

# Good Mental Wellbeing

It's everyone's business

## Annual DPH Report

Public Health Annual Report

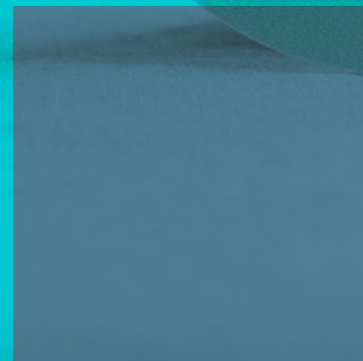
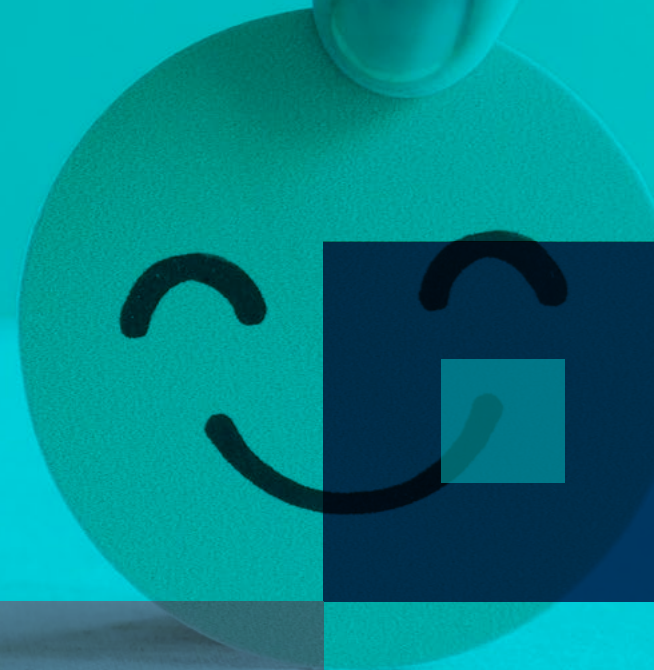
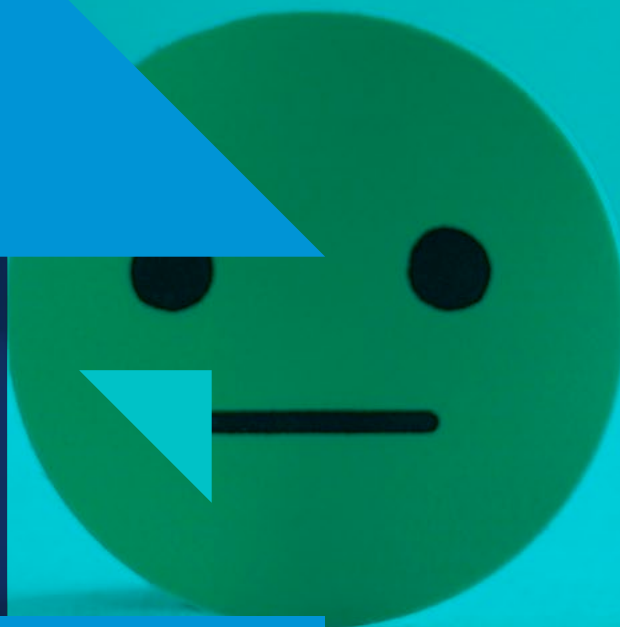
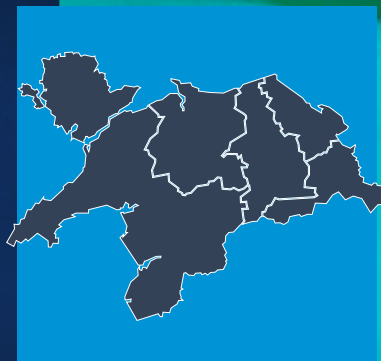
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

November 2022



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
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University Health Board





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# Foreword

## Teresa Owen, Executive Director of Public Health



**As Executive Director of Public Health (DPH) for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), I am pleased to introduce my latest Public Health Annual Report. After a break from writing the annual reports during the extremely busy Covid-19 pandemic years – this year I have chosen to focus on mental wellbeing.**

There is much written and researched about the state of our mental wellbeing, including the impact of the pandemic over the past couple of years. Building on this insight, this year's report focuses on the role of four big, interlinked areas that directly affect our mental wellbeing – our own physical health, our support networks and connectedness, our relationship with the environment including its impact on us and our impact on it, and our financial resilience. The pandemic has brought their influence on our mental wellbeing, and the importance of looking after them, into stark relief. The last DPH Report focused on a range of health protection issues including pandemics, but little did we know then what was ahead for all of us with the Covid-19 Pandemic.

