

CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES



Port Talbot Town

Our shared priorities for this Plan and specifically for this theme centre upon improving the quality of life and local services for local communities. This requires effective partnership working, strong community and political leadership and effective community engagement.

So this theme focuses on the importance of adopting a community development approach to working with communities, in order to help build “confident communities”. This approach is about enabling communities to identify local issues and solutions to bring about change. “Communities” refers to those that can be defined both geographically and by interest group.

Communities of interest include those in danger of being discriminated against due to gender and gender reassignment, age, disability, race, language (Welsh), colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin, responsibility for dependants, marital status, sexuality, HIV or AIDS status or religion/belief.

Fostering confident communities is reliant upon achieving the objectives and targets for the other themes in this Plan. Also, the guiding principles of social inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable development are integral to creating confident communities.

The Communities First Initiative, which is built upon the principles of partnership and community development, continues to play a key role in helping the following communities have their say:

1. Cymmer, Gwynfi and Glyncoed
2. Sandfields West and Sandfields East
3. Onllwyn and Seven Sisters
4. Ystalyfera and Panteg
5. Briton Ferry West
6. Lower Brynamman and Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen
7. Pelenna
8. Neath East
9. Fairyland
10. Brynbryddan and Penllyn

Communities First Partnerships have been established in each of these communities.

The county borough-wide Communities First Domestic Violence Partnership also continues to develop a number of successful projects aimed at tackling domestic violence. The revised Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation will provide a new basis for the identification of future Communities First Areas.

In addition to Communities First areas, partners recognise the need to consider how they can support the development of community audits that result in Community action plans in other areas of the bountiful borough. Councillors acting as "community champions" for their communities, together with community councils, have a key role to play in this process by working closely with communities to help identify and address local issues.

Voluntary work provides many local people with the opportunity to play an active part in their communities and this is important because there can be a strong link between voluntary activity and overall life satisfaction. The estimated number of community or voluntary groups operating in the area is 1000 and over 500 people are employed in the voluntary sector. A snapshot survey of this sector estimates that it has an annual turnover in excess of £20 million. So the voluntary sector makes a significant contribution to the local economy, providing public services and offering employment opportunities, and to the quality of life in local communities.

The Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service helps provide other partner organisations with opportunities to engage with different communities. In addition, other examples of community engagement include the County Borough Council's Citizens' Panel, Youth Council and the soon to be established Older Persons' Council, as well as the recently established Disability Network, facilitated by Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service.

The overall aim is to improve communication, dialogue and interaction between local communities and all partners, helping to create communities that are active in meeting their own needs, active in local democracy and citizenship and active as partners in community regeneration.

KEY PARTNERS

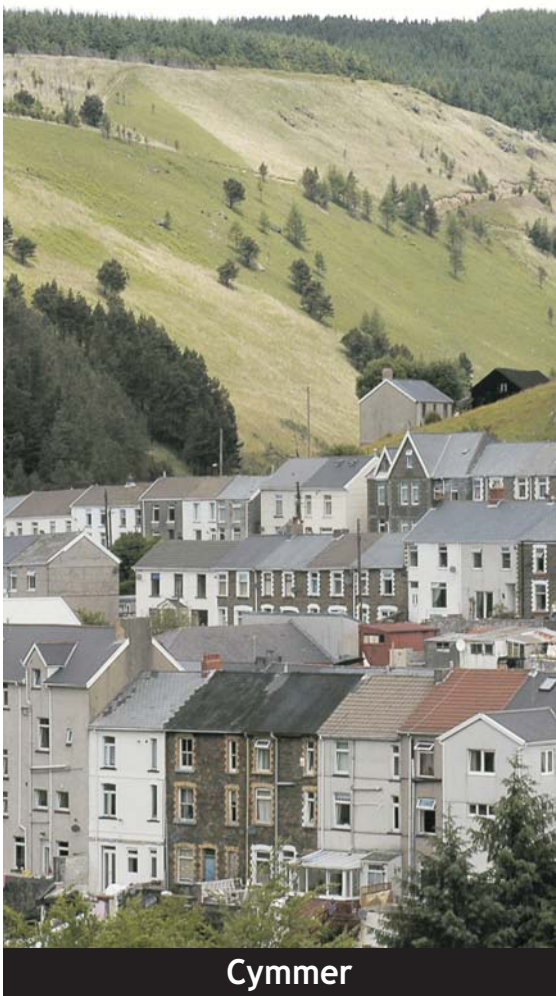
In addition to partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, other key partners include:

Communities First partnerships
Community councillors
County borough councillors
Neath Port Talbot Council for
Voluntary Service
Neath Port Talbot
County Borough Council

OUR VISION

Our vision is that by 2015:

- All citizens will have the opportunity and be encouraged to be involved in identifying the problems and finding the solutions for significantly improving the quality of life in their local communities.
- All partners will ensure that the key issues identified by communities are integrated into their activities and services and agree how they can best be met.



