



Well-being Cross-cutting Objective	Tackling Loneliness and Isolation
Lead Officer	Sharon Richards, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil and Simon James, Interlink RCT
Immediate steps:	<p>We will continue to work in new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities to tackle more effectively the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them.</p> <p>We will help to remove any barriers to and build on the surge in volunteering seen during pandemic, whilst also recognising when to stand back as the communities are growing their own success. This will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. working with our communities to understand what is important to them and how together, we can help to build support to make improvements; b. target volunteering to include people from a range of backgrounds who are lonely or isolated, either through joining in or receiving support; c. connecting people interested in volunteering, along with specific interests, resources and skills. This will provide opportunities to children and young people as well as adults; d. advertise volunteering opportunities on behalf of community groups, third sector, public sector organisations and businesses; e. help with the official parts of volunteering e.g. Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks, advice on supervision and health and safety risk assessments; and f. recognition and celebration of volunteering and its achievements in our communities.
<p>Why do we need to do it?</p> <p><i>To be informed by Well-being plan, Well-being and any other Assessments and Future Trends</i></p>	<p>More than ever, people are valuing their community and want to feel a part of it. Many want to offer skills and connections. The Well-being Assessment demonstrated that feeling part of, or like you belong to, makes a huge difference to well-being. We, as a Public Services Board, need to make sure there are as few things stopping people from getting involved as possible.</p> <p>The ONS Mapping loneliness during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (7 March 2021) report states that 8.48% of people in RCT feel lonely often or always, this is higher than the Wales average of 8.25% and British average of 7.24%. 23.17% of people in RCT report</p>

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	<p>feeling lonely some of the time (Wales 21.23%, GB 19.57%) and 15.78% feeling lonely occasionally (22.15% Wales, 24.45%). No data is available for Merthyr to avoid disclosure but what the figures show is that more people within the Cwm Taf region feel more acute levels of loneliness more often.</p> <p>The same information release shows more people feeling lonely in RCT in the last seven days than the Welsh and British average.</p> <p>The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted on everyone’s mental health and led to, or exacerbated, feelings of loneliness and/or isolation as discussed in a June 2021 BBC News item. Tackling loneliness and isolation was on the agenda prior to the pandemic but it now needs to be prioritised including considering how to best support specific groups of people, such as children and young people, those that live alone and older people. We also need to consider the impact that home working has had on our workforce.</p>
<p>What difference will delivering this Objective make to the people and communities in Cwm Taf?</p>	<p>The long-term vision is to develop a greater understanding, with our communities, of why people get involved and volunteer, what barriers exist and what opportunities could be developed.</p> <p>Through delivering this Objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people will feel more connected and less isolated; • people will be more active; • there will be increased community capacity to tackle loneliness and isolation • people will make increased use of their surroundings, including green spaces; and • people will have better mental health and well-being
<p>What are the quick wins that the Partnership can complete in 2021-22?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Befriending Network – revisit and reinvigorate • Exploring how children and young people are experiencing and managing loneliness and isolation, particularly through working with schools and building on the work of well-being ambassadors • Better public sector signposting / support for those experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation, including opportunities for ‘Loneliness Champions’ in the public sector.

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<p>Who will be involved in contributing towards this Objective? <i>This will include Cwm Taf PSB partners, people and communities, and new contributors who can help</i></p>	<p>Nominated colleagues from identified PSB partners (see action below), 3rd sector representation as identified from the Social Value Forum, communities, schools and colleges, and neighbourhood networks.</p>
<p>How does this Objective also contribute to the delivery of another Cwm Taf well-being objective?</p>	<p>This is a cross-cutting step supporting the delivery of all our Objectives.</p>
<p>How does this Objective align with the delivery of other local or national plans or strategies?</p>	<p>It's a cross cutting theme throughout the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WG's 'Connected Communities' Strategy to tackle Loneliness and Social Isolation • June 2021 Programme for Government with a focus on Social Prescribing and Mental Health • Regional Social Prescribing work, being led by Public Health Wales and involving the RIIC Hub • Links to the Covid Regional Strategic Oversight Group and structure, particularly PTG and RCCE • Preventative actions within the SSWB Act and Mental Health Partnership Plan; and • Valleys Regional Park through their social prescribing and green spaces agenda, and the developing National Nature Service.
<p>How have you considered the Sustainable Development principles i.e. five ways of working in delivering this objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking and planning for the Long term • Preventing problems before they happen • Integrating with other strategies • Collaborating with others • Involving people and communities 	<p>Long Term – This work of this Objective will develop a culture of being active in the community for people of all ages and abilities to build community capacity and reduce loneliness and isolation. It will work to lobby for policy and funding changes with a view to securing long-term commitment to this agenda.</p> <p>Prevention – setting up a robust framework for encouraging and supporting volunteering could result in more volunteering in their community, improving physical and mental well-being preventing loneliness and isolation among all age groups. Befriending services, social prescribing and volunteering are all identified ways of preventing people's health and well-being deteriorating to the point of needing medical intervention. This is particularly important in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and people re-entering society after shielding.</p>

