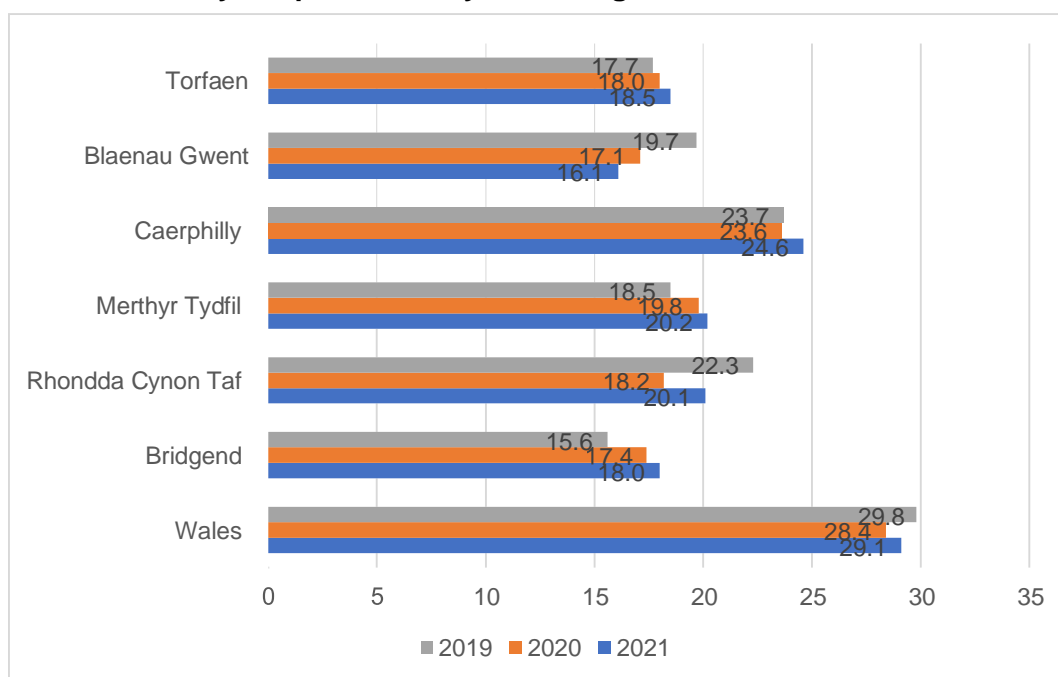
Welsh language is a key element of the Welsh culture. There is a statutory requirement to ensure it is available to all with a commitment to treating Welsh and English on an equal basis. The Welsh Language Commissioner oversees the promotion and facilitation of use of the Welsh language. This is enshrined in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 which introduced the Welsh Language Standards that Local Authorities are required to meet.

**What does the data tell us?**

**Welsh Language**

The number of people who are able to speak Welsh is increasing across the CTM area as can be seen on the chart below:

**Chart 93: Ability to speak Welsh year ending 31 March.**



Source: Stats Wales from Annual Population Survey ONS

Whilst there was a decrease in the ability to speak Welsh in RCT 2020 this has increased again in 2021 this is consistent with the Wales average for that year. Overall compared to the Wales average all areas have a lower percentage who are able to speak Welsh, which is consistent across all authorities shown. Within the South Wales area only Carmarthenshire is higher than the Wales average with 51.4% of people saying they can speak Welsh.

There are clusters of those who are able to speak Welsh across the CTM area. Data based on the 2011 Census at LSOA level shows that there are people in all of the areas that are able to speak, read and write Welsh. The table below shows the top 3 areas in each authority (detailed breakdown of all areas is available in the associated data sheets)

Table 59: Percentage residents who speak, read and write Welsh (2011)

| Local Authority          | LSOA              | %    |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | Llangynwyd 1      | 13.1 |
|                          | Maesteg West 1    | 12.9 |
|                          | Bryncethin        | 11.1 |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | Church Village 3  | 18.7 |
|                          | Llantwit Fardre 2 | 18.3 |
|                          | Church Village 2  | 16.9 |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | Treharris 1       | 12.4 |
|                          | Cyfarthfa 1       | 10.5 |
|                          | Treharris 3       | 9.5  |

Welsh language strategies are a requirement to work towards increasing the use of Welsh language. Strategies include growing the number of people able to speak Welsh and increasing its use in communities. The need to increase Welsh language was reinforced in 2017 by the Welsh Governments long term vision for Cymraeg 2050 – a million Welsh speakers.

Each local authority has indicated that they need to increase the number of Welsh speakers to meet their targets by 2050 as indicated below:

- Bridgend identified that 21% of their residents need to speak Welsh by 2050. They will need to increase Welsh speakers by a minimum of 1.9% during the lifetime of each strategy until 2050.
- RCT indicated that they needed to increase their Welsh language speakers by 1.66% by 2021
- Merthyr Tydfil have indicated that an increase of 0.3% per year would be needed to meet the Welsh speakers target by 2050,

Each local authority has a range of initiatives to increase the number of Welsh speakers within work, educational and community settings. There are initiatives in each area that bring Welsh into early years settings. Cylch Meithrin provide pre-school/preschool education through the medium of Welsh and are in all the CTM areas. The groups include Cylch Ti a Fi for parents to meet up with their children to socialise.

The promotion of services to support learning and maintaining the Welsh language appear to be supporting an increase in spoken Welsh.

## Celebrating Welsh Language and Culture

Welsh language is celebrated and used in communities not only in Wales but further afield across the UK and abroad e.g. Patagonia. The celebration of the language and culture is evident in different forms including sports, music, and arts as well as faith. These are events and gatherings that bring people together to celebrate the pride of being Welsh and the language.

Welsh male voice choirs are known around the world and the 'Welsh Association of Male Choirs' was established in the 1960s. The membership has grown from 26 in 1962 to 97 to date which includes membership from around the UK and 5 overseas members. One of the aims of the association is

*'To foster and promote the art of Male Voice choral music and Welsh choral works'.*



As well as promoting the cultural elements of Wales it promotes the Welsh language enabling those who live in the area to come together to enjoy the language. It is also an intergenerational activity which brings new members to maintain its longevity as has been evidenced with the increasing numbers. Those which have been established in the CTM area have been here for a number of years from 1920's and beyond in some cases and they continue to sing. The choirs have evolved from a range of areas from work, religious and sporting groups.

A national and local celebration of Welsh language and culture is the Eisteddfod which is celebrated both nationally and locally. The National Eisteddfod is a significant event in the Welsh calendar involving all ages and backgrounds, its modern inception being in 1861 but can be traced back to 1176. Merthyr Tydfil hosted one of the first National Eisteddfods in 1881. Providing a festival of events and activities it is visited by thousands of people and so provides a platform to showcase the Welsh language and culture. Testament to its success is the length of time it has been held and the increasing level of activity and attendance.

The National Eisteddfod will be held in RCT in 2024 and opportunities have been considered around how this could benefit the increase in Welsh language in the local communities. This is an opportunity to build on the strength of a Welsh tradition and celebration of Welsh culture and language.

Urdd Gobaith Cymru is a Welsh youth organisation which is well linked to schools and local community activities. Established in 1922 it promotes the Welsh language for young people between the age of 8 and 25 providing a range of activities and clubs where young people can learn, speak and enjoy the language. The below is an extract from their web site (<https://www.urdd.cymru/en/about-us/what-urdd/>):

*"The Urdd has nurtured generations of young men and women to be proud of their country, open to the world and living embodiments of our language and culture, along with the universal values which we cherish in Wales. Over 4 million children and young people have been members of the Urdd since its beginning back in 1922. The significance of the institution in Wales cannot be over-emphasised. Its contribution to generations in Wales, to the lives and confidence, and mental health of our young people over the years has been immense."*

The Urdd have over 55,000 members every year and up to 95,000 visitors to the Urdd Eisteddfod each year. The Urdd Eisteddfod keeps the celebration alive with local and regional competitions with winners going through to the Urdd National Eisteddfod.