While we are beginning to recover from the impact of the pandemic on our way of life, our mental wellbeing is being further tested by the impact of global warming, the economic situation of Brexit, and the war in Ukraine. We are all facing an unprecedented rise in our cost of living, with energy, food and job insecurity exercising everyone's mental wellbeing.

We may feel overwhelmed by these and their impact on our lives. However, focusing on what we can do, thinking positively and knowing that we are taking steps that are good for us, our families and community does bolster our resilience and boost our mental wellbeing. Together we create a voice for good mental wellbeing that can shape communities, society, and policy.

World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2022 encouraged us all to think about this. To help us on this journey across North Wales we are delighted to have lots of personal contributions in this report from people who live, study and work in the region. These real personal stories bring alive the insights from local, national, and international research, and the impact of local support and advice. This insight will also support all system partners understand what we do well to support our communities, and what else would be useful to put in place.

This report has been a real team effort once again. My sincere thanks to everyone who's contributed and supported this year's report, and special thanks to Karen Bryson for keeping us on task with the report production.

We hope these rich insights will help each of us reflect on what is important for mental wellbeing and what steps we can personally take to protect and enhance it.

**Mental wellbeing is everyone's business**

# The Importance of Prevention in Mental Health

Dr. Alberto Salmoiraghi, Clinical Director Mental Health and Learning Disability, BCUHB



**Prevention is a word that we often hear about our physical health. However, the same concept and rules apply to our mental health. A substantial portion of mental health problems that come to the attention of primary and secondary care services could be prevented by the individual. Simple measures can be taken by any of us to prevent deterioration of our mental health and to preserve our mental wellbeing, without necessarily accessing professional help.**

There are several areas and steps that will help in preserving our mental wellbeing. Loneliness and lack of social connections is often reported to be linked with poor mental health. Trying to engage in social activities is often underestimated in how important it is for our mental health. It can be done in many ways, but it gives a strong sense of identity and helps reframe problems.

Substance abuse is another aspect that is under our control at the initial stages. It's easy to think that stress and anxiety may be helped by tobacco, alcohol, or illegal substances, but the evidence is that they affect our mental health even in the short term and may, of course, lead to dependency and serious physical health problems. Even smoking tobacco is linked to increased levels of anxiety, and alcohol affects mood.

On the other side, exercise and healthy eating is linked with better mental health, lower levels of anxiety and depression, more alertness and improved cognitive functions. In the long

term, a healthy lifestyle is linked with longer life expectancy and lower incidence of mental illnesses and dementia. Wales has a rich, accessible, and beautiful natural environment that can be used for the benefit of our mental wellbeing.

Finally, asking for help early is crucial. When people struggle with their mental health, it is normal to feel ashamed and isolated. People do not talk about their problems until it becomes unbearable. Talking to friends, family members, or reaching out to the voluntary sector makes a substantial difference. Other times it is a matter of needing some practical help and to be signposted in the right direction. The aim is prevention of further progression towards severe mental health problems.





# Mental wellbeing affects everyone

Lucy Reid, BCUHB Vice Chair, with specific brief to oversee mental health



**The Together for Mental Health Partnership Board brings together all partners in the region to support the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and adults living in North Wales.**

The pandemic has been a real challenge for many people. Before the pandemic, we focused on mental health and our mental health services, but not so much on how people were managing their mental wellbeing.

The pandemic really brought out the importance of people's mental wellbeing through the way in which people felt socially isolated; how many struggled with the financial impact of being furloughed or losing their jobs. Many of us felt very restricted during the prolonged lockdowns and limitations placed on being able to see family and friends. I know I felt very isolated, and turned to my dogs and long walks to help.

Armed with these first-hand experiences, the partnership is revisiting the Together for Mental Health Partnership Strategy because we now recognise that the type of support that people need has fundamentally changed. It will now focus more on supporting mental wellbeing with a further shift to prevention and early intervention.

As we enter a very difficult winter with a cost of living crisis, many of us are feeling increasingly anxious and alone. This means we need to think differently about what we do to support each other. We want people be able to manage stressors before they reach crisis point. So, we will need to improve access to information about how people can protect and manage their wellbeing, as well as where and how to access support when it's needed.

