



CHC's Response

About Us

Community Housing Cymru (CHC) is the representative body for housing associations and community mutuels in Wales, which are all not-for profit organisations. Our members provide over 158,000 homes and related housing services across Wales.

CHC launched its twenty-year 'Housing Horizons' vision for Welsh housing associations in November 2017. Our vision is a Wales where good housing is a basic right for all, and the vision's commitments include a pledge to build 75,000 new homes by 2036.

We embark on this vision from a solid foundation. In 2016/17, our members directly employed 8,731 people and spent nearly £2bn (directly and indirectly) in the economy, with 84% of this spend retained in Wales. Housing association built 2,207 new homes in 2016/17.

Our members work closely with local government, third sector organisations and the Welsh Government to provide a range of services in communities across Wales.

CHC's objectives are to:

- Be the leading voice of the social housing sector.
- Promote the social housing sector in Wales.
- Promote the relief of financial hardship through the sector's provision of low cost social housing.
- Provide services, education, training, information, advice and support to members.
- Encourage and facilitate the provision, construction, improvement and management of low cost social housing by housing associations in Wales.

Connected Communities – Tackling Loneliness and Isolation



Given the broad range of questions in this consultation, we have taken the decision to respond to those most pertinent to housing associations

Question 6: What more can the housing sector do to reduce loneliness and social isolation? How can the Welsh Government support this?

Housing associations are noticing a growing number of people becoming lonely or isolated.

Housing Associations in Wales are key anchor organisations. Their core purpose is to provide a safe, well-maintained home, however each and every housing association goes well above and beyond that basic duty. Each organisation has a Community Engagement, Regeneration or Development team whose focus is to enable tenants to improve their wellbeing and build community cohesion.

Loneliness and Isolation has a wide variety of trigger points and presents itself within people in many different forms. There is no one answer or approach to tackle loneliness and isolation, and the housing association sector in Wales have demonstrated a number of various projects and schemes to help people who are lonely and isolated. The variety in these projects reflect the variance in nature of the causes, and potential solutions to loneliness and isolation as well as other wellbeing issues.

Asset Based Community Development

A number of housing associations are taking an asset based approach, which instead of focussing on the deficit of an area or community, focusses on the strengths, or assets: "what's strong, not what's wrong". Within this approach, the professional isn't seen as the expert who does things to, or for the community, rather they assist the community to things by themselves, for themselves. Outputs aren't pre-determined at the outset, they are based on what the community decide. Outcomes aren't likely to appear quickly, but are much likely to be sustained.

Many people attribute the rise of loneliness and isolation to the fall of community cohesion. This approach builds genuine connections within communities which is likely to lessen the likelihood of those becoming isolated and would hopefully involve those that already are.

Green Spaces and Physical Environment

As a sector, we are very aware of the effect of the environment on people's wellbeing.¹ With this in mind, new developments include swathes of green spaces. Housing associations are also regenerating existing areas to

¹ <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2016/11/09/green-space-mental-wellbeing-and-sustainable-communities/>



Space Saviours², a shared service project by 6 housing associations in South Wales to work with communities to rejuvenate underutilised pieces of land into flourishing, useful land based on the communities' wants and needs. Due to this approach, Space Saviours can cater to any demographic. In the past they've made play parks from families and children as well as developing a sensory garden for older people who are living with sensory loss.

Health and Wellbeing

Housing Associations are increasingly managing programmes and projects around improving tenants' health and wellbeing. Loneliness, isolation and other causes of low wellbeing are social in nature, rather than medical. Housing associations are working to provide social solutions in these cases. There are examples of these in the case studies below.

Skills and Employment

For some people, their route out of isolation would be to volunteer, build skills or find employment. Many housing associations have teams dedicated to supporting tenants in these efforts.

Social Value

A lot of this 'value-added' work has gone relatively unmeasured in the past. In the last few years, however, Social Landlords have begun to quantify these 'soft' outcomes. There are a number of methodologies e.g. HACT, Social Return on Investment, LM3. Measuring social value is still in its infancy, but will become vital in a world that's focussed on 'hard' outcomes.

Using the HACT methodology, Melin calculated that they generated over £4million worth of social value in 2017/18³.