Continuing to bring the Welsh language alive for children, their future priorities are:

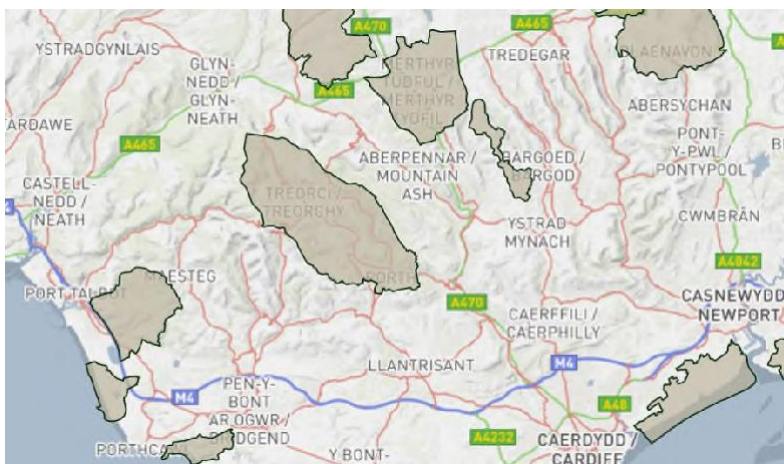
- To develop the appeal of Eisteddfod yr Urdd to our members and our visitors.
- To extend the provision and reach of the Urdd's national sports competitions.
- To establish a national Welsh-medium youth work model across Wales.
- To invest in the 3 residential centres to offer the best experiences.
- To extend the reach of our outdoor pursuits'pursuit services across Wales.
- To provide Welsh-medium apprenticeships for young people across Wales.
- To aim for a worldwide reach for the Urdd's Peace and Goodwill Message.
- To offer international opportunities and experiences for Urdd members.
- To establish a data system that strengthens how we communicate with our members and partners.
- To create art and cultural activities for our members within their communities.
- To celebrate the Urdd's Centenary in 2022 by celebrating the past and innovating for the future.
- Develop Pentre Ifan, Pembrokeshire as the fourth Urdd Camp.

## Heritage

The Valleys area of CTM is rich in industrial heritage. This is seen in the unique landscape where the greening of the valleys has taken place as well as how some of the old structures and mines have been used to remind us of the past. The interdependence between RCT, Merthyr and Bridgend is evident in the mining industries and access to transportation from the valleys to the coastal areas to transport coal and iron.

Cadw have recognised that the landscapes of Wales have been shaped by human activity and want to preserve the historic and cultural aspects of these. In order to ensure that the land-owners, statutory bodies and developers make better informed decisions to protect the most important landscapes they have developed a register of landscapes of outstanding and special interests. Caring for historic landscapes is important but needs to be balanced with evolution in response to modern needs. Cadw state that '*The challenge is to manage change while protecting the legacy of the past*' (Cadw 2019). The register includes 58 landscapes which includes 7 areas in CTM shown on the map below

(<https://lle.gov.wales/catalogue/item/RegisteredLandscapesOfOutstandingHistoricInterestInWales/?lang=en> )



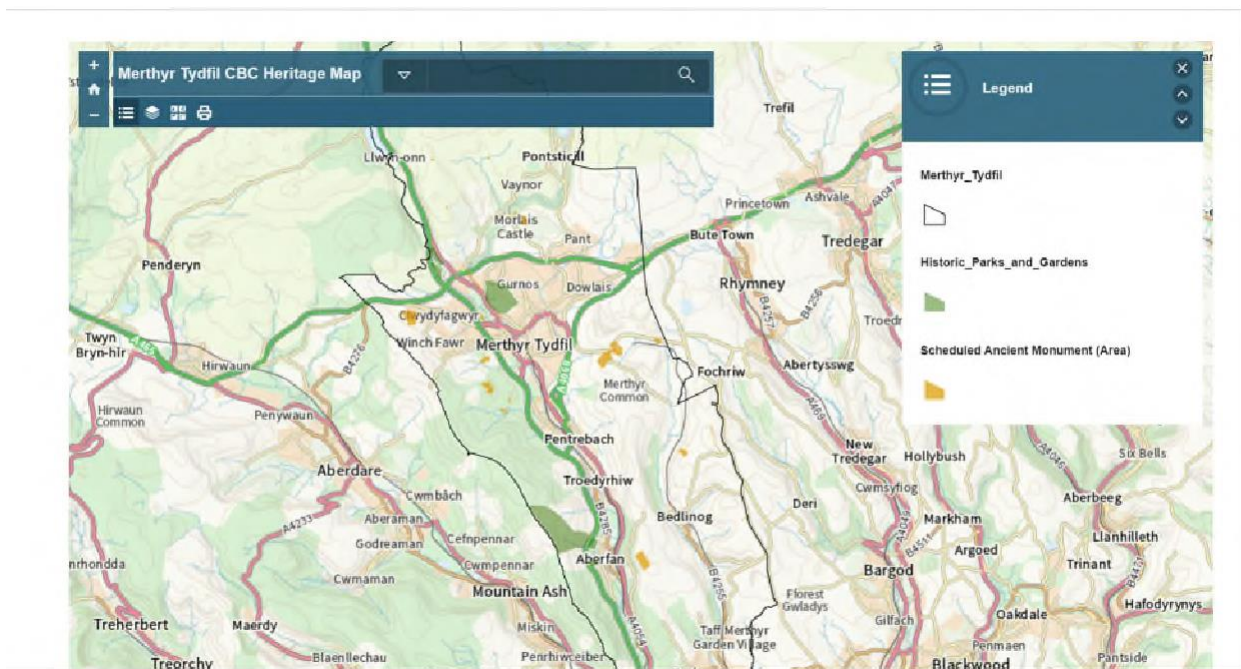
There are a range of museums and heritage sites to visit and learn from for local people of all ages and visitors. The sites reflect both the industrial and cultural past of the area.

The heritage sites range from coal mining to historic buildings and castles which are rich with history and build on the history of the area. The area's heritage is also reflected in the local villages and communities across the CTM area from the valleys and rural settlements to the coastal strip.

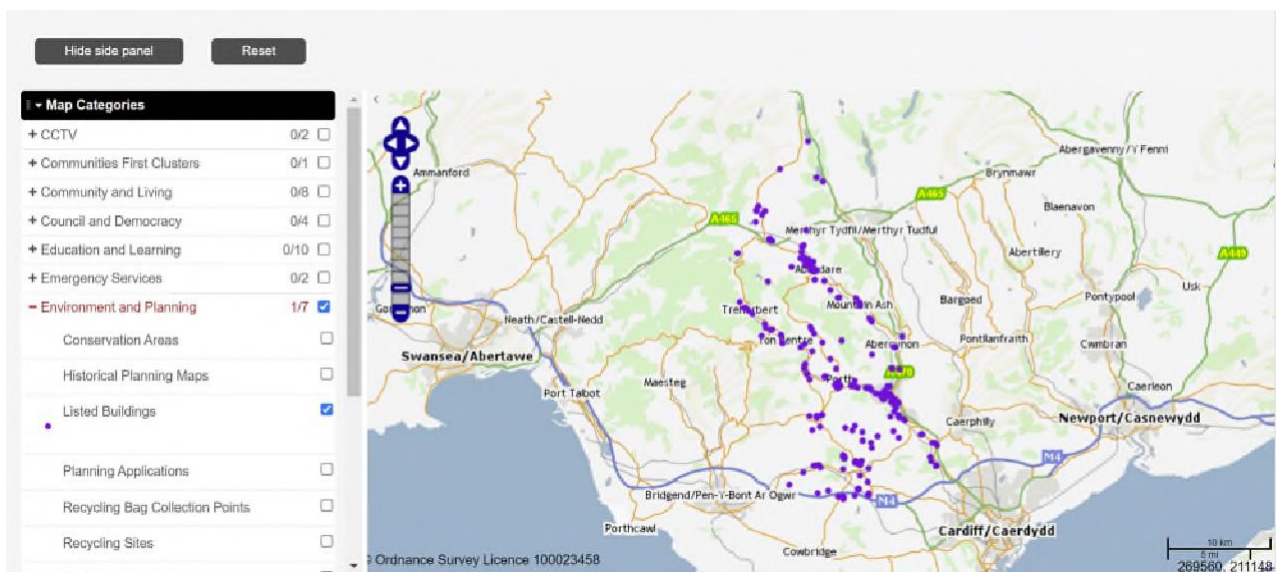
Bridgend County Borough's historic assets include:

- 373 listed buildings and structures
- 60 scheduled ancient monuments
- 16 conservation areas
- five historic parks and gardens
- 525 buildings on the draft local list
- sites or areas of archaeological significance
- one historic landscape of outstanding historic interest in Wales
- one historic landscape of special historic interest in Wales, plus one on the county boundary

Merthyr Tydfil has 233 listed buildings ranging from viaducts to terrace houses of historic importance. The below map shows the Merthyr Heritage map of Historic parks and gardens as well as scheduled ancient monuments in the area. The Scheduled Ancient Monuments include historic sites relating to iron works in the area such as the deserted Iron Mining Village, Ffos y Frand dating back to 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. This links to the industrial legacy for the area and is important for its potential to enhance knowledge of the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century iron working and other industrial practices (Cadw Scheduled Monuments <http://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/sam/FullReport?lang=en&id=913> )



