



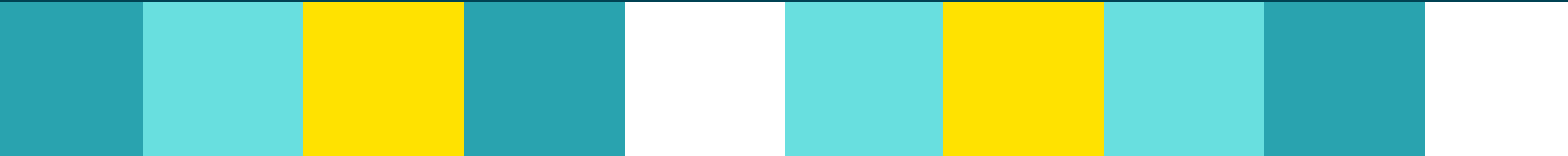
Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru

What can PSBs do to improve wellbeing from a community perspective?

Workshop recap and resource pack



Overview and contents



Workshop summary

These slides present evidence from several WCPP research projects relating to where community action comes from, and ‘what works’ to enable and support it from a public sector perspective. Research undertaken during the Coronavirus pandemic highlights the value of community action in supporting the seven wellbeing goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Its benefits span from providing a sense of purpose and community cohesion to preventative action towards addressing physical and mental health challenges. The pandemic experience has also highlighted the importance of working towards these wider wellbeing goals to enabling and sustaining community action, and the significant role that local government and public services can play in supporting this two-way relationship.



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What do we know about community action?

The evidence suggests that community action is underpinned by community connection which, in turn, is underpinned by social connection. Social connection is a sense of **belonging** and the ability to connect with others. Community connection describes the **networks** of people, groups and organisations built through social connection.



What works to support social and community action?



Our evidence finds that social connection is underpinned by having **meaningful things to do** in communities (e.g., sports, culture, arts, services) and **inclusive places to do them**.

Community connection is underpinned by these meaningful things to do and inclusive places to do them, and is further supported by **shared goals** across sectors and organisations, and digital and physical **infrastructures to support coordination**. For both social and community connection (and therefore for community action) **shared purpose and inclusive infrastructures are key**.

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What can PSBs do?

Our evidence suggests that community action did not emerge in a vacuum during the pandemic, and that public services could be instrumental in determining how effectively communities were able to mobilise in response to adversity. Possible actions include:

Meaningful things to do...

- Promoting sports, arts, cultural activities and community-based services, by providing practical support and advice for securing funding, navigating legal structures, and by providing direct access to facilities or land and finance

...inclusive places to do them...

- Promoting the involvement of minoritized groups in the design, development and running of physical and online community spaces to ensure that they are welcoming to all, and creating or promoting awareness of funding opportunities structured to enable such an approach.

What can PSBs do?

Working towards shared goals...

- The pandemic brought shared purpose across public and community sector organisations, but our research suggests a holistic vision of wellbeing can too. Working towards shared goals was most effective when the public and community sector established clear roles and responsibilities, and clear pathways for working across them (e.g., liaison and referral). This enabled gaining 'strength from difference' (e.g., a community groups' capacity for preventative work or identifying need, and public services' expertise and logistical frameworks to enable onward and outward referral where necessary).

Infrastructures to support coordination...

- The pandemic highlighted the importance of both physical and digital infrastructures in making space for and facilitating the 'joined up working' described above. For example, libraries, community hubs, leisure centres, and diverse online platforms. Key was local authorities making space for community ownership (or, where appropriate, collaborative ownership) over these infrastructures, through attention to governance, finance, and location.

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Community connection

What do we know about its relationship to wellbeing?

Activity: Linking community connection and wider wellbeing in your area

What works to support it?

Summary and further reading

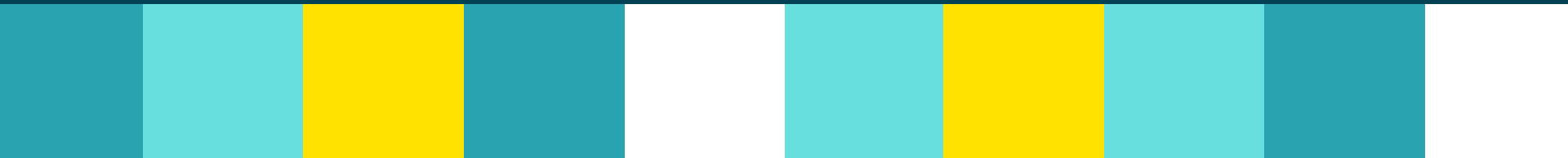
Clickable links to resources and references are included throughout



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Introduction

Wellbeing and community action



Workshop aims

- Present evidence on how to enable and sustain community action, to support you identify actions that improve community wellbeing and address key themes:



Loneliness and mental wellbeing



The role of community hubs and groups



Volunteering



Digital connection and overcoming digital exclusion



Collaborative working

- Evidence from practice across Wales during the pandemic
- Discuss what it means from a PSB perspective



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Overview of the workshop



Social connection:

- What do we know about its relationship to wellbeing?
- What works to support it?
- What actions could PSBs take?