For every £1 invested in their major works programme, Tai Tarian calculated that £1.99 was reinvested in the Welsh economy according to the LM3 method. It's worth noting that this is only 1 pence short of the theoretical maximum possible of £2. During 2016/17, their major contractors spent £3.4m with businesses in Wales and £4.3m was spent on people living in Wales who are/were employed as a result of the contracts.

² <http://www.spacesaviours.co.uk/>

³ https://www.melinhomes.co.uk/assets/files/download/Social_Value_at_Melin_Final.pdf



Examples and Case Studies

Merthyr Valleys Homes

The Community Wellbeing Team leads on initiatives to address loneliness and isolation within their communities. Key objectives of the team are around well-being and they are very well aware of the detrimental effect that loneliness and isolation can have on a person's well-being. Examples of initiatives used to prevent loneliness and isolation within their Community Living Schemes, include daily events such as coffee mornings, bingo, crafts, luncheon clubs, visitors from other agencies attending to give talks about keeping well, keeping warm, exercise, welfare benefit advice etc. that are held in all the schemes, and which are open to the whole community.

They work closely with their partners, such as health, third sector agencies, homelessness and the community occupational therapists and they have in-house trusted assessors to assess minor adaptations. They also undertake periodic welfare visits to all of their tenants, to identify any support requirements, which may also highlight isolation and they then sign-post them accordingly to either the Community Wellbeing Team or external agencies where this is required.

A Summer Fun Kids Club was set up in the school holidays to enable families within their communities to attend learning and outdoor activities. The main aim of the project was to give children and parents the opportunity to take part in outdoor activities giving enrichment to their wellbeing. These opportunities gave families a chance to get to know members of their community and experience something different throughout the holiday period.

One of the latest initiatives that they are exploring within their Community Living Schemes to combat loneliness and isolation is the purchase of 'Alexa' units from Amazon, that are able to assist with reminders for medical appointments, and which are linked to the telephone lines. They are looking at the possibility of installing broadband to individuals' homes to assist with this initiative.

Case Study

For several years X was homeless and sofa surfing at different family member's homes. Whilst being homeless X tried accessing their local hostel but were unable to as it was a dry hostel and at the time X was heavily dependent on alcohol. For all of their life X has had very poor literacy skills and used a variety of avoidance techniques to skirt around telling people that they could not read or write - X would say they did not have their glasses on them so people would be none the wiser. However, X has overcome these barriers in the last year. In October of 2017, X accessed temporary accommodation with floating support at Merthyr Valleys Homes; this appears to have been the lifeline they needed. With support X gradually reduced their alcohol intake and they have since stopped drinking alcohol – it has been almost a year since X last drank. X also enrolled on a literacy and numeracy skills course at their local community centre



and is growing in confidence as a result. X is excelling in their studies and has thoroughly enjoyed learning so much, and has just returned to undertake the second year of studying. X has since moved out of temporary accommodation and moved into their first property in August 2018, a place they can finally call “home”.

United Welsh

United Welsh has a community investment team and an engagement project called Together which focuses on increasing community cohesiveness by bringing people together to discuss what matters most. Together funds grassroots community projects and encourages volunteering to build social action.

They carry out a programme of social events around engaging children and families, tackling poverty and improving their estates. They find that these events are excellent opportunities to build connections that can have lasting benefit. For example, during a recent Jingle Bells tour, a young mother told them how she had made “so many new friends” during the experience, including some other mums who she planned to meet up with later. She had connected with a neighbour who had offered to look after her flat whilst she was on holiday and they were “hoping to get an event planning committee together”. This illustrates how one light-hearted event can, quite organically, build social support networks and increase social action.

They have set up a number of projects specifically targeting social isolation and loneliness in older people, but evidence from Office of National Statistic reports and their social prescribing work show young adults are at greater risk. Their future focus will be on how they can target initiatives to these groups.

Connect project 2018-2020 (Blaenau Gwent)

United Welsh is reviewing its services to people aged 50+ to ensure their offer meets the needs and aspirations of future generations. They conducted engagement sessions in their sheltered schemes around the activities they offer and found many residents reported feeling bored, lonely or isolated. Communal areas and traditional activities like bingo were poorly attended. Residents didn’t want “old people” activities and felt some groups “weren’t for them” but seemed demotivated to make any changes themselves. Following the Campaign to End Loneliness’ report on the detrimental effects that loneliness and isolation can have on a person’s health and the stark figures showing the prevalence of loneliness among older people, they realised they needed to focus on interventions that can sustainably improve social participation and wellbeing. They saw an opportunity to build social action within the scheme by using co-production to create a programme of activities, designed by residents and for residents.