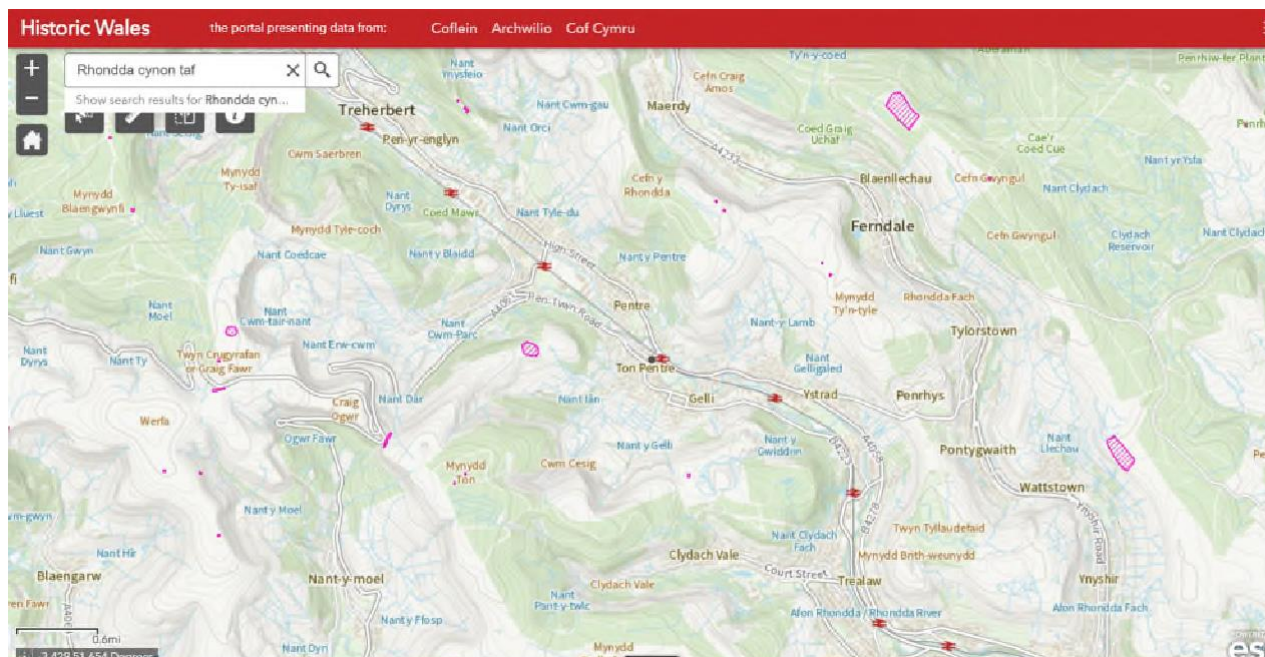
RCT has almost 360 listed buildings in the area which are shown on the below map:



The Scheduled Monuments listed with Cadw are shown in the below map, these include Twyn y Bridallt Roman Camp. This dates back to the Roman period from the conquest of Wales by the



Romans and is of national importance in enhancing our knowledge of Roman military organisation (situated top right of the map).



As well as the physical landscapes and industrial heritage there are other elements that have risen from those industrial times. The male voice choirs (as discussed above) of the area which grew from the mining community are known worldwide and whilst some have gone others still thrive. This is a true reflection of the culture of Welsh communities that are cohesive and proud of their heritage. The choirs continue to thrive in each of the areas within CTM.

There have been projects to engage young people in their local heritage such as Unloved Heritage (<https://unlovedheritage.wales/blaenrhondda/>) . This project was a Wales wide initiative funded through the Heritage Lottery and led by Cadw. Valleys Kids were part of the project, and a group of young people were involved in work around the old Fern Colliery and the demolished Caroline Street where the families of workers used to live.

This brought a significant amount of understanding and learning about the industrial past to the young people and also engaged members of the community who had lived there and worked in the mine. A video of the Minecraft re-build of the colliery can be seen here <https://www.facebook.com/UnlovedHeritage/videos/233641817869616/>

## Libraries

There is a wealth of services provided within Libraries which aim to improve and support the wellbeing of the communities. These are excellent resources not just for learning but for socialising and reducing loneliness. They are accessible now either to visit or online which makes accessing reading and other materials easier for those who may not be able to visit the services.

Within the libraries as well as books they provide a range of activities for children/young people and adults. These activities link with culture and heritage of the local area as well as other activities. Data shows that between 2018/19 and 2020/21 the number of e-books, audio downloads and loans are increasing across the CTM area for both adults and children.

There is also a significant increase in the number of Welsh books downloaded between 2019/20 and 2020/21 as shown in the below table:

Table 60: Welsh books downloaded 2019/20 and 2020/21

| Local authority          | Total Welsh loans<br>2020/21 | Total Welsh loans<br>2019/20 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Bridgend</b>          | 176                          | 51                           |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 341                          | 106                          |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    | 42                           | 12                           |

Activities in the RCT libraries include the below:

- Welsh classes, reading groups and coffee mornings
- Male voice choir rehearsal
- Creative writing and poetry groups
- Family history groups and local history group
- Art classes
- Welsh baby massage and rhyme time
- Book club

These activities provide both cultural activities and activities to learn and share about heritage.

RCT are also looking at developing a 'human library' involving people from different backgrounds sharing their cultural experiences. The concept is about lending people rather than books to break down barriers and learn from different cultures and backgrounds. Opportunities are provided to bring people together who wouldn't normally speak to or have contact with each other. As well as providing opportunities to learn from different cultures it can provide a better understanding of the people who live in the communities and how they live.

Within Bridgend Awen provide a range of culture activities which includes management of libraries and theatres. Awen libraries provide a range of activities which include:

- Bounce and Rhyme
- Story Times
- Dungeons and Dragons
- Feel Good for Life (for dementia patients)
- Reading groups
- Welsh language groups (for learners and fluent speakers)
- Cuppa with a Copper
- Craft sessions
- Digital drop-in sessions
- Reminiscence sessions with care homes (via Zoom)
- School holiday activities for families
- Reading Well With...collections for mental health, dementia support

Awen's libraries constantly adapted during 2020-21 to ensure they remained resilient and continued to meet the need of the community, despite the challenges presented by coronavirus to front-line, customer-facing services.

A brand-new service 'book and collect' was launched in June 2020 and rolled-out to most branches following a successful pilot. The scheme allowed customers to access physical books during the pandemic, offering a lifeline to so many people, not least those most at risk of social isolation.

Another vital community service – Books on Wheels – was reinstated as quickly and safely as possible, to provide books and other support to those housebound and/or most vulnerable within

society. This service was featured on ITV Wales News, with customers explaining why they benefit from their doorstep deliveries.

Awen also worked in partnership with Digital Communities Wales, Halo and Wales Co-op to offer carers the opportunity to borrow an iPad pre-loaded with useful apps, to give those at increased risk of social isolation the opportunity to communicate, keep entertained and engaged, and to improve their digital skills.

Library staff took the time to contact over 1,300 users by telephone to 'check-in' with them and carry out short surveys to help shape their service.

*"The library has been the reason why I have developed skills on the internet. They helped me set up an email address. They are so supportive and talk me through each step of how to do things. I use the library, mainly for computer access, so it's good to know that limited access is available when lockdown measures lift, and what that looks like (book ahead, area hygiene, track & trace, correct change etc.). I will look at library services online/on phone such as magazines and ancestry."*

*"I think for people who live alone as I do, or people who are lonely at the moment, to feel like they can simply pop in the library to see a friendly face from staff or others and have some small amount of company would be so beneficial. The library feels like a safe and local place to perhaps have that."*

*"It has been a lifeline for me, especially since I haven't been able to go out during the pandemic but I have been able to use the call and collect service and my daughter has been able to pick up any books that I have ordered. Thank you'."*

*"The library is one of my happy places."*

The libraries are now developing into community wellbeing hubs which contributes to the wellbeing of the local community by providing a non-stigmatising place to visit. The activities help to bring people together which builds companionship between people of all ages.

## Volunteering

Volunteers are a significant asset to communities not only in giving their time but in the skills they bring with them. During Covid this was evidenced across the nation with people coming together to help each other through formal volunteering opportunities, providing informal support to ensure the vulnerable were able to get food, medication and have someone to talk to.

Data relating to volunteering is available nationally, however it is limited. Local data is also available, but again this depends on the individual services and whether they need to capture data as part of a funding allocation.

There are three county voluntary councils across the CTM area

- Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO)
- Interlink – RCT
- Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT)

These organisations are the cornerstone of support for community and voluntary groups as well as not for profit organisations and social enterprises. All these groups are normally local and support the local community in various ways.

They have been a key partner in supporting members of their communities before, during and beyond Covid, working in partnership with local authorities and health services.