OUR AIMS

This is what we wish to do together:

1. Develop our collective ability to work effectively with communities and identify gaps in the skills, knowledge, services and resources that are available.

This process will be assisted by the creation of a partnership programme for consultation, capacity building and training opportunities.

2. Recognise the diverse needs of communities and help find solutions that work locally by involving local communities in the identification, planning, development and delivery of responsive and accessible activities and services.

To help create a culture where the principle of working closely with local communities is acted upon, all partner organisations need to work in line with the Community Development Officer's Statement of Principles and monitor community engagement opportunities. All communities of interest are important, however it is recognised that partners need to do more to ensure that there is greater dialogue with black and minority ethnic communities.

3. Improve the availability of accessible information, advice and guidance about activities and services, including advice about debt and consumer protection issues.

OUR AIMS (continued)

This will involve supporting partnerships for the Community Plan mapping what is available and making best use of local delivery points such as the 12 local action centres.

4. Encourage active citizenship and community empowerment by providing a range of participation and volunteering opportunities that are within the reach of all. Opportunities must evolve at a pace that suits the individual community.

The Youth Council and the evolving Older Persons' Council help ensure that younger and older people have a direct input into the implementation of plans such as the Young People's Plan and the Strategy for Older People. However the representation on both councils from both a geographical and communities of interest point of view will be monitored and any imbalances addressed.

5. Develop a Valleys Strategy and local community action plans for both Communities First and non Communities First areas, which address local issues that make a difference and around which we can focus our collective efforts.
6. Acknowledge existing community based activities and consider the coverage and co-ordination of consultation opportunities, making best use of existing groups and community assets.

This will involve partners in

mapping the availability and accessibility of community meeting places.

7. Ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations by acting in a sustainable way, which requires economic, social and environmental impacts to be addressed when providing services and activities.
8. Promote a culture that values diversity and makes equality of opportunity a reality for all citizens by ensuring this is a cross cutting theme for all activities and services.
9. Ensure that no individual or section of the community is excluded from playing their full role in the community and having the chance to fulfil their potential by considering all needs, particularly transport needs, when planning and delivering activities and services.
10. Actively foster, sustain and further develop the Welsh language, culture and heritage within communities.
11. Promote the development of activities and services that aim to challenge poverty, achieve social justice and regenerate communities.
12. Promote social enterprise that empowers communities and improves their social, environmental and economic well-being.

OUR TARGETS

By 2009

1. Increase in the percentage of households who consider that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council provides information in the language and format of choice.
2. All 10 of the Communities First partnership areas to have produced action plans by 2006.
3. Each of the 10 Communities First partnership areas to annually assess their ability to effectively engage with their local communities and communities of interest.
4. Increase the number of referrals from front line employees to "quality marked" advice services following the distribution of Shelter Cymru "Information Matters" project by 5% per annum.
5. Percentage increase in the number of people participating in volunteering activities on a regular basis, focusing upon young people and those from black and minority ethnic communities.
6. Net increase in number of new voluntary sector initiatives established and new funding generated.
7. Increase in the number of new social enterprises formed.
8. Increase in the number of training courses held for volunteers and community groups and numbers participating.
9. Four local communities (outside of Communities First areas) to be given the opportunity to identify their own targets and contribute to community audits and action plans.
10. Increase in the number of young people involved in youth projects to 1900 by 2007.
11. Increase the percentage turnout for local elections.
12. Produce Local Interpretation Plans with 6 local communities, which will help make local heritage sites more accessible and produce an overarching Interpretation Strategy for the Neath Valley by 2009.

RELATED STRATEGIES, PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

- Community Action Plans for Communities First areas
- A Health, Social Care and Well-being Needs Assessment of the People of Neath Port Talbot 2003
- Neath Port Talbot Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy 2005-2008
- Working Together - Serving all Communities. A partnership agreement between Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service
- A partnership for well being: Working together for a healthy community
- Communities First Protocol
- Community Development - A Statement of Principles by the Community Development Officer's Forum
- Crime and Disorder Strategy 2005-2008
- Neath Port Talbot Strategy for Older People 2004-2007
- Community Legal Services Partnership Strategy
- Children and Young People's Framework Partnership Plan
- Council and housing associations resident participation agreements
- Objective One Strategy
- Unitary Development Plan
- Welsh language schemes and equalities' policies, including the Disability Equality Strategy for Neath Port Talbot