Comic Relief’s Active Ageing grant (£80K) allowed them to fund a two year project to empower residents to transform their sheltered schemes into vibrant centres of their community. The grant funded the appointment of a Connect Facilitator to have “what matters” conversations with residents, encouraging them to identify their own strengths and



passions and helping them connect with others to create activities, share skills and interests. The conversations helped to identify the most isolated and vulnerable, who might benefit from working with volunteers to build confidence and the most engaged, who could become volunteers themselves. The Connect Facilitator conducts weekly catch-ups within the scheme to facilitate setting up activity groups and stimulate conversations around how the schemes and individuals' personal assets can be utilised to connect with the wider community. They're exploring setting up creches and social enterprises from the scheme and community gardens.

In the first six months they have focused on one extra care and two sheltered schemes. They have built relationships with local preschools, businesses and colleges and recruited volunteers. Some examples of the activities delivered to date include:

- Intergenerational choir with a local school now "twinned" with their scheme⁴
- Intergenerational craft group
- Hobbies and interest groups including music, Knit & Natter, bowling, baking and gardening
- Social groups like quizzes, supper clubs and Men's Sheds.

They have recruited 13 volunteers who are active in running activities and 6 potential Connect Coaches who will work more intensively with individuals to build their confidence and support them to take steps towards achieving what matters to them. They are monitoring self-reported wellbeing and risk of isolation and loneliness using the Campaign to End Loneliness 3-item scale to monitor the impact of the project. Next year they will roll out the project to the remaining four sheltered schemes.

Moving with the Generations (Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent)

This project was delivered in partnership with Head4Arts following a previous pilot event and funded by an Age Cymru Small Loneliness Grant (£1,000 award, plus in-kind donations from both partners). They developed this project because they wanted to explore the benefits of intergenerational experiences, which were highlighted by recent studies and the Channel 4 programme "Old People's home for four year olds"

The project will provide twelve intergenerational art and play sessions in their Extra Care Schemes; Llys Nant y Mynydd in Blaenau Gwent and Plas Hyfryd in Caerphilly. The activities involve the use of sensory tools like music and coloured scarves to create gentle seated exercise and dance play experiences. The aim of the event is to create moments of joy for

⁴ <https://www.unitedwelsh.com/blog/intergenerational-choir-to-mark-world-war-one-centenary/>



residents and visiting preschool children, to increase physical activity and artistic expression and build connections for social participation.

They have finished their sessions in Llys Nant y Mynydd⁵, which were well-attended by older people from surrounding areas as well as residents. Children and older people gave positive feedback. "It lightens them up" said one resident.

They built excellent relationships with local preschools and many have expressed an interest in reciprocal volunteering and befriending opportunities. There is a demand for more sessions and they are exploring options to up-skill volunteers to deliver the sessions, using equipment purchased with the grant to sustain the benefits.

Whilst it was difficult to evidence long term impact on wellbeing, social isolation and loneliness from such a short intervention, it was clear there were short-term improvements in mood based on event surveys and conversations with participants.

Community Wellbeing – Cardiff

Community Wellbeing is an eight-month pilot project funded through the Communities First Legacy grant. The project offers community wellbeing activities, peer support, volunteer-led befriending and intergenerational activities to citizens living in Cardiff.

They are in the process of recruiting volunteers and matching them to citizens looking for befrienders. Their Volunteering & Activities Co-ordinator is setting up groups and events to encourage social participation and peer support.

The following case studies reflect how their Community Wellbeing Facilitators have supported individuals to reduce social isolation

- A 34-year-old single mother and asylum seeker met the Wellbeing Facilitator at a local community event. At the one-to-one consultation the woman disclosed she was feeling very isolated and had little connection with people in her community, as her friends lived in Birmingham and London. She had suffered from depression in the past and was concerned about her mental health deteriorating. With the application of motivational interviewing techniques, the Facilitator helped the person to focus on what she could do. The individual wanted to connect with people, enjoy some type of physical activity, possibly learn new skills and eventually get into work. The challenge was accommodating child care. The Wellbeing Facilitator introduced the citizen to

⁵ <https://twitter.com/hashtag/movingwiththegenerations?src=hash>



Women's Connect First where they run Yoga and Zumba classes with childcare provided and the World Café where people can cook, share food, chat and bring their children. She was also signposted to some pre-employment learning courses. The citizen is engaging with these opportunities and is feeling more positive about her future.