We will continue to promote our ICAN service which is a fantastic resource. It's easy to find on the internet and has an app to help us find local ICAN services, such as someone to chat with about a concern over a cup of tea through to more expert advice. Many have used it throughout the pandemic and found it a great support. Additionally provided during the lockdown, and still accessible, were the 'Solihull Approach to Parenting' online courses. Parents could access information online, in their own time, in their own home.

The pandemic has unlocked some of these resources by changing how the service itself works. We can unlock a lot more and make them more accessible for people when really needed. It's a real partnership-delivered approach.



# Section 1



## Introduction and key messages



# Introduction and key messages for looking after our mental wellbeing

## Introduction

North Wales is a great place to live, with the 2nd highest life expectancy in Wales. However, there is a growing gap between the least and most deprived communities, suggestive of growing inequalities in our overall wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

Marmot, in his key inequalities report<sup>2</sup>, suggests that half of what affects our mental wellbeing resilience is our social context which can be summarised as:

- ✓ personal physical health
- ✓ the impact and strength of connections with family, friends and communities
- ✓ our environment – where we live, our awareness of and impact on, our planet
- ✓ financial security and sufficiency

The experience of living through the Covid-19 pandemic has thoroughly tested these. Many of us were able to adapt and protect our mental wellbeing. For others, it worsened mental wellbeing significantly.

This report considers the importance of these factors using invaluable insight gathered from the pandemic. It reflects on what we each can do to protect our own mental wellbeing at each stage of life, and what else would help.

**Infographic:** Life expectancy in North Wales



### Mental wellbeing

*Feeling able to function well in everyday life, to deal with things effectively, to identify and manage emotions appropriately and to be resilient. How someone is feeling about themselves and what is going on for them*

**Sara, Flintshire, 18-64**

## Key messages

### Mental wellbeing improves when:

**We are physically healthy and active** – it boosts our mood and protects our physical and mental health against long term conditions. This is important for all ages, especially our younger generation, so they adopt healthy habits from the start

**We have a support network** – of family, friends and community. This builds our resilience, feelings of being valued and included. This is especially important for children and young adults.

**We feel safe, and can connect with nature** – we all need to be free of fear from violence, trauma or abuse. Our built and green environment affects our feelings of value, purpose and wellbeing. We need to engage with, and look after, both.

**We are financially secure** – financial wellbeing is about feeling secure and in control. In short – confident and empowered.

# Section 2



## Mental wellbeing – a very human condition



# Mental wellbeing – a very human condition

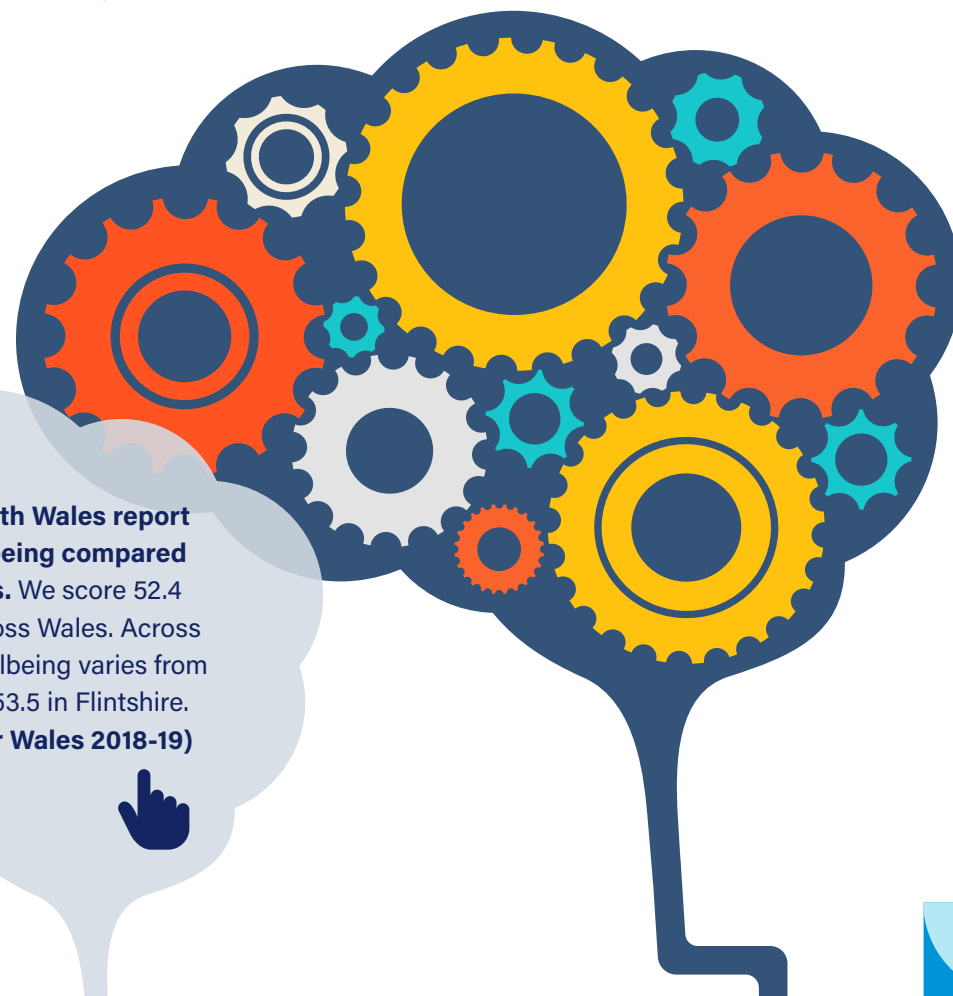
“Mental wellbeing belongs to everyone but it may mean different things to different people; each person will have their own view on what it means to be mentally well. Mental wellbeing affects how people grow and develop; it influences how they cope with normal stresses of life, how they work and the way in which they participate in family and community life. Mental wellbeing is an important area of public health as it determines both overall health and happiness.” **Public Health Wales**<sup>67</sup>