## BAVO

BAVO provides support and advice to voluntary and community groups in the Bridgend area. They are a key partner in the delivery of local services and provision to the communities.

The following data (Table 61) has been taken from the Annual Impact Report for BAVO which shows the numbers of volunteers they have engaged with:

| Bavo    |                                  |                              |                   |                                   |
|---------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Year    | Volunteer enquiries responded to | Volunteering interviews held | Volunteers placed | Young people placed as volunteers |
| 2019/20 | 1,257                            | 283                          | 253               | 45                                |
| 2018/19 | 687                              | 282                          | 204               | 72                                |
| 2017/18 | 976                              | 423                          | 268               | 105                               |
| 2016/17 | 1,286                            | 486                          | 259               | 128                               |

There are a range of activities that volunteers are able to be involved with which cuts across the age ranges. The support provided includes accessing funding through different grant streams, part of this being done by working in partnership with the local authority.

Services which were provided pre-Covid were able to adapt quickly to support communities such as the Community Navigator service:

Community Navigators link socially isolated people with activities in their community. This supports the work of the health and social care sector in reducing or delaying the need to engage with these services.

During Covid the Community Navigators role changed to support people in their homes. The change was prompt as the teams were already established and working within allocated cluster areas. In addition, the teams were also aware of which services were available and were able to make contact to establish what they were doing in response to the pandemic. Feedback from partners in an evaluation of BAVOs response during the pandemic stated that *'Community Navigators were the people who knew what was going on in their local community.'* (Urban Foundry 2021).

During Covid BAVO worked in partnership to deliver the community response which included supporting individuals and wider third sector services. They received nearly 1500 new volunteering registrations which they matched to local organisations to support local communities. Volunteers were matched to support Foodbanks, shopping, pharmacy, telephone befriending and shielding support.

Volunteers were distributed across the area with 93 volunteer drivers supporting shopping, prescription and foodbank deliveries. These distributions were as below which reflects the density of the population in the areas:

- Bridgend & Pencoed – 60
- Porthcawl – 3
- Sarn/Bryncethin, Brynmenyn/Tondu – 10
- Llynfi Valley – 5
- Kenfig, Pyle, Cornelly – 4
- Ogmore & Garw valleys – 11



Telephone support within BAVO identified changes in the needs of people as the pandemic progressed. One change related to the wellbeing of individuals and more support needed around this. In response they extended the availability of telephone support outside normal working hours. In total between March 2020 and March 2021 4,004 referrals were received by the services with a peak in June 2020 dealing with 900 referrals.

In addition to this, working with the local authority they supported visits to those who were shielding. Where no contact was achieved after three phone calls from the local authority BAVO volunteers would undertake a doorstep visit. There were 1,126 visits undertaken which people who they spoke to were very grateful for. If a doorstep visit did not result in contact, then South Wales Police were informed.

The above shows how the services have all worked in partnership during the pandemic to support the communities. These are just some of the examples provided and there were many more which yielded effective support in the community and to small organisations.

## VAMT

VAMT provide support in the Merthyr Tydfil area with their work broadly focussing on:

- Information and advice
- Learning and development
- Networking and communication
- Shaping, influencing and building the social capital and resilience of the sector
- Raising the profile of the sector

They represent and support the third sector organisations and volunteering in the area.

VAMT Annual Report (Table 62) shows the number of volunteers they had placed were as below:

| VAMT           |  |
|----------------|--|
|                | Number of volunteers placed (all ages) |
| <b>2019/20</b> | 97                                     |
| <b>2018/19</b> | No data                                |
| <b>2017/18</b> | 152                                    |
| <b>2016/17</b> | 162                                    |

## Local Authorities

During Covid the volunteering support was also provided by local authorities. There was a need to ensure the wellbeing of those who were self-isolating was met by being able to access their medication and get food. As well as these elements other forms of support were provided. The below table shows the volunteering activities in RCT:

Table 63: Volunteer activities for 2020 and 2021

| Activity                       | April to October 2020 | January to October 2021 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Dog Walking</b>             | 858                   | 170                     |
| <b>Prescription collection</b> | 164                   | 71                      |

|                             |     |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>Mobile Response</b>      | 766 | 0   |
| <b>Shopping</b>             | 9   | 134 |
| <b>Friendly phone calls</b> | 241 | 380 |

Table 64: Volunteer Interactions

|   | <b>April to October 2020</b> | <b>January to October 2021</b> |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Interactions</b>                       | 2038                         | 2574                           |
| <b>Active residents (supported)</b>       | 960                          | 976                            |
| <b>Active volunteers</b>                  | 127                          | 133                            |
| <b>Volunteer hours</b>                    | 1581.08                      | 2024.12                        |
| <b>Average hours per active volunteer</b> | 12.27                        | 15.13                          |

Between 2020 and 2021 there is an increase in activities relating to the volunteers who supported residents. The support provided changed between 2020 and 2021 with less prescriptions being collected but more shopping being provided. This may have been due to a range of factors such as alternative arrangements being made with friends and family and changes to restrictions.

## Art and Theatre

The national data which shows participation in arts and culture events is shown in the table below:

Table 65: Percentage of people who attend or participate in arts culture or heritage activities three or more times a year by local authority

|                          | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2019-20</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2019-20</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                          | Age 16-24      | Age 24 – 44    |                | Age 45-64      |                | Age 65-74      |                | Age 75+        |                |
| <b>Bridgend</b>          |                | 84             | 80             | 69             | 60             | 65             | 59             | 59             | 56             |
| <b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b> | 75             | 78             | 76             | 68             | 62             | 62             | 61             | 38             | 54             |
| <b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>    |                | 86             | 72             | 63             | 59             | *              | *              |                |                |

The annual survey undertaken by the Arts Council for Wales (2019) shows that in 2019 more women (88.9%) than men (84.5%) attended arts events once a year or more. There is also a lower level of attendance for those living in the lower social grades. Attendance at events covers 'south central' area of Wales which includes Cardiff where there will be more venues and a wider choice of activities to attend. The survey shows that south central is the region that has the highest levels of attendance at events with 89.1% attending an event once or more a year.

The most frequently attended artform was cinema with 6 in 10 adults attending once a year or more. Lowest attendance rates were ballet 5.5% and opera 6.1%.

Arts Council for Wales (2019) also undertook a survey relating to children's attendance at events. This showed that the majority attended carnival and street arts which had decreased slightly in 2019. There is however an increase in classical music and opera attendance among children compared to 2018.

Within RCT the below table shows theatre attendance between 2014/5 and 2019/20.

Table 66: Theatre attendance RCT Park and Dare and Coliseum

|          | Park & Dare<br>Treorchy | Coliseum<br>Aberdare |                                   |
|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Fin Year | Attendance              | Attendance           | TOTAL                             |
| 14/15    | 31,706                  | 34,121               | 65,827                            |
| 15/16    | 31,927                  | 26,476               | 58,403                            |
| 16/17    | 34,089                  | 32,374               | 66,463                            |
| 17/18    | 30,008                  | 28,741               | 58,749                            |
| 18/19    | 30,918                  | 31,380               | 62,298                            |
| 19/20    | 23,959                  | 24,864               | 48,823 (impacted by the pandemic) |

The numbers fluctuate but remain at a reasonable level of attendance. Even though the pandemic will have impacted on the 2019/20 figures the numbers are not significantly lower which could indicate a good level of attendance prior to restrictions. Those attending the digital presented programmes for RCT theatres during 2020/21 was significantly higher with 116,242 participants. Whilst it is not clear whether all those viewing were from the area, those who are living in the area may be more likely to attend the theatre having viewed performances remotely.

There are examples of projects which are provided locally where young people have engaged in arts activities. The below information is from RCT:

RCT Families First Commission: SONIG Youth Music Industry and Youth Arts Programme

2020/21 Performance Data

Number of NEW children and young people (aged 8-25) supported by the project – 140

#### **Improved Emotional / Mental Wellbeing**

Number of participants for whom improved emotional/mental wellbeing was identified as an objective – 106

Number of participants for whom improved emotional/mental wellbeing was identified as an objective – 74%

#### **Changes to Lifestyle / Behaviour**

Number of families / individuals for whom contributing to changes to their lifestyles/behaviours was identified as an objective – 106

Percentage of families / individuals successfully achieving this outcome – 75%

#### **Improved Resilience**

Number of individuals for whom improved resilience was identified as an objective – 14

Percentage of individuals successfully achieving this outcome – 93%

## **Pontypridd Municipal Arts Centre**

Awen have received £5.4 million Levelling Up funding to redevelop the building with its gothic architecture. A mixed programme of events with live music is planned to use as a step up from smaller venues. It is being developed for community use being more vibrant and adaptive.