- A 42-year-old single woman self-referred to the Wellbeing Facilitator. Her reasons for referral were mental health, namely anxiety and feelings of isolation. The citizen had a history of alcoholism but had been abstinent for several months and was determined to remain so. However, with the onset of Christmas looming, not being with her son as the father currently has custody and this being the time of the year when she lost a child, she was feeling very vulnerable. After exploring her living situation, social connections and interests, the citizen agreed that she would like to find opportunities to socialise to help her anxiety and volunteer using her gardening skills. As she has limited financial resources it was important to find activities near to her home. The facilitator was able to locate and introduce the citizen to a local gardening project that she could attend twice a week, she was signposted to the Whitchurch FAN Group that meet fortnightly in her local area and she is also attending the Community Wellbeing Anxiety Course at her local community centre.

Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association

Case study 1

Parent A is a single mother who has three children. Her eldest is nine years-old and has many medical conditions that effect his movement, and she has two little children aged 18 months and four months old. She has identified that she struggles for affordable family activities to do. The Active Family project was an ideal way to get the family active together, tackle social isolation for the mother and look at easier and more convenient ways of cooking family meals.

"My son loved the project. He enjoyed playing with other children that are the same age as him. It was really nice seeing him mix as well. I was really proud in seeing him mix so well with others. When he got home from school to his goody bag he was really excited and he was amazed by all the goodies that were in it. He loves his new football and water bottle. He's trying to learn to skip now so he spends time in the back garden practicing. We took the bag up to the park over the weekend and we had a play with the skipping ball and the different balls and we tried some of the games as well. We're going to Cyfarthfa Park on the weekend so that we can play nature bingo and try the Geocaching because he loved that. I was so glad that you did the session on sugar. He's terrible for sweet things, so much so, I've stopped buying sweet things. He has trouble listening so when he told me that he didn't want the tango that I had for



him and that it needed to be kept as a treat I was super proud because he listened and he learned.”

Case Study 2

Tenant R started engaging with MTHA through their slow cooker project. With no real cooking experience, and problems with anxiety and depression, she was a little nervous when she started, although very eager to learn.

Throughout the weeks she attended the project Tenant R has grown in confidence; she is chattier, and has taken on a supporting role to another member of the group. Physically, she's began looking after her appearance more; she told us that she's having visits to the dentist after not going for a long time as she wants to get her teeth sorted, and has said she's been feeling so good that she's been buying herself new clothes. She told us that getting out has been a real incentive to sort things out. Tenant R's property is in a poor condition so the fact that she started looking after herself and her property is a very good sign, she has also told us that she is no longer taking in rescue animals as she has something else to focus on, which is another positive outcome.

Perhaps the most significant difference for Tenant R is that her anxiety and depression has decreased. After one doctors visit she reported her anxiety/depression levels going from a 10/10 to a 5/10. Tenant R attributes this to getting out, meeting new people and learning new skills; she has also begun ordering from the food coop so that she can cook in the house for her family. Tenant R has also told us that she usually keeps a diary which helps with her depression, but she has not even needed to keep this over the last few weeks.

Tenant R received support from a floating support worker and through her interaction with the project she has been able to cease support and is better able manage both the depression and anxiety and her personal finances and property. Tenant R now volunteers on the slow cooker project supporting others who were in a similar position to her not so long ago and has become a member of Merthyr Housing's scrutiny group. Tenant R is now much more confident and does not suffer from the loneliness, isolation, stress and anxiety that she used to experience.

Case Study 3

C is a resident in a sheltered housing scheme; she is 92 and lives alone. Despite regularly attending coffee mornings and activities at the scheme, C does not see other friends and family as much as she would like as they live in other parts of the Country.