Community connection:

- What do we know about its relationship to wellbeing?
- What works to support it?
- What actions could PSBs take?

Community action and wellbeing

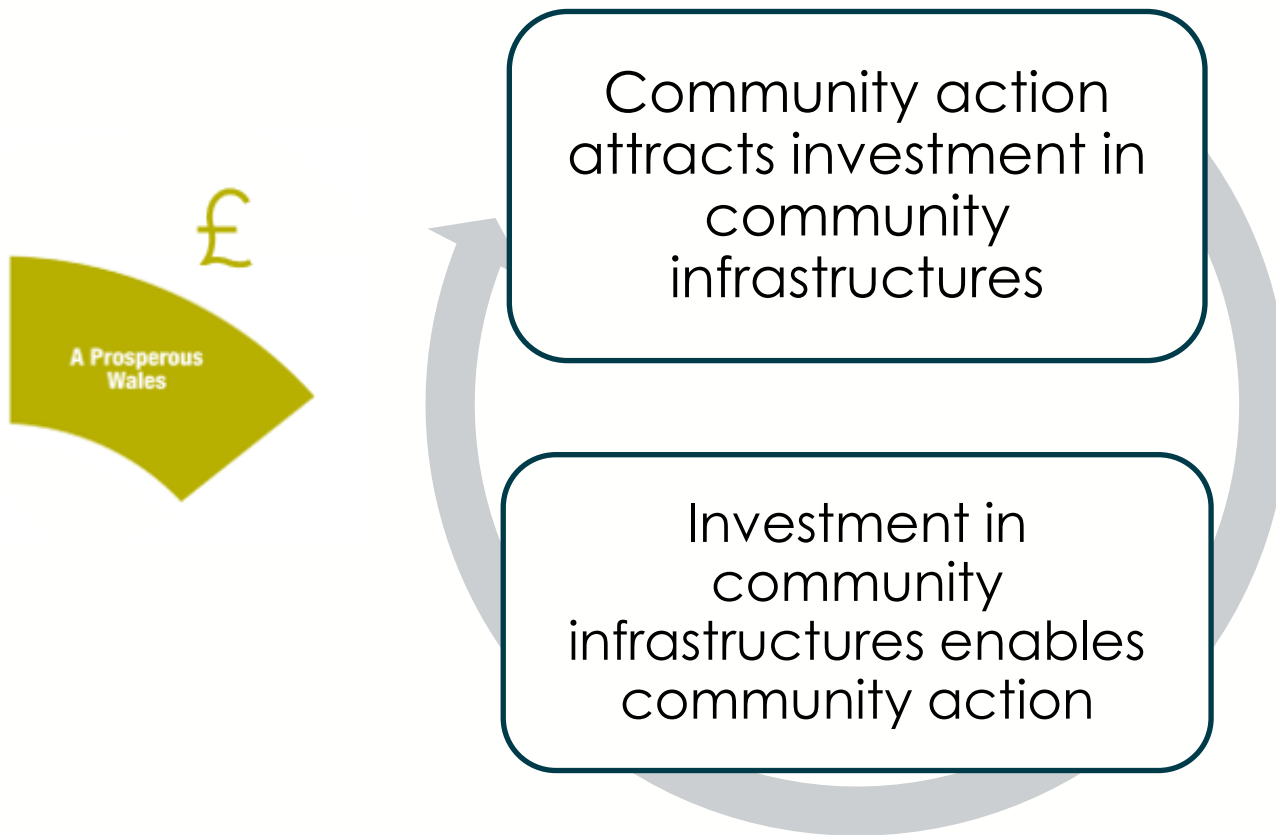
A two-way relationship



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Community action and wellbeing

For example...



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Some more examples...



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Community action and wellbeing – workshop discussion



How could enabling and sustaining community action help deliver wider wellbeing goals? How could working towards wider wellbeing goals help enable and sustain community action?

Participants said...

For me community action is about a shift in power in which the community takes ownership of their health and wellbeing – and this shift in power has the potential to contribute to all the wellbeing goals.

An example of how community action can help deliver ‘a resilient Wales’ – a group of volunteers got together and built a hydroelectricity plant in the town, so that local investors would then benefit from the cheap electricity produced. So that was a good example of a community taking ownership of the energy crisis.

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Why explore links between wellbeing goals and community action?

...to help understand different opportunities and challenges, and therefore identify specific (preventative and responsive) actions that can be taken as part of a coordinated, holistic approach

This isn't to say that community action is a magic bullet that can solve everything – or to locate problems or solutions elsewhere

It's more to understand what can be done in specific contexts, at different levels, across different sectors and parts of the system, and how they might fit together

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Section 1

Social connection

What do we know about its relationship to wellbeing?