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/CompletedConsultations/TheFutureofPontypriddsMuniArtsCentre.aspx>

## **Bridgend – Awen**

With live performances not permissible for the whole financial year, Awen's creative team turned to alternative ways of entertaining, educating and filling the missing shared spaces that theatres traditionally offer.

Working in partnership with Bridgend Carers and Llynfi Special Families, 'doorstep dances' provided by performers Kitsch n Sync brought joy to 60 households of highly isolated people with caring and/or sharing responsibilities.

*"Thank you, loved every minute, felt so spoilt and special, and the girls were amazing!"*

*"I am really touched, the only other day that was better than this was my wedding day!"*

Monthly exhibitions on the exterior of the Grand Pavilion, 'Promenart', supported local, freelance artists, graphic designers and prop makers to showcase their work, while the venue was closed. These have engaged residents and visitors to Porthcawl in visual art in an accessible format while at the same time supporting freelancers who were among the most affected groups economically. The outside of the venue has also been lit in lights of various colours throughout the year to commemorate and celebrate different charitable causes.

Another partnership, with Citrus Arts, gave families the chance to enjoy themed (St David's Day, Easter, Lanterns) craft activities at home and access to a community space to share photos of their creations online. A four-week course of digital film-making classes upskilled ten young people each session. Awen supported up-and-coming local writers, directors and creatives to turn a play destined for the Edinburgh Fringe into a radio play, so that their work could still be broadcast. To continue engaging with customers throughout the closure, Awen ventured into online shows for the first time, offering a range of performances that could be streamed digitally to people at home.

At Christmastime, with the absence of the annual pantomime, a solo musician performed seasonal music and classical jazz in front of the Pavilion to elevate the mood of the local community and give freelance musicians the opportunity to perform.

## **Maesteg Town Hall**

Despite the pandemic, work continued on the £8m redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall. Although there is inevitable delay in the project's completion due to supply chain issues and new construction site-specific working methods because of COVID-19, the ambition is nevertheless on track to be realised in 2022.

Engagement with the local communities gathered momentum on the venue's social media platforms, thanks to photographs of unusual finds during the strip-out phase and high-quality features installed during the restoration phase. Several volunteers and local historians supported an information gathering project to develop the content for the heritage interpretation work, which is funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, whilst a series of videos documenting the repair of the Hall's famous Christopher Williams paintings were published online. Further information can be accessed at <https://maestegtownhall.com/future/>

There was an impact on the arts and theatre sector during the Covid restrictions due to closures of theatres and other arts centres. Whilst the restrictions have now been lifted there is a tentative response from people returning to the theatres.

A UK wide survey of cultural organisations was undertaken by Indigo to look at audience views on returning to live events during the first and second lock downs (Indigo 2020). There were 258 cultural organisations participating in the survey. The survey responses included 7% (2,855) of the total from Wales, the Grand Theatre in Porthcawl sent a link for the survey out to their participant list. The majority of respondents to the survey were aged between 55 and 74 and had attended the theatre 4 or more times per year pre-Covid. There were 16% of survey respondents identifying as disabled. The survey suggests that respondents are still a little apprehensive in attending the theatres with only 20% booking for future events. 67% of respondents would also not consider booking for events for at least 3 months. Anecdotally this is borne out locally in Bridgend with the number of people booking further in advance being low compared to those who book closer to the date of an event. As well as being concerned about being in an enclosed space with a number of people it may also be due to people being concerned about their own circumstances relating to Covid and having to isolate or any other restrictions imposed. Of those who responded to the question relating to returning to venues on relaxation of restrictions 67% stated that they would consider attending events and venues if they re-opened with social distancing but only 14% would go to venues as soon as they opened. However, 72% of respondents to the survey expect events they have booked to go ahead. Later bookings for events is difficult for venues in relation to marketing and whether people are aware of the event or just being cautious as well as whether an event will go ahead if there are very low bookings.

Digital culture was also considered as part of the above survey and 62% of respondents had already experienced culture online before and during the Covid restrictions. Of those who watched digital culture 80% had watched full length productions and 31% made a donation to watch a performance. Respondents were also then asked, 'If you were unable to go to cultural events in a venue for the foreseeable future, would you be interested in engaging with cultural events ONLINE?'. Of those who responded 70% said they were interested and 37% they would not be interested with the main reason being that 'the online experience isn't an attractive alternative to the LIVE event'. Those who would engage in online events were mainly interested in:

- A performance especially created to be watched ONLINE (78%)
- An ARCHIVE recording of a performance with a full audience staged before Coronavirus (74%)
- A LIVE event filmed behind closed doors (72%)
- A LIVE event with a socially distanced audience that I cannot attend in person (66%)
- A RECORDING of an event filmed behind closed doors (63%)
- A RECORDING of an event with a socially distanced audience that I could not attend in person (59%)

Overall, the response indicated that digital can be rewarding but is not a replication of a live event. Over 2/3 of the respondents would pay to watch something new.

Outdoor events were also considered in the survey and 80% (Wave 2) had attended outdoor events and 55% said they would go to cultural events outdoors if they were unable to go to indoor events in during lockdowns. Open air theatre and plays (84%) and open-air concerts and gigs (76%) were the most likely events they would attend outdoors. Relating to paying to attend there was much more of an appetite to pay the same as live events for outdoor than digital events.

Disabled patrons were also asked about their return to the theatre and the following were the most important considerations for them in making a decision to return:

- Confidence that accessible toilet facilities will still be available
- Confidence that accessible seating will be included in social distancing arrangements
- Priority access for disabled patrons if queue management is employed

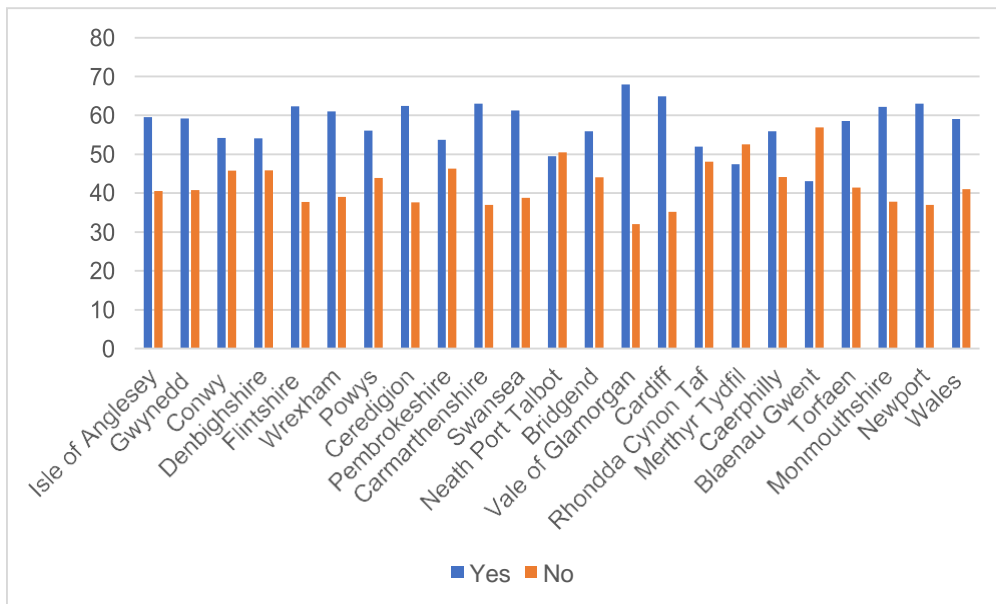
The survey indicates that those who previously attended cultural events would return although some caution is evident for some. There is also a positive link to digital and outdoor events for some with an indication that they would be happy to pay to attend/view such events. Although the participants were UK wide it provides an indication of what could be made available and the appetite for participation in various ways.

## Sports and Recreation

Taking part in sports and recreation activities are beneficial to the wellbeing of people both physically and mentally. The opportunities vary in different areas with the use of sports facilities as well as outdoor space. The use of the outdoors, as previously discussed, increased during the pandemic with more people making use of parks and the natural landscape. There are many connections with the different elements of the assessment and sport, in particular for mental health, eight management and reducing loneliness and isolation.