**Defining mental wellbeing is a pretty tall order. One person's stresses may be very different from another's. It's very personal.**

The following pages provides examples of what mental wellbeing means to people living and working in North Wales.



**People living in North Wales report better mental wellbeing compared to the rest of Wales.** We score 52.4 compared to 51.4 across Wales. Across the region, mental wellbeing varies from 50.9 in Wrexham to 53.5 in Flintshire. **(National Survey for Wales 2018-19)**





# We all need to take care of our Mental Wellbeing



**One in four of us are likely to experience challenges to our mental wellbeing each year.<sup>3</sup>**

What we feel is often described in several different ways - 'poor emotional health', 'overloaded', 'burnt out', or 'overwhelmed'.

During the pandemic, the constant experiences reported across all age groups, from young children to the elderly, were anxiety, depression, isolation and loneliness. Loss of control has been a huge issue.

Those most affected were women, younger people, elderly, those on low/no income, and those with long-term health conditions.<sup>4</sup>

**Two fifths  
felt isolated**

**1 in 4  
felt  
depressed**

**1 in 6  
worried  
a lot**

**1 in 10 adults  
always /often  
felt lonely**

**1 in 5 adults  
felt anxious**

# What mental wellbeing means to you

"Feeling happy  
and at ease" -  
Georgina,  
Anglesey,  
16-64

"the negative and  
positive feelings that  
effect your mental  
health and what we  
do about it"  
Delyth,  
Gwynedd Local  
Authority

"Happy, Content,  
Trying to live your  
best life with  
friends and family"  
S Cooper,  
Wrexham County  
Borough Council,  
public servant

"The ability  
to cope with  
everyday  
situations good  
or bad"  
Anon

# Section 3



## What influences wellbeing?





# What influences wellbeing?

When we distill down the things that give us contentment, feelings of happiness and good mental wellbeing, these are the four areas - being in good physical health; being part of and supported by a community and network of family and friends; nature and a safe environment for our family and friends now and in the future. The fourth is being free of financial stress and being financially secure.

Knowing that we can influence these and can see the positive impact of our daily efforts, maintains and strengthens our own resilience and feelings of good mental wellbeing.