C has engaged with their digital inclusion project; College students come into the sheltered scheme once a week to teach the residents how to communicate with friends and family via Facebook, Messenger and Skype. C is thoroughly enjoying learning new skills and is able to contact her family via Skype and she is enjoying practising her skills by skyping other residents



in the scheme! C has also recently learnt how to load her pictures from her camera onto a laptop and create a slideshow; she has enjoyed passing time by showing the other residents her old pictures.

For C this project means being able to see family regularly and have a connection with them that she might not have been able to have otherwise. This creates a sense of inclusion and has enabled C to feel she is still part of her family and has enabled her to re-connect with her family. The impact of this project will be felt by both C and her family for many years and has had the impact of reducing the social isolation and loneliness that C had been experiencing for some time.

Trivallis

Case study - Helping to address loneliness and isolation

'Loneliness comes in many different shapes and sizes. For me, it was as a friend defined it, having plenty of people to do something with, but nobody to do nothing with' (Dame Esther Rantzen DBE)

This statement is a great description of loneliness and isolation and how it can feel for people. It recognises that there are people who have very active social lives, who may still be lonely because they live alone. One way that we can help is by recognising the need and benefit to having good quality sheltered accommodation, not just in the accommodation, but the support services that ensure people can live within a community of older people and have the opportunity to live active, social lives.

Trivallis is proud of its sheltered schemes and has invested in the accommodation. Their 23 schemes throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf have undergone extensive modernisation over the past few years. The properties enable tenants, friends and family and the community of older people to mix together. This can be from something as simple as sitting alongside someone in the communal lounge to watch television, to pottering in the garden, to going on a trip to the theatre or seaside with the social club. The schemes all run a variety of activities such as breakfast clubs, bingo, movie nights and seasonal celebrations.

Trivallis' Scheme Co-ordinators meet monthly with their tenants and it was at one of these meetings that tenants talked about meeting together with other schemes. An initial event was held in February, when tenants for 5 schemes came together, with other local residents, and a great afternoon was had - tenants helped make cakes, played bingo and enjoyed a quiz. These have now been arranged throughout the year, with different schemes hosting.



They recognise the work we do goes a long way to helping combat loneliness and isolation and they are always looking for ways to do more and activities that will appeal to different people. They are working with the local health board on a Falls Prevention programme and Drink Wise Age Well on other planned social activities. Tenants have trained to lead fitness classes and are supported in the volunteering by the RVS. Tenants also want to start Inter scheme activities such as darts, quizzes, kurling and dominoes.

Their activities are popular and well attended and having older people in the community attend our events has helped to promote the benefits of sheltered accommodation. Trivallis' schemes are popular places to live – people really appreciate that they have their own apartment with the security and support but being within a community of older people is one of the main draws.

Cartrefi Conwy

Cartrefi Conwy was created out of the stock transfer from Conwy County Borough Council. They have 3800 homes spread across a wide and varied geographical area mostly within the county of Conwy. Approximately 1/3 of their stock is sheltered and an additional 500 properties are located in rural communities.

There are a number of ways that they are presently working which helps to combat loneliness and social isolation.

A strong Community involvement team that focuses on the following themes:

1. **Tenants Voice**- Improvements to how Cartrefi Conwy works based on consulting with tenants
2. **Community Action**- Improvements in the community through support for localised work
3. **Personal Development**- Improvements in people's personal skills to give them a better chance in life
4. **Health and Well Being**- Improvement to people's or communities health and well being

This wide range of interaction ensures that there is something to interest everyone. This might include activities for everyone in a community, specific art projects, or interesting training sessions. They have the ability to do work in any community within Conwy, and provide support for individuals by way of covering transport and childcare costs, having accessible venues and community centres, and providing a range of ways of communicating with them. By removing the barriers that people might face, they make it easier for them to get engaged.



With a third of Cartrefi Conwy's housing stock being designated as independent living properties for the over-55s, they have recognised the importance of focusing on their mental and physical well-being. They have an Older Person's Engagement Coordinator (OPEC) who ensures our older tenants have the opportunity to be socially and digitally active regardless of age, and have the necessary support to live healthy, active independent lives. Along with another colleague, they have done extensive work to provide digital sessions in community centres across the county. These sessions provide a valuable link to the outside world and are delivered in part through assistance from tenant digital champions.

They are also piloting a series of Mental Health sessions, which are facilitated by an engagement officer, but guided by the participants to decide on subject matter. It has been very successful at engaging with people that do not normally get involved and it is also providing positive results for the individuals.