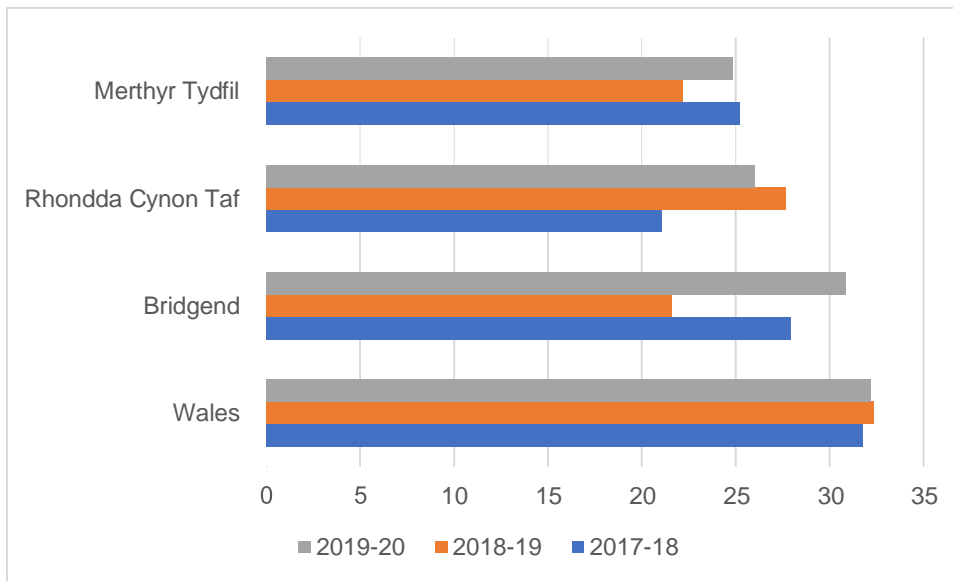
Taking part in sporting activity is captured in the National Survey for Wales. The below information is taken from the results of the survey. The first chart shows the overall activity rate across Wales in all authorities.

**Chart 94: Percentage in each Local Authority participating in any sporting activity or not 2019/20**



Both Bridgend and RCT are above the Wales (59%) average for participation in sport. Merthyr Tydfil are lower than the average at 47%, but the activity has increased compared to 2018/19 as shown in the chart below.

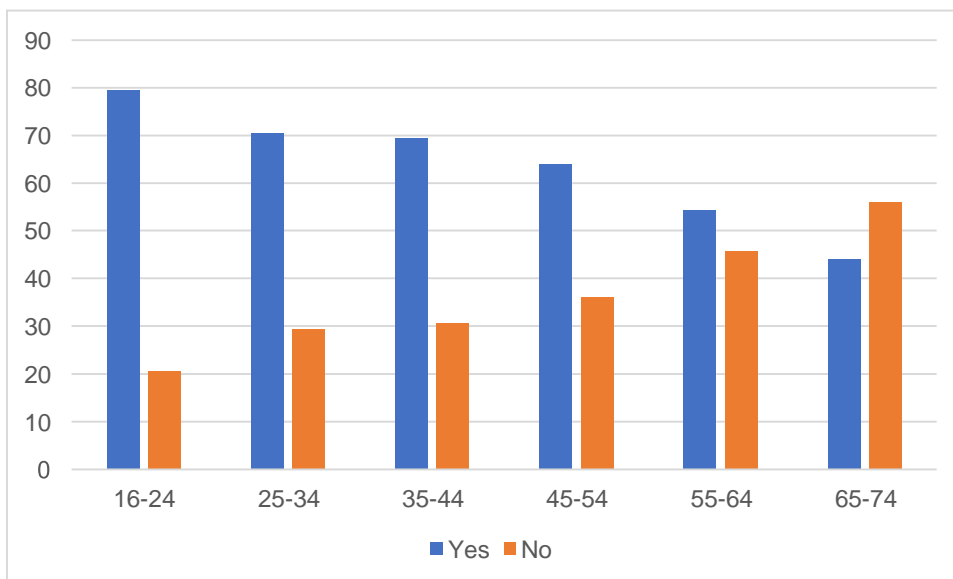
**Chart 95: Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week (FG indicator 38)**



The overall activity rate across CTM is lower than the Wales average, Bridgend being closer to the average than Merthyr Tydfil and RCT. There is an increase in activity in Merthyr and Bridgend shown in 2019/20 with activities decreasing in RCT, but still being higher than Merthyr Tydfil. There are a range of reasons why some do not take part in sporting activities which are discussed further below.

Ages of those who participate in sport or physical activity is higher in the 16 to 44 age group. They also are more likely to participate in sports three times a week or more. The chart below provides a breakdown for Wales as a whole:

**Chart 96: Percentage of those participating in sporting activities 2019/20 by age range**



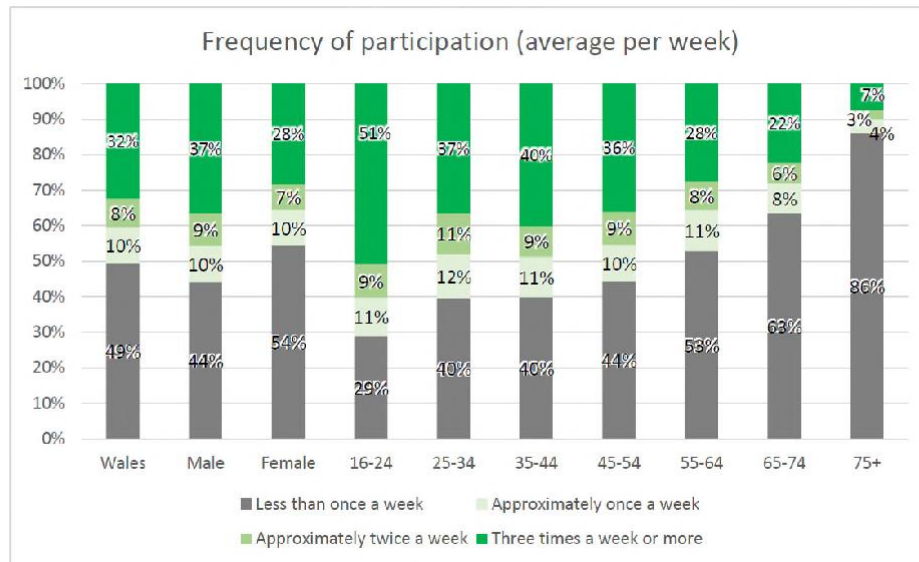
Source: National Survey for Wales results viewer



The below chart is taken from the State of the Nation report for 2018/19 which illustrates the difference in activities between age, gender and activity participation.

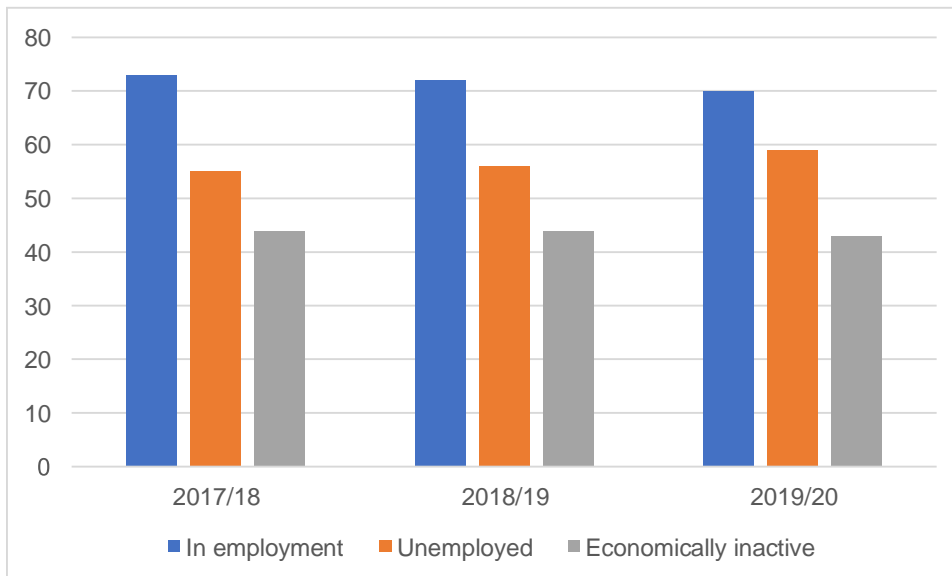
**Chart 97: Frequency of participation by age and gender.**

*Figure 1.1: Frequency of participation (week) – by gender and age*



The State of the Nation report by Sports Wales (2019) provides an analysis of the data from the National Survey for Wales relating to sporting activities. Differences in frequency of activity is discussed in the report with a lower participation rate linked to disability and employment status. These are shown in the chart below:

**Chart 98: Percentage Participation by Economic Status by year**



Reasons behind the lower activity rate are not more widely considered. However, there will be economic reasons around affordability in accessing some activities as well as having access to transport in order to attend facilities. Further to this the report considers the 'demand' and it identifies that those who do not participate in sport but have a demand are:

*'more likely to be female, aged 45 -64, living in material deprivation, have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity, and have the lowest quotas of both high wellbeing and good/very good general health. This group is also found at a higher-than-expected level in South Wales and in Communities First Cluster Areas. The demand provision preference of this cluster is indoor games or activities' (p16)*

Again, this could be linked to affordability to be able to take part in organised activities which require payment to take part.