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	<p><i>The Right Way</i> also states: “Develop appropriate priorities, targets and programmes of action to increase participation, in particular amongst otherwise excluded/ marginalised or disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>We will also work to improve the safeguarding and standardisation of volunteering opportunities and experiences, building on the work done with the Covid-19 Volunteering Grant made available through WG.</p> <p>Integration – this plan will positively contribute to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board’s Area Plan, particularly around the key actions for the Mental Health Partnership and the work with older people and their Dementia Strategy. The work on this cross-cutting theme will also develop links across strategic partnerships to support people to develop confidence and skills through connecting to and being active in the community. Nationally, the Connected Communities WG strategy on tackling loneliness and social isolation sets out the context for the work, and we will also address the WCFG Commissioner’s advice on developing volunteering opportunities and reducing isolation.</p> <p>Collaborating – ensuring partners in the Public Services Board develop the capacity and resilience of community and voluntary organisations, particularly in the context of recovery from the pandemic. All partners will be encouraged to act as ‘one public service’, offering staff the opportunity to be involved in the community; and to provide opportunities within public services.</p> <p>Crucially, the PSB needs to improve on its collaboration with the community, working with groups and organisation to tackle loneliness and isolation together.</p> <p>Involvement – we will speak directly with people and communities about how we continue to reduce barriers in a way that enabled such mobilisation during the pandemic and what we can do to help and support. This will be done through accessible formats, using a variety of methods to ensure we engage with diverse communities. Where we work with young people, we will promote and encourage the extension of active citizenship, so that young people are aware of their rights and develop their political literacy, to enable them to be effectively involved now and in the future.</p> <p>We will maximise the offer secured by the PSB from Co-Production Wales to improve how the collective PSB involves communities in its work.</p>
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<p>How will work towards this Objective contribute towards the seven national well-being goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p><i>Identified in the well-being plan is contributing towards a more prosperous Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of more cohesive communities, and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.</i></p> <p>Prosperous - the volunteering opportunities provided within this Objective could change people’s readiness and ability to find paid employment. It could also give young people opportunities to explore future career opportunities.</p> <p>Healthier – through volunteering opportunities, there will be a reduction in people’s feelings of loneliness and isolation which will have a positive impact on people’s mental health and well-being, as well as encouraging people to take up social prescribing opportunities that would make use of the fantastic green and blue space in the region.</p> <p>More equal – by developing this plan with people with protected characteristics and providing opportunities for older people, children and young people, people with disabilities, LGBTQ groups and BME groups, providing greater opportunities to volunteer get involved, the plan recognises the Public Sector Equality Duty and will carry out Equality Impact Assessments on any new or improved services.</p> <p>More Cohesive – by working through the Community Zones to deliver some of this plan, it will provide volunteering and befriending opportunities, which will contribute to well-connected and integrated communities that are pleasant to live in. We will also encourage inter-generational projects to encourage skills transfers, learning and understanding.</p> <p>Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language – we will promote and encourage Welsh language opportunities and volunteering in the Community Hubs and networks, through Adult volunteering and learning opportunities, forging links with local and National Welsh Language organisations. Culture and heritage will form an integral part of volunteering and befriending opportunities, such as, music and dance, sport, art, heritage sites and tourism destinations.</p>
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Actions that will deliver this Objective