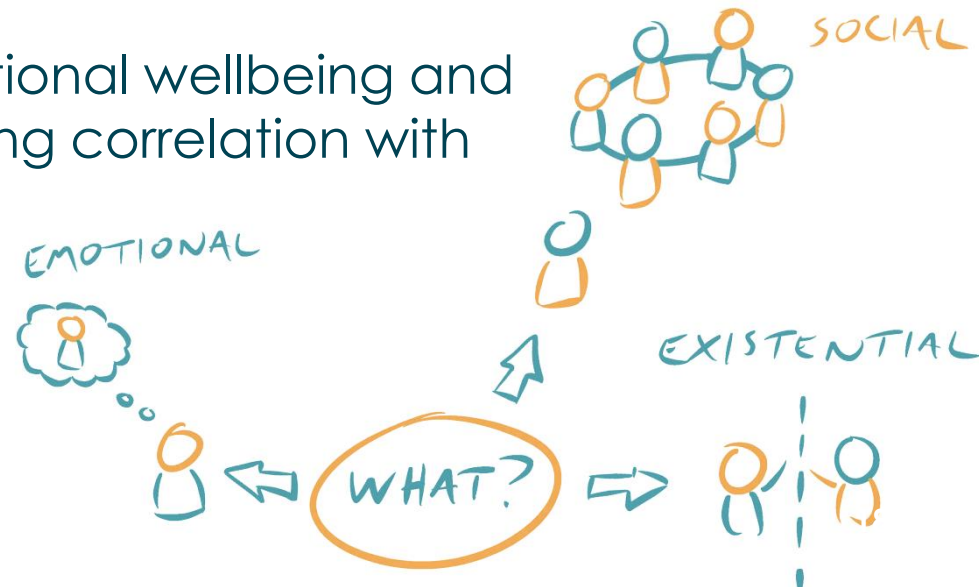
What works to support it?

What actions could PSBs take?

Social connection: what do we know?



- Social connection = sense of belonging and ability to connect with others
- Loneliness as a sense of lacking adequate social connection
- Manifests in different ways – not always/just about social contact, but also feeling disconnected, excluded, unwelcome, or lacking a sense of purpose or role in society
- Loneliness linked to wider emotional wellbeing and mental health – and has a strong correlation with wider inequalities



Resource: [Loneliness video](#)

Social connection: what do we know?



Loneliness is closely linked to structural inequalities. Reported loneliness varies according to individual characteristics & personal circumstances.



Younger people are more likely to report being lonely.



Women report higher levels of emotional loneliness, men report higher social loneliness.



Those with a long-term illness or disability are lonelier than those without.



Those from a racially minoritized background are lonelier than those that identify as white British.



Those in single adult householders report higher loneliness, with single parents loneliest of all.

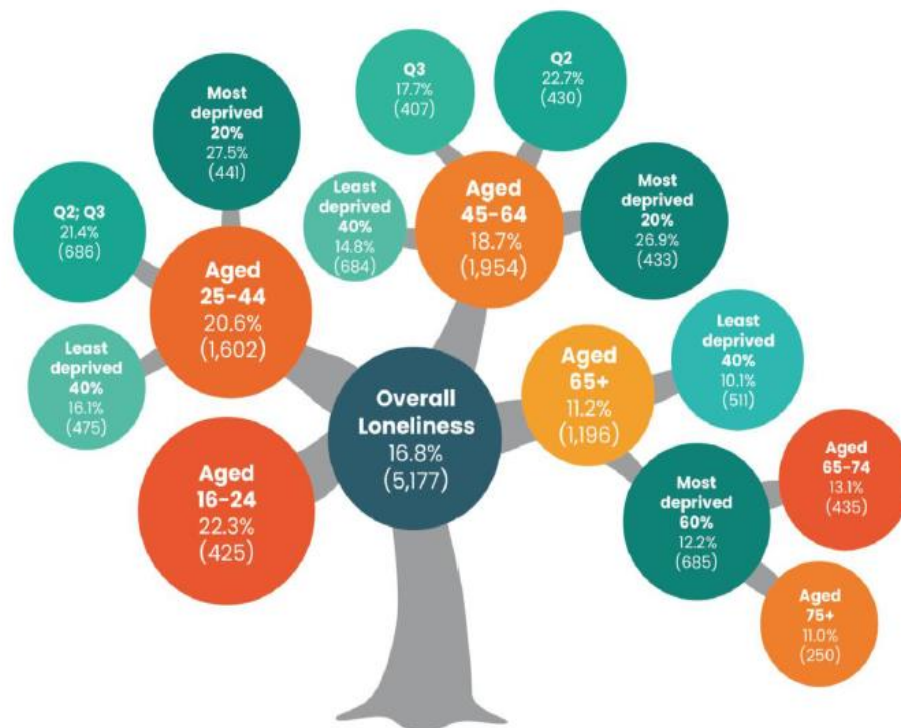


Reference: [Who is lonely in Wales](#)

Social connection: what do we know?



Example: Intersectionality of Loneliness – Age & Deprivation



23.3% of those aged 16-24 reported being lonely. Among 16-24 year olds with a long-term illness or disability, this rises to 42.2%.

Those who are younger and live in the most deprived areas are lonelier than older people in similar circumstances.