There are ways of accessing activities in different ways some of which are free. Specifically, to the CTM area there are a range of clubs and activities.

### **Park Run**

Parkrun is a national organisation which brings people together to either run, walk, jog or volunteer and it is free. They are seen as a community event with 5k being the length of a 'run'. Those attending are urged to use public transport, walk, run or cycle to the events rather than drive, to reduce the impact on the environment. The ethos of the initiative links with a range of elements of wellbeing relating to physical and mental health, community cohesion and environment. In addition to this they use local cafés which brings some benefit to the economy. The park runs in CTM area are held on a Saturday morning and those registered on the Parkrun website are shown below with some of the statistics <https://www.parkrun.org.uk/>

Bridgend has a park run on a Saturday morning in

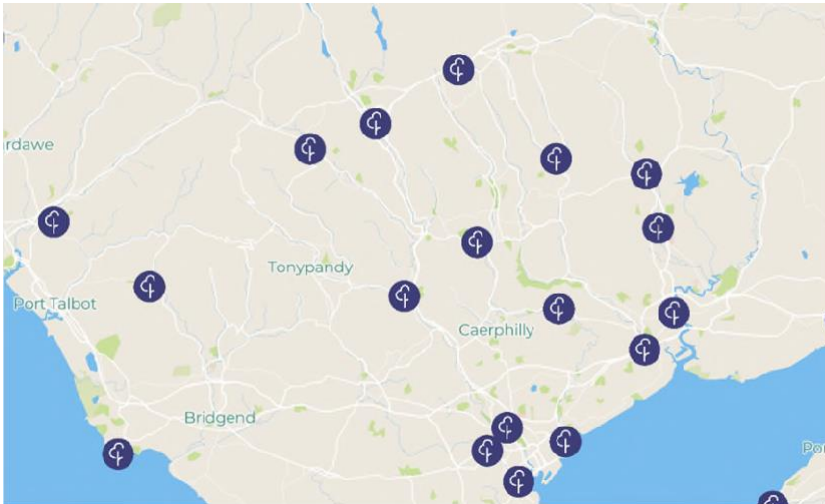
- Porthcawl started in 2013 and they have had 374 events with an average of 272 people finishing the 5k distance per week. They have also had 739 volunteers being involved. This takes place on the seafront.
- Maesteg started in 2017 and have a parkrun in a local park and have had 147 events, with an average of 59 people finishing the 5k distance per week. The total finishing to date is 2,023, they also have a number of volunteers being involved-331 to date.

RCT have park runs in:

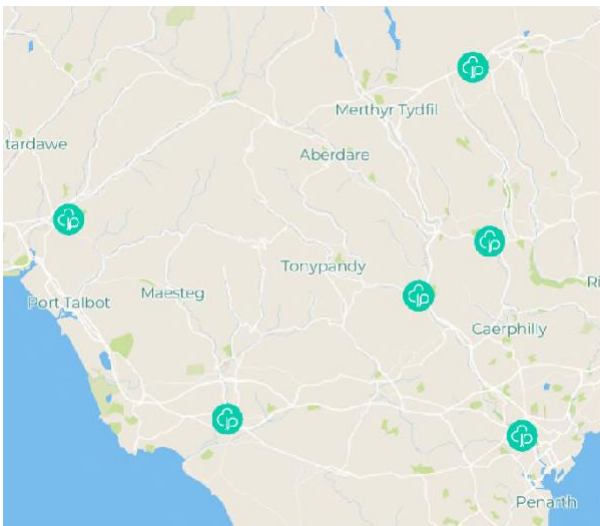
- Aberdare started in 2018 and have their park run in a local park and have had 100 events with an average of 98 finishers every week. The total finishing to date is 2,429, they also have 171 volunteers supporting the run.
- Pontypridd started in 2013 and have their park run in a local park and have had 316 events to date, with an average of 214 finishers per week. The total finishing to date is 9,034, they also have 742 volunteers supporting the run.

Merthyr Park Run started in 2017 and takes place in the Leisure Village with 158 events to date, they have an average of 46 finishers per week. The total finishing to date is 2,302 and there are 378 volunteers supporting the events.

A map of some of the park runs in the South East Wales area is shown below



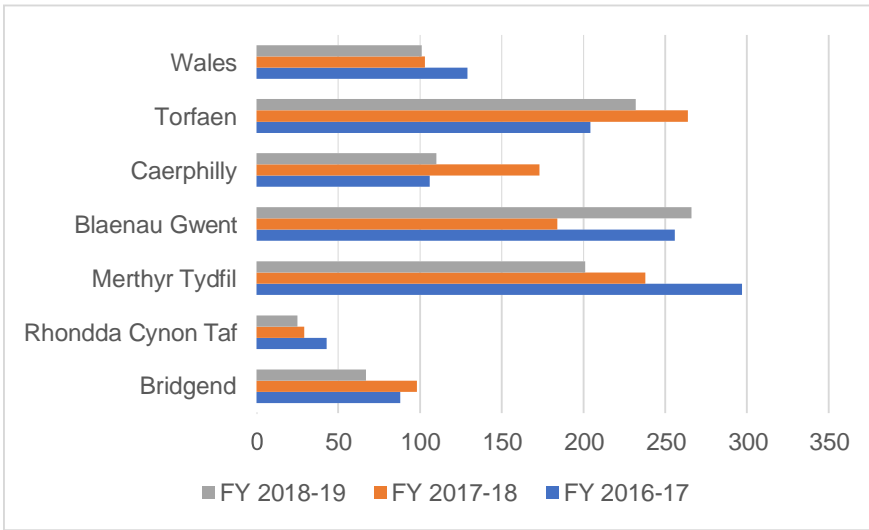
They also have Junior Park Runs in the area which are shown on the below map:



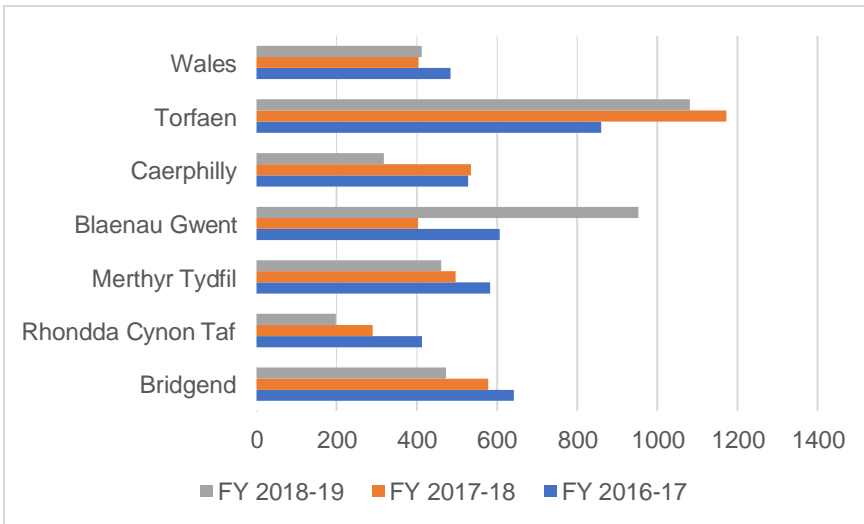
### Free Swimming

The Free Swim initiative first launched in 2003 aimed to get more children under 16 and adults over 60 to swim and more regularly. The charts below show the rate of children taking advantage of the free swimming up to 2019:

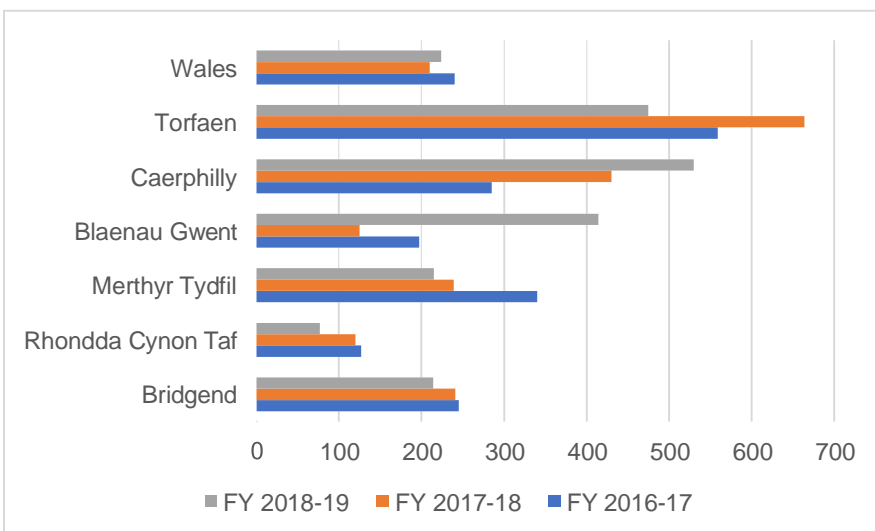
**Chart 99: Children age under 8 years**



**Chart 100: Children age 8 to 11 years**



**Chart 101: Children age 12 to 16 years**



As can be seen in the charts the rate of children taking part in free swims is decreasing across the CTM area. Whilst Merthyr Tydfil rates have reduced, they have remained above the Wales average for children up to age 11. Bridgend and RCT have higher rates in the age range 11 to 16 but they remain lower than that Wales average. In comparison neighbouring authorities Bleanau Gwent and Torfaen have consistently higher rates of take up across all ages in 2018/19.