Cartrefi Conwy see it as essential to work in partnership with the Local authority, other health organisations and agencies. This enables them to provide their older and isolated people with a broader range of services and support. They work in partnership with the Conwy County Borough Council's Wellbeing and Communities for Work teams and have run several projects together. For instance, they are presently running intergenerational sessions known as 'Wee Ones Meet Wise Ones' where older tenants have the opportunity to spend time with infants and young children sharing stories and singing songs.

They also work in partnership with the RNIB and all improvement works to homes and community centres are accredited to RNIB Platinum standard, providing a safe environment for those living with sight impairment, giving them a stronger sense of ownership and less anxiety.

Each year Cartrefi Conwy holds 2 major events. First on the calendar is the family day- 'The Big Day Out' which offers an opportunity for all tenants to attend an event which is fun and informative for the whole family. While keeping the youth entertained they strive to interact with the adults to offer advice, assistance and information. Second to arrive on the events calendar is the Older Person's Day which coincides with the annual International Older Persons Day. This event is to acknowledge and celebrate our older tenants. The event includes musical entertainment, our annual Older Person's Awards ceremony, workshops and exhibitors to promote health and wellbeing and a free lunch with transport provided. This focused event is prized by older tenants and has been very successful at bringing forward people that often do not get engaged in any other way.

Cartrefi Conwy are recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as a Dementia Friendly Organisation. Each member of staff is a trained Dementia Friend. Training for staff is carried out by an in-house Dementia Champion. Our OPEC is also a Dementia Champion and runs



Dementia Friends sessions for our tenants and the wider community. Cartrefi Conwy are committed to ensure that those living with Dementia have the opportunity to live well within their community.

As mentioned previously, 1/3 of their housing stock is sheltered accommodation. In order to cater for this clientele, they developed a strong Independent Living service. This service is part funded by the Welsh Governments Supporting People programme, which is critical to maintaining the Independent Living service that we offer and is crucial not only in improving the lives of our tenants but at the same time contributes to reducing costs and pressures on accident and emergency. The support provided by the Independent Living Coordinators (ILC's) is allocated on a needs basis rather than linked to tenure. The invaluable support provided by the ILC's assists and supports their elderly communities, building social networks and enabling people from different backgrounds to come together and form friendships. They encourage social inclusion and a 'feel good' sense of purpose, which has led to the improved health and wellbeing of the participants and has sometimes alleviated the need for social service intervention or residential care.

Likewise, for our general needs tenants we have Tenancy Support Officers (TSO's) and they provide support to up to 40 tenants at any one time. The referral process for the TSO service is internally and also through the Supporting People Single Pathway.

The type of support people are offered includes:

- Emotional support and guidance where there is a high risk to individuals tenancy due to poor property condition
- Assist tenants who have been identified as Hoarding – This will include Long term support due to complexity of monitoring required
- Monitoring cases that are short term 6-9 months will be passed to Neighbourhood Coordinator to ensure a consistent approach
- Assist in housing related problems
- Assist to manage paperwork and correspondence
- Assist to organise access to other services and professional help as required
- Assist to identify local services and organisations that may be of interest
- Assist in financial support and assist access to other services

Both the Independent Living Service and the Tenancy Support Officers are essential tools that assist them in tackling loneliness and social isolation for a wide and vulnerable group of residents in our communities.

Example Projects

Project 1- 'Passion for Life' is a recognised framework for older people which enables them to make incremental changes to move them from where they are now to where they would like



to be in their lives, and not let their age (or anything else) stand in their way. The programme has been tailored by Cartrefi Conwy to suit the needs of older tenants in improving the quality of their lives whilst promoting independence.

The programme aims to empower and enable older people to take control of their lives. This has proven to be especially effective in helping older people who have recently been through a life-changing event, such as retirement or bereavement.

Mrs Wright, 76, a Cartrefi Conwy tenant, describes the Passion for Life sessions as life changing.

She said: "I really look forward to coming along as I get to meet new people and the interaction is great. "I'm also learning new skills and important little things about home safety and security that I never realised, simple things that can make a big difference when it comes to keeping safe."

Project 2- Cartrefi Conwy embarked on their Time Bank project which we named 'Give Where You Live' (GWYL) in July 2015. The project was specifically created to provide opportunities and improve the health and wellbeing of older people living in the county of Conwy.