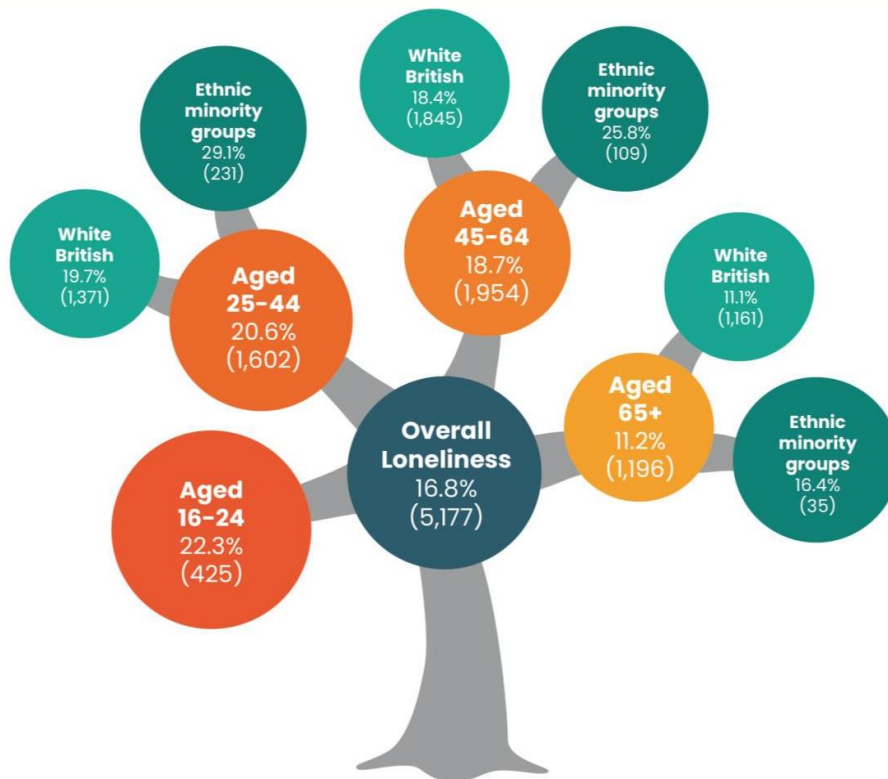
Reference: [Age & Loneliness in Wales](#)

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Social connection: what do we know?



Example: Intersectionality of Loneliness – Age & Ethnicity



Across all age groups, those from racially minoritized backgrounds are lonelier than those identifying as White British.



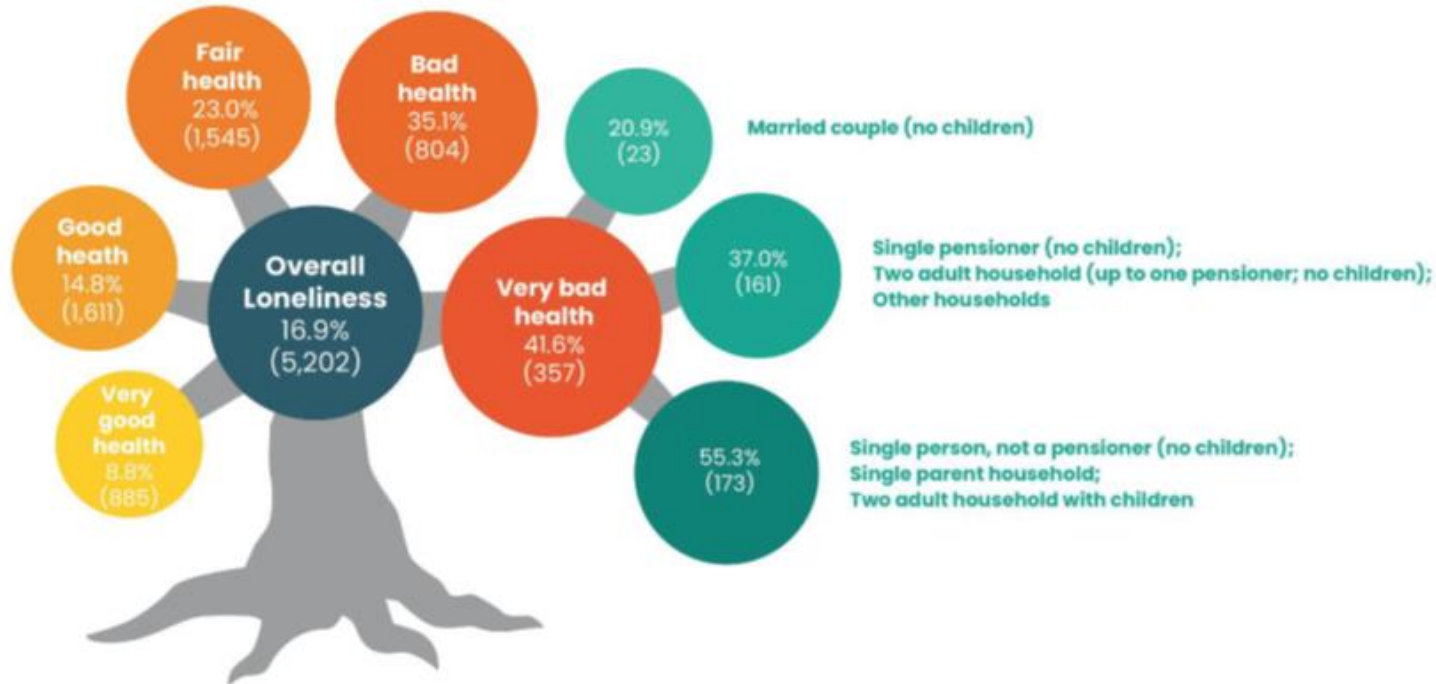
Reference: [Age & Loneliness in Wales](#)

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Social connection: what do we know?