Following a review of the Free Swim initiative it was found that the numbers taking advantage were reducing with initial 'splash sessions' for young people rising from under 400,000 to 800,000 in 2004/2005, which was maintained for a few years. The number of 'splash sessions' for younger swimmers reduced to 145,000 in 2016/17. It was found that this was due to the number of free swim sessions available reducing. The impact was similar for the older age groups partaking in the free swim initiative. The conclusion of the review was that it was no longer fit for purpose and was not '*servicing the equalities and the wellbeing objectives of the Welsh Government or of Sport Wales effectively*' (UKRCS 2018).

As a result of the review the initiative was changed in 2019 and whilst it continues to apply to the same age range it now prioritises those from the most deprived areas. This is to ensure that those who face the biggest barriers to swimming are able to learn to swim and swim more frequently.

## Strengths

- Using and developing the industrial landscape: There are business initiatives which make use of the industrial landscape with the development of Zip World Tower in Hirwaun. This brings people and tourism to the area with the activities, but also has a historical element with the story of the Tower Colliery. This cuts across all the pillars using the local environment through the history of the area as well as the economic impact of bringing people into the area and the benefits of the activities.
- Welsh language ability is increasing in the area moving towards the targets for the million Welsh speakers by 2050. All areas have a target to achieve for Welsh speakers in line with the long-term vision of the Welsh Government.
- There are a range of groups from young children to adults which come together to enjoy the Welsh language.
- Culture is very important for the area with people valuing the past and enjoying the here and now. This was reflected in the engagement with communities. Cultural identity for many meant a sense of place, belonging, and, specifically, their Welsh identity. Promotion of the area's cultural past and current opportunities both externally and within communities was considered important, including promotion of the Welsh language.
- During the engagement one of the 'best things about the area' was: History and heritage of the area and its role in bringing tourists to the area, '*There is a strong Welsh culture here and growing use of the Welsh language*
- Libraries are well used and valued by members of the community with a range of activities for people to take part in. They were a lifeline for some during Covid restrictions. Data shows that between 2018/19 and 2020/21 the number of e-books, audio downloads and loans are increasing across the CTM area for both adults and children
- Overall participation in sport is good. Participation in free sport activities in the area is good with free swimming being available and others participating in the various Park Runs.

## Opportunities

### Welsh Language

All areas in CTM are preparing or have prepared their Welsh language Strategy for the next 5 years. The content of the strategies will have key areas for promoting the Welsh language in their areas which will include how they are working to contribute to the goal of 1million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

One respondent during engagement expressed the following:

*'I'd like to see English schools do more about what it is to be Welsh - our history and our culture – and more Welsh language support for those parents who can't speak Welsh but send their children to Welsh school. I know they want to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050 but I can't see anyone doing anything about it.'*

There is a need to promote the good work that is ongoing to promote the language and ensure communities are aware of the drivers for the strategies so that they see that something is being done about it.

Due to the comprehensive work that is taking place in development of the strategies in each area there is an opportunity for the PSB to support the priorities. This will provide a regional approach to supporting the Welsh language in the local communities. Feedback from engagement has shown there is a clear pride in being Welsh and promotion of the Welsh language and culture.

### Arts and Theatres

There are a range of cultural activities available in the CTM area from small theatres to larger venues such as the Grand Pavillion in Porthcawl. However, the arts sector has undergone unprecedented challenges in the last 18 months due to the Covid restrictions. The cultural and arts sectors were supported with funding through the pandemic, with the Culture Recovery Fund and Arts Resilience Fund. Venues are just starting to open and bringing people back into theatres may bring challenges. In particular, the challenges relating to employment in the sector and people leaving during the pandemic moving on to other employment.

Funding is making it possible to renovate historic buildings in the communities to bring communities together.

### Heritage

Building on the work that has already been undertaken in the area across the age ranges. Further funding is being sought in RCT to deliver a range of activities which engages children and adults. During engagement there was a lot of pride in the area and the desire to preserve and share the local history and industrial heritage.

### Libraries

There is a lot being delivered in library buildings and in the communities with mobile libraries being a lifeline for some during the Covid restrictions. The link between libraries and culture was captured by the engagement with calls for more books and knowledge relating to Welsh language and culture. Libraries are also key for people to meet and socialise, they are important to some who experience loneliness. They are becoming wellbeing hubs and an opportunity to develop this is evident to enhance the community services and hubs that are already in place. One response identified that they *“Need more community centres or meeting places for people to go to. I can't afford to keep buying coffee!”*

Engagement found that: Socialising strengthens relationships by bringing people together, helping them to make friends. Respondents felt that socialising reduced loneliness and supported better

mental health, but better transport links are needed in some areas to improve the ability to socialise.

### **Sports and Leisure activities**

There are a range of sports and leisure activities in each area and there is access to free swimming and park runs as well as the natural environment for exercise and leisure activities.

Some area highlighted in the engagement was affordability of access to some leisure facilities. This was especially true for young people who talked about the cost of doing activities from sports to piano grades. Others who said that although they lived in more affluent areas it didn't mean that their parents were able to afford to pay for activities.

Gender quality relating to sport was also highlighted for some girls who spoke about how sports are taught according to the gender of participants in school. Also outside of school certain sports and activities are targeted specifically at boys e.g. motocross

National statistical data shows that those who are in employment are more likely to participate in sports than those who are not. This may be due to affordability of being able to participate or access sports and leisure activities due to lack of transport, engagement identified that those in more affluent areas are driven to activities (eg swimming, guides).

Engagement responses included Community Activities – 'more things to do that don't cost lots of money. I want to be able to do more sports'. There was also a call for more activities in certain areas (mainly poorer communities) and low cost/ no cost activities and facilities eg youth groups, skate park.

### **Volunteering**

There are opportunities to build on the activities of people during the pandemic who volunteered. These can link to all aspects of wellbeing in communities relating to heritage, economy, environment, cultural and community cohesion. Many respondents discussed volunteering in the engagement sessions, for access to work as well as for meeting people. They believed that volunteering made people feel 'socially connected'. Some considered that there was a need for more varied volunteering opportunities.

Factors that are considered to support social wellbeing included:

**Volunteering** - Aids connectedness with a two-way process - people feel wanted and of use within their community and the community benefits. It also helps people meet new people.

### **Transport**

Transport was the most frequently barrier to accessing cultural activities. There was a clear need for better transport links for people of all ages to be able to access activities. The below are just some of the comments highlighted in the engagement report:

- *Transport needs to be more reliable and available later into the night to enable people to travel.*
- *For the area, I would improve public transport links. I think it is ridiculous that we can only get a train once an hour and none on Sunday's. The train stops at 10pm on the weekend which really limits options for travelling, not only for out of the area but also into - we need to encourage people to visit our area but make it very hard for people who don't or can't drive.*



- *Transport tended not to be available to many activities so those whose parents had a car drove them to activities and hobbies, including dance, guides, sports and ambulance cadets*

There are opportunities for this to be addressed with the new South Wales Metro, but there will be other elements that need to be considered. One respondent mentioned community transport which may be an opportunity to consider for more rural areas not served by any public transport.

## Summary

In summary, this section has sought to bring together and assess available information that relates to the cultural activities in the CTM area.

This has been set out showing the importance of community and culture for the areas. This is borne out in the engagement with various members of local communities. There is a clear pride in the area, in being Welsh and being part of the Welsh culture.

There are challenges which are identified such as affordability to be able to take part in some activities as well as transport to be able to access activities. These are not insurmountable to overcome with services and communities working together.

There are some exciting opportunities for the area to develop and work together to build on the natural environment that makes up the areas from the industrial landscape to the coastal areas. Funding is being brought into the area to enhance the cultural activities with buildings being renovated to be used by the communities such as in Maesteg and Pontypridd.

There are clear links to the Wellbeing Goals in supporting health, culture, prosperity and cohesive communities. The cultural element of wellbeing provides a clear link to these important aspects of wellbeing and with the opportunities available can further enhance the cultural aspects of the area.

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