Actions		Milestones		Delivery date	Lead
Ref	Description	Ref	Description		
a.	Working with our communities to understand what is important to them and how together, we can help build support to make improvements.		NESTA work / Community-led development work (Simon)		
			Using recommendations from Bevan		
			Supporting food sufficiency networks		
			Continue to look at sustainability and capturing the work.		
			Standardising metrics to demonstrate impact (with a view to help with funding, consistency).		
			COoPro work around the Assessment process and steps towards understanding our communities / ongoing conversation		
b.	Target volunteering to include people who are lonely or isolated, either through joining in or receiving support.		Role of befriending, befriending network		
			Supporting the role of L&I Development Officer and ensuring strategic buy in		
			Role of Welsh language / BAME work		
			Understanding the role of technology https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/the-role-of-communities-and-the-use-of-technology-in-mitigating-loneliness-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/		
			Schools and wellbeing ambassadors		
c.	Connecting people interested in volunteering, along with their specific interests, resources and skills.		Supporting		
			Green Spaces, Coed Lleol, Actif Woods, Friends of... WtoW		
			Valleys Regional Park and National Nature Service		
			MTBWYF		
		Pen Y Dre / Cyfarthfa Wellbeing Ambassadors			
d.	Advertise volunteering opportunities on behalf of community groups, third sector,		Utilise new platforms (Connect RCT, RPB website) and existing ones		
			Social Prescribing		
			Work to understand how people view / want to find opportunities?		

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Actions		Milestones		Delivery date	Lead
Ref	Description	Ref	Description		
d.	public sector organisations and businesses		Social Media		
			Rebecca Goodhand / Comms with RPB around ensuring there's one message		
e.	Help with the official parts of volunteering e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, advice on supervision and health and safety risk assessments.		Safeguarding and Covid, volunteers uniforms		
f.	Recognition and celebration of volunteering and its achievements in our communities.		Using AGMS. Public sector sponsorships		
			Social Media Volunteering week.		

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Information that will help to monitor the delivery of this Objective

Quantitative Evidence – including Performance Indicators

PI ref	Local/ National	PI description	Direction of travel	Frequency	Responsible partner
		To help be developed under Action A			

Data and targets will be required for all identified Performance Indicators

Qualitative Evidence

Activity	What will/does it demonstrate?	When/how often will this be available?
Subjective Well-being Measures (Warwick/Edinburgh scale) to be used across activities delivered through community hubs	Asking people to grade how strongly they agree with subjective well-being statements at the beginning and end of an activity can assess the impact that the activity is having on the individual and collective well-being.	As activities are run
Case Studies		
Capturing Journeys, linked to the RPB / Assessment	The difference being made	As captured

Risks that will affect the delivery of this Objective

Risk	Ref to existing action above, if relevant	Other mitigating actions if required
Too great a demand for services to cope with / feel like their making an impact		Maintain pressure on funders to consider the sustainability of services, and recognising the preventative role of the third sector
Covid restrictions preventing activities from going ahead / those with the greatest need		Helping community groups work with council and other key holders to make spaces 'Covid secure' and as open and accessible as possible.

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If there are insufficient resources then there is likely to be limited impact on loneliness and isolation		To look at what current resources could be more effectively used to direct providers to address loneliness and isolation
If there is an assumption this is about older people then key issues with certain groups including people with disabilities (physical and mental) children, young people and adults will not be addressed.		To ensure we define target groups and/or target communities to measure progress.

Support required to progress this Objective, including any associated financial contributions

From PSB support Team	In respect of engagement/involvement	In respect of data or analyses
Support for audit and analysis as described in Action a.3 above.	Other Objective Leads and key partners to drive specific projects and ensure their own delivery plans seek to tackle loneliness and isolation, where possible	Evidence base for identifying how we collect and report making a difference.
Administration / secretariat of delivery group. Establishing a working group.	Help to identify what groups are most affected by loneliness and isolation and establish an evidence base.	Welsh Bacalaureate, results and value.
Clearer definition of target groups is required to assess involvement capacity and needs.	Integration and collaboration with SSWB board	Evidence gathering from other work areas and national schemes.