Example: Intersectionality of loneliness – Health & Household



Those in bad health are lonelier than those in good health. Very bad health interacts with household composition to further increase or reduce loneliness.

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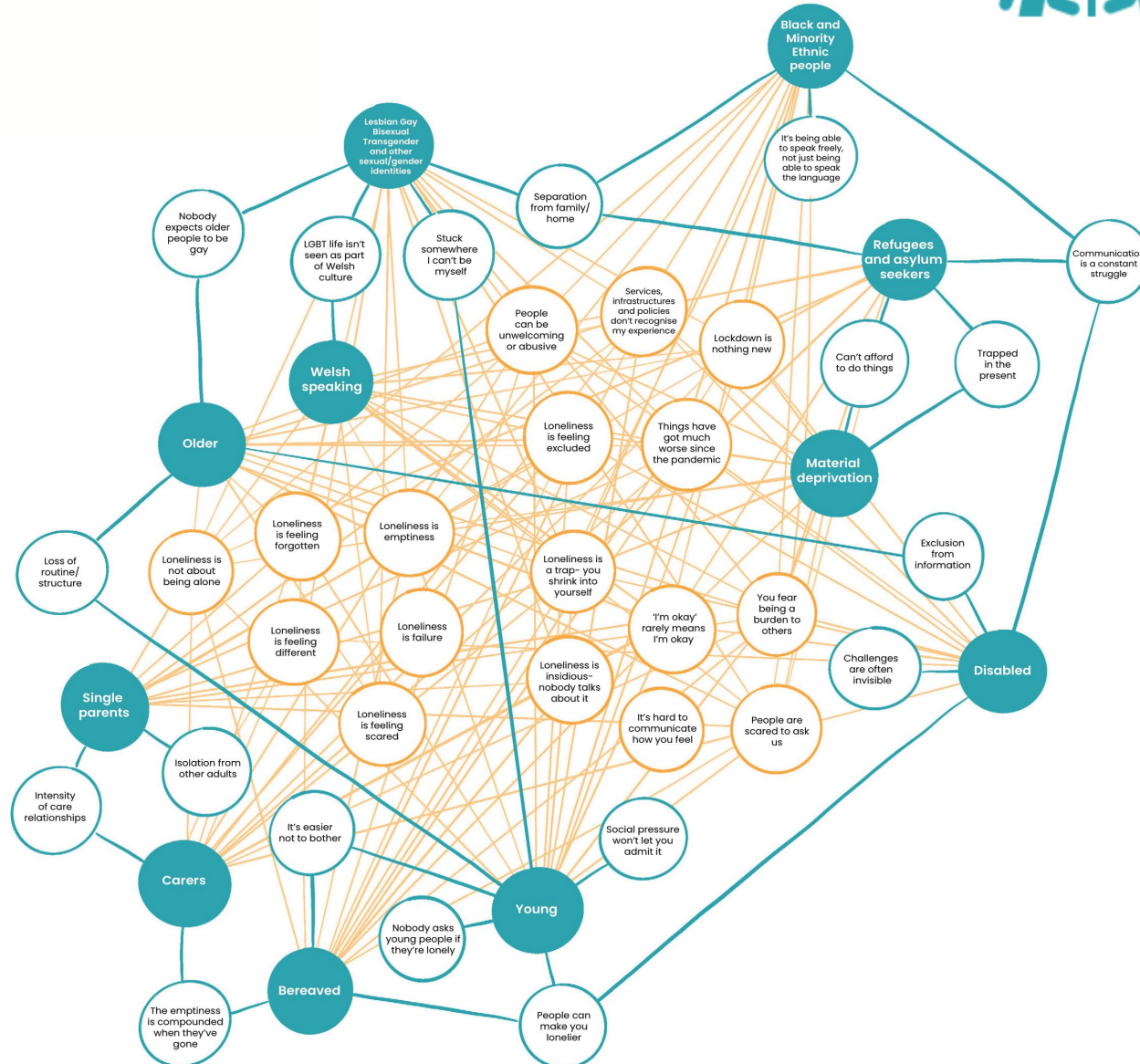


Reference: [Health & Loneliness in Wales](#)

Social connection: what do we know?



How different 'characteristics' and their intersectionality can translate into feelings of lacking social connection – may not (always) reflect a lack of actual social interactions, but rather the absence of feelings of belonging and purpose



Reference: [Role of communities and technology in mitigating loneliness](#)

Social connection: discussion



What are the links between social connection and wider wellbeing in your area?

- Social connection = sense of belonging and ability to connect with others
- Multifaceted (not just about social contact)
- Linked to wider inequalities

We asked participants to think about...

- What you know from your wellbeing assessments and local intelligence – for whom and in what ways is social connection a wellbeing issue in your area
- CAUSES and CONSEQUENCES of social connection/lack of social connection across different dimensions of wellbeing

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What are the links between social connection and wider wellbeing goals in your area?