The Time Bank is a means of exchange where time is the currency. For every hour a member 'deposits' in a Time Bank, perhaps by giving practical help and support to others, they are able to 'withdraw' equivalent support in time when they themselves are in need. For example an individual doing shopping for an elderly member of the Time Bank, then spends that time credit on getting somebody to cut their grass.

There have been over 100 GWYL members who have shared over 900 volunteer hours supporting each other since 2015.

Miss H was one of the very first members and has been an active member since 2015, she lives in an Independent living complex and has a mild learning disability.

Due to her learning disability, Miss H has lacked confidence when meeting new people and being part of Gwyl has given her the confidence to arrange film and Karaoke evenings for local residents which has earned her time credits. Miss H has then spent her time credits on day trips and bacon sandwiches in the Brunch club which is held every other week.

Over recent months Miss H has had numerous hospital appointments due to deterioration in her health and felt anxious about attending the appointments on her own. The Timebroker was able to match her with another GWYL member who accompanies her.



Being part of the GWYL has not only given Miss H the confidence to arrange her own events. It has also made her feel valued and helped her to make friendships with people who are living in her community who she otherwise would never have met.

First Choice Housing Association

Case Study – Gig Buddies

Case Study –First Choice Housing Association

Gig Buddies was initially launched at the Festival of Voice in the Millennium Centre in Cardiff on June 7th 2018.

It aims to help with loneliness and isolation, health and wellbeing and improving confidence enabling people with a learning disability to avoid social isolation, exclusion and loneliness.

With funding from First Choice, Gig Buddies Cardiff will run for an initial twelve months and enable 20 adults with a learning disability to buddy up with volunteers so they can go to gigs and events together. Gig Buddies is a befriending scheme that matches people with a learning disability with volunteers who share the same interests, so they can go to gigs together.

It specifically focusses on events that happen in the evenings, such as concerts, in order to break the many barriers that stop people with a learning disability going out at night and staying up late. These barriers include lack of support, or inflexible support that forces people to leave events early. Other obstacles include transport, confidence, safety, and accessibility of venues. Most importantly, Gig Buddies are free to choose what their 'gig' is and when and where they want to go. A 'gig' can be a concert, but it can also be a rugby match, a trip to a museum, or an evening down the pub. "Learning Disability Wales have been working with the 'Stay Up Late' campaign for several years to bring Gig Buddies to Wales.

To date there has been Interest from 50 people wanting to volunteer. Gig Buddies staff have met with 15 and 12 have been trained and DBS checked. A waiting list is now held for future training.

15 people with a Learning Disability have expressed an interested and staff have met with 7 tenants to sign them up with the other 8 to be interviewed.

Grŵp Cynefin

Case Study



Mrs B was living in an apartment she owned out of the area. Mrs B was born in the town where the extra care housing is based, and most of her family still lived in the town. Mrs B and her family were very eager for her to move closer to them because of loneliness and a health condition. She was suffering from anxiety and took medication towards this condition and had been for some years.

As a result of moving to the Extra Care Housing Scheme, Mrs B has been able to build a very close relationship with her family and this has improved the quality of her life. She no longer has to take medicine for anxiety and she is a much more confident person.

Mrs B enjoys attending the activities in the plan and is willing to take a leading role, she plays the piano and is willing to assist during religious services that are being held in the scheme.

Mrs B has recently been using her skills as a teacher and has been giving Welsh lessons to another resident.

Mrs B said: -

'I'm delighted to be living here, the facilities are perfect for the elderly. We all think we're beyond lucky to be living here.'

What can the Welsh Government do to support this work?

All of the projects and schemes mentioned are financed either by the housing association themselves or by grants such as The Big Lottery.

Housing associations feel that they are doing all that they can to help with the loneliness and isolation agenda under the finance constraints that they have. If Welsh Government were able to assist by way of grants or the encouragement of joint initiatives, there is the potential to unlock more productivity from these anchor organisations.

Additional financial assistance from Welsh Government would be cost-effective as it would likely reduce the burden of other services, such as the NHS, Local Governments and the Police. Such funding would allow the work currently underway to reach a higher number of individuals, and therefore reduce instances of loneliness and isolation across Wales.