Participants said...

<p>A prosperous Wales</p>	<p>Investment in public transport and support for active travel helps prevent social isolation</p> <p>Social isolation can lead to poor mental health which impacts on employment opportunities</p>
<p>A healthier Wales</p>	<p>Those with poor physical and mental health more likely to experience loneliness</p> <p>Marmot principles link social connection with the aim of creating healthy and sustainable places – clear link between social connection and good health</p> <p>Infrastructure to support active travel and connecting communities together also promotes population health</p>

What are the links between social connection and wider wellbeing goals in your area?

Participants said...

A resilient Wales	<p>Access to good quality green spaces supports social connection</p> <p>Projects to improve/create community green spaces bring people together and give them a sense of purpose</p>
A more equal Wales	<p>Some activities and groups became more inclusive/accessible through moving online during the pandemic</p> <p>There are stark inequalities in access to transport and therefore access to services and connections (with associated impacts on loneliness, isolation and wellbeing). The cost of living crisis is exacerbating existing differences between places in terms of transport links and the social and economic isolation of people living there.</p>

What are the links between social connection and wider wellbeing goals in your area?

Participants said...

<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</p>	<p>Communities' pride in their culture and heritage can promote social connection and there's an opportunity to build on this. But there's a difficult balance to be struck – preserving heritage while maintaining openness to other cultures and avoiding the risk of excluding and isolating people from different backgrounds</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p>	<p>To an extent during the pandemic we saw a different experience of social connection – with the use of digital technologies and community action/volunteering reaching out to and building links with the most vulnerable</p>
<p>A globally responsible Wales</p>	<p>Volunteering has the potential to promote both global citizenship and social connection</p>

Social connection: what works?



‘What works’ to enable and sustain social connection to support wellbeing?

Meaningful things to do and inclusive places to do them

Features:

- Steppingstones and purpose
- Transactional to relational & importance of mutuality
- Inclusive physical and digital environments

Enablers:

- Funding and ownership
- Skills and networks in the community
- Existing and new community infrastructures and activities

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Social connection: what works?



Steppingstones and purpose

I think that being proactive and giving people the pathway to how to be involved, and not leaving it to them. Not hectoring them, not pestering them, but just having practical things so that it's clear how to be involved and it doesn't take much effort.

IBG member

My confidence is endless now. I am no longer afraid to go outside. I love meeting new people. [The volunteer centre] gave me my life back. They gave me a purpose.



Resource: [Steppingstones and purpose video](#)

Reference (p.24-31): [Role of communities and technology in mitigating loneliness](#)

Reference (p.16): [Volunteering and wellbeing during the pandemic](#)



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Social connection: what works?



Transactional to emotional & importance of mutuality

I made some quite deep connections with some of those families, especially elderly people that we were helping, and I help them now on a weekly basis not necessarily... I don't see myself as a volunteer for that, I'm just doing it because they're now my friends, you know.

PBG coordinator

I learnt that I'm not on my own. I know I felt like I was on my own....but now I feel like we have a community. It just needed somebody to say, "Hello, I'm here"

PBG coordinator

"I am not sure who helps who more! The stories, life experience and perspective of those who I have shopped for have inspired me greatly."

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Social connection: what works?



Inclusive environments: stuck offline & grounded digital



“although we think of the cyberworld as a disconnected thing and a global thing, it absolutely can be used at the micro-community level”

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Social connection: what works?



Inclusive environments: stuck online

I was isolated a lot because I've got chronic illnesses.... So I have experience, before the pandemic, of social isolation and using online things as the only way to communicate with people.... There wasn't anything I could do in person before I started the other group.

IBG member

I think one of the things, the most frustrating bit is that LGBT people seem to live their life online. So, how do we get away from it being online when that's the only option? It's because LGBT people are on Grindr, on gay groups. That's the way they connect with each other because there are no safe spaces

IBG coordinator



Resource: [Blended spaces video](#)

Reference (p.32-39): [Role of communities and technology in mitigating loneliness](#)

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Social connection: what works?



Enablers of meaningful things to do and inclusive places to do them:

- Skills and networks in the community
- Funding for community ideas and ownership (meaning & mutuality)
- Support – skills development/information
- Existing and new community infrastructures and activities (physical & digital)

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Social connection: what works?



How to action 'what works'?

Meaningful things to do

- Promoting and investing in community-based services, sports, leisure, arts and culture that provide **meaningful** activities, **low-pressure** social interaction and a sense of **purpose**.

Inclusive places to do them

- Supporting communities to develop and maintain **welcoming**, **accessible** physical and digital environments through attention to **how** not just what infrastructures are developed.

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Section 2

Community connection

What do we know about its relationship to wellbeing?

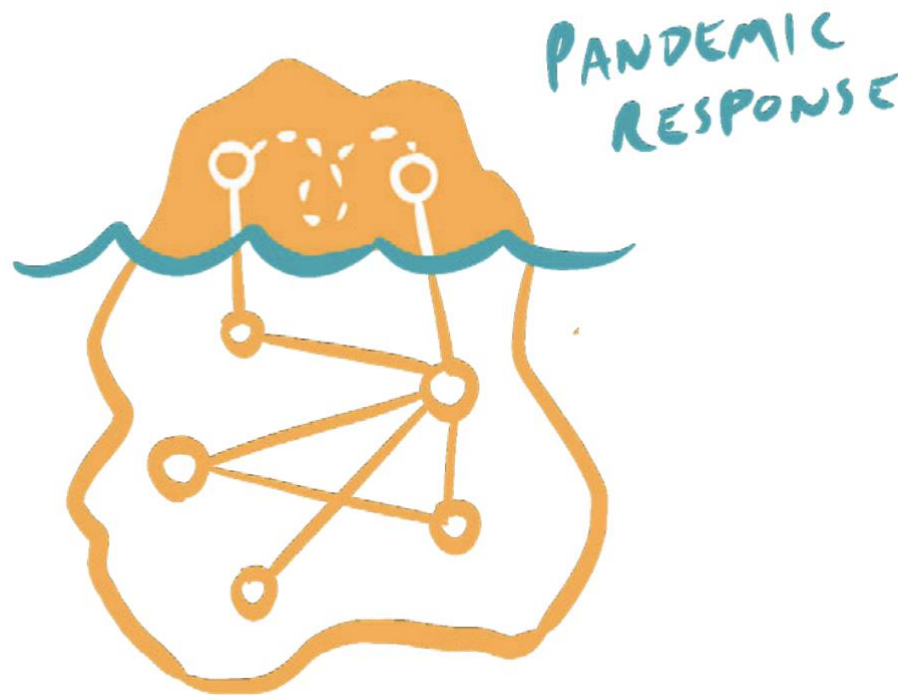
What works to support it?

What actions could PSBs take?

Community connection: what do we know?



- Community connection = personal and professional networks across organisations and groups, built through social connection
- Underpinned pandemic response and wellbeing benefits
- Not all individuals and communities felt these benefits
- Community action was widely networked



Reference (p.18-21): [Role of communities and technology in mitigating loneliness](#)

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Community connection: what do we know?



Community action did not come from nowhere

I would say that the social networks were already well entrenched in the town. Not just as a result of things like obviously the [community action plan]. They were entrenched as a result of strong cultural activity in the town... There is a lot going on in this place. They all contribute to creating a network that makes us stronger.

IBG and PBG coordinator

“What are you doing? What are you going to do next?” I thought, “Well hang on. We are already doing so much in this town. Do we now need to come up...?” I found myself a bit defensive about that” (PBG coordinator).

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Community connection: what do we know?



Community action did not happen in isolation

If you're suddenly being bombarded by lots of things happening, it's very easy to become almost like, I don't mean turning in on yourself, but protect yourself by, yes, hiding under the duvets.... Whereas actually I think the way you do protect yourself, and the way you do stay strong, is to actually open yourself up, really, and say, "No, we need to look out. We need to connect with people."

PBG coordinator

We have had weekly (and sometimes daily!) conversations with FLVC to help us manage the very fast establishing of such a large infrastructure of food distribution and volunteer management. They have also provided us with links to other groups and organisations.

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Community connection: discussion



What are the links between community connection and wider wellbeing in your area?

- Community connection = personal and professional networks built through social connection
- Underpinned pandemic response and wellbeing benefits
- Not all individuals and communities felt these benefits
- Community action was widely networked

We asked about...

- What you know from your wellbeing assessments and local intelligence – what does community connection mean in your area?
- CAUSES and CONSEQUENCES of community connection/a lack of community connection across different dimensions of wellbeing

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What are the links between community connection and wider wellbeing goals in your area?

Participants said...

A prosperous Wales	Community connection depends on investment in skills and development
A healthier Wales	Community connection to support volunteering has physical and mental health benefits for participants – especially in relation to outdoor/green spaces
A more resilient Wales	Community connection often develops around common issues of interest or concern, but communities may need support to come together and respond collectively
A Wales of cohesive communities	PSBs and public services need to get better at engagement with their communities, prioritising support for community development and coproduction – all communities are different and have their own needs

Community connection: what works?



What works to enable and sustain community connection to support wellbeing?

Shared goals and infrastructures to support coordination

Features:

- Networked action
- Strength in difference
- Coordinating infrastructures

Enablers:

- Funding and ownership
- Skills and networks in the community
- Existing and new community infrastructures and activities



Resource: [Networked action video](#)

Reference (p.40-52): [Role of communities and technology in mitigating loneliness](#)

Reference (p.18-20): [Volunteering and wellbeing during the pandemic](#)

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Community connection: what works?



- Networked action

I think the most important thing has been the support of the local people and the support of the local statutory organisations, and the third sector organisations and all the networking that's been going on.



Community connection: what works?



- Collaboration and strength in difference

There is so much wealth of expertise within groups and communities, and it is just about extracting that and just not assuming that you are the expert. Like anything. I am always like, "Oh, I fancy going to the Moon. Are there any astronauts in the group?" Honestly. There always is.

IBG coordinator

"It's not a scary thing to get in touch with. You get a very different response either working for a charity or working for the council. I suspect this is another level of informal again where it's a bit easier to get in touch with" (PBG coordinator).

So I've got a guy threatening to commit suicide on the phone. What do I do about it? I don't want to do it wrong.... I think we need to make it easier to know who to call in emergencies and who will take responsibility.... So it's a coordination of external bodies, I suppose, and giving volunteers (...) the information they needed to be able to speak to them.

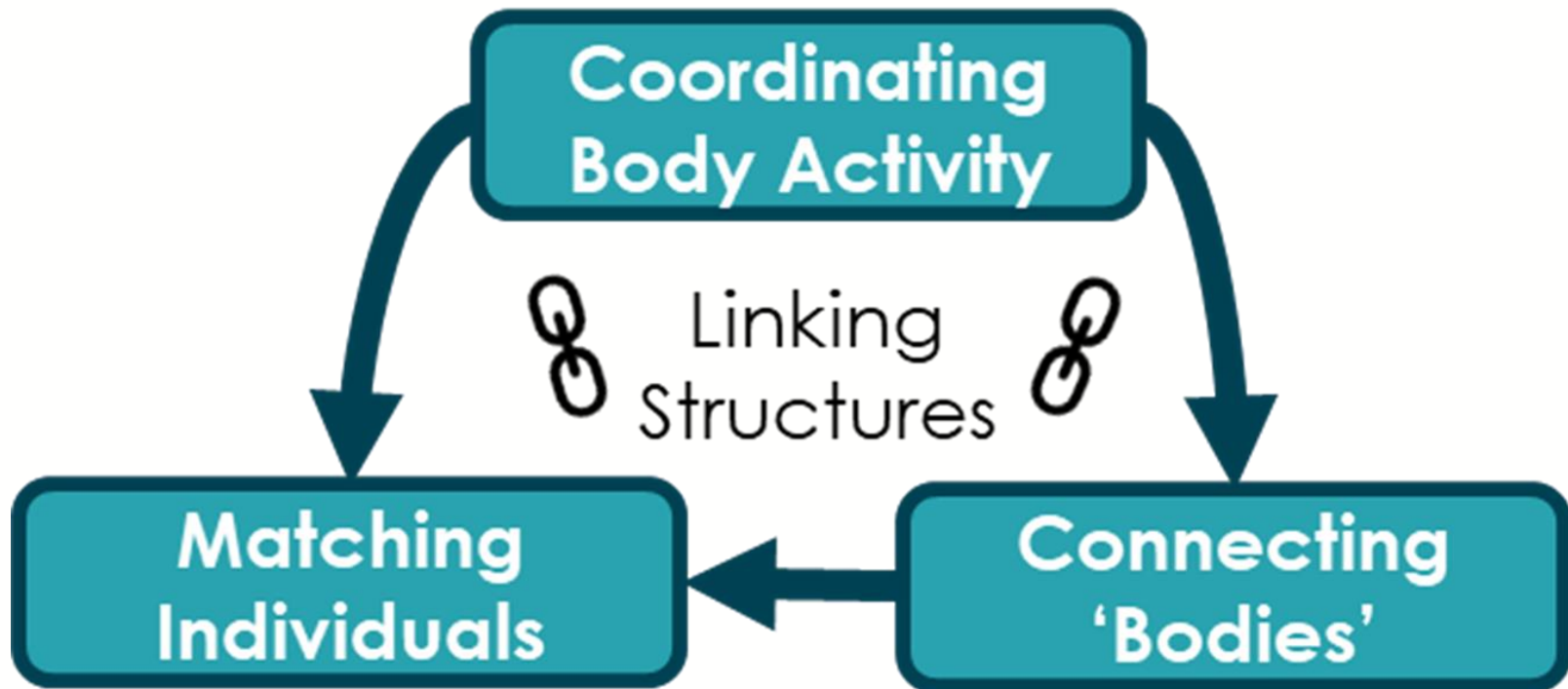
PBG coordinator

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Community connection: what works?



- Coordinating infrastructures



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Community connection: what works?



Enablers of shared purpose and coordinating infrastructures:

- Funding and ownership
- Skills and networks in the community
- Existing and new community infrastructures and activities

Community connection: what works?



How to action 'what works'?

Shared goals

- Mutual support/respect; liaison roles; procedure and protocol; roles and responsibilities; coordination

Infrastructures to support coordination

- 'How' not 'what'; legal and financial support; ownership and governance; supporting not controlling.

In summary



Social Connection Community Connection

What do we know?

"belonging" "networks"

What works?

Shared



Purpose

Inclusive



Infrastructures

Meaningful things to do and inclusive places to do them

Shared goals and infrastructures to support coordination

What actions can you take away from this workshop?

How might they support your ambitions to improve community wellbeing ?

What action in wider areas might be needed too?

You can find out more about our work on our website:

- [Who is lonely in Wales?](#)
- [Volunteering and wellbeing in the pandemic: Learning from practice](#)
- [The role of communities and the use of technology in mitigating loneliness during the pandemic](#)
- [Stakeholders' ideas for tackling loneliness in Wales through the pandemic and beyond](#)

If you'd like to talk to us some more, please get in touch:

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