Healthy life expectancy at birth in North Wales  
**63.9 years (M) & 62.4 years (f)**<sup>6</sup>



[Infographic: Healthy life expectancy data](#)



# Being in good physical health

Healthy minds live in healthy bodies.<sup>10</sup>

**Physical health is closely linked to mental wellbeing<sup>7</sup>. The relationship goes both ways with recent and ongoing illness having a negative effect on wellbeing<sup>8</sup>, and poor wellbeing influencing physical health.<sup>9</sup>**

**Being active is the most protective life-course action we can take for good mental health and wellbeing.** It increases our cognitive abilities from early years, builds neural pathways in young adults, and maintains them in older years. It improves educational achievement and employment opportunities. It strengthens our protective immune system, pain tolerance and reproductive health. It reduces our risk of obesity, diabetes strokes and heart attacks, and slows disease progression, including dementia.<sup>14,15</sup>

The most effective activity increases our heart rate, and boosts brain activity and memory. Dancing, swimming and cycling have particular benefits in improving life satisfaction.<sup>11</sup> Lifting weights increases physical strength and slows brain degeneration. T'ai chi, the Chinese balance practice, slows cognitive decline.<sup>16</sup>

BCUHB has 11,918 people living with dementia. As fitness improvement even in older years can improve memory by 33%, its never too late to start.<sup>12</sup>

Being physically healthy has a wider reach than our own mental wellbeing. Our physical health is as important to our family member's stress, anxiety, mental wellbeing and happiness as to our own.

**Good physical health leads to greater life satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>**

[Click here to see the health status in North Wales.](#)



If we measured health gain as money

£1

Physical health  
gained

adds

50p

Mental  
wellbeing





# Safe environments for family & friends now, and in the future



**Being part of a safe nurturing neighbourhood/community is essential for mental wellbeing.**<sup>22,23,24</sup>

There are differences in **mental wellbeing between affluent, deprived and disadvantaged communities**, driven by the quality of schools, jobs, housing and neighbourhood.<sup>18</sup>

Support networks still help manage daily anxieties and stresses.

However, people who live in communities where they **don't have these connections** to others, are less likely to have the longer, healthier lives enjoyed by people with thriving social networks.<sup>17</sup>

[Click here](#) to see how safe people feel in north Wales



**Nature and the outdoors is the New Pill.**

The power of nature is now recognised by medicine as an alternative option to drug therapy<sup>19,25,26</sup>. It is often socially prescribed as an alternative to drugs to encourage us to spend more time with nature to help our mental wellbeing.

Indoor plants and **small urban patches where nature thrives**,<sup>29</sup> which often mirrors the challenges in our own life journey, have a restorative effect.<sup>27,28</sup> Even a short time in nature, hearing bird song, running water,<sup>20</sup> walking amongst trees reduces our heart rate & blood pressure, and boosts our immune system.

Locally, the **Gwynedd Community Project** provides solace & opportunities for new friendships. The Grenfell Tower Maxilla Wall of Truth Garden in London, shows the power of nature to heal even the severely traumatised.



**Global Warming is a public health challenge and opportunity.**

Global warming is affecting our air, food, water and weather security.<sup>31</sup>

**Poor air quality** is one of the largest risks to our wellbeing.<sup>21</sup> It is linked to asthma in children, CVD, diabetes, and dementia plus other life-limiting conditions. It worsens anxiety, stress, and depression.

The **most protective action we can take also improves our physical and mental wellbeing**.<sup>30</sup> Reducing our own carbon emissions levels through changing how we travel, eat and heat our homes\* will improve our physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. We must make this achievable for everyone, especially the vulnerable who are most affected.<sup>32</sup>

*"During Covid, not seeing anyone in the community left me feeling disconnected which made me feel isolated and alone" – Georgina, Anglesey, 18-64*

# Being part of, and supported by, a community

## Being connected to support networks

Strong family and community connections and networks are essential for building **self-esteem, confidence** and social relationships, that help reduce anxiety and stress.

Building networks is hard when feeling anxious, stressed and isolated. Socially prescribed community-based activities, such as sustainable allotment schemes, connect people and communities while helping cut carbon footprints. Participants report greater life satisfaction. Sustainability initiatives lead to increased happiness.<sup>33</sup>

## Tools for staying in contact

When affordable, accessible and used well, phones, teleconferencing, and social media can be good tools to maintain and extend existing relationships with real time connections.

However, they need to be used with caution as they can also exploit or reinforce vulnerabilities, isolation, loneliness and anxiety.

Simple tools for staying in touch are often forgotten. The Americans spent months designing a pen to work in space. Russians used a pencil. Back on Earth, old fashioned letters can bring happiness to the writer and recipient.

In Gwynedd, the Pen Pal Scheme brought a young girl and elderly woman together during the pandemic.



## Equality and being part of a community at work

Feeling supported, valued and respected at work influences our mental wellbeing. In 2019, on average 17 days were lost per employee to poor physical & mental wellbeing in the UK.<sup>34</sup>

Organisational values are a key influence for new employees entering the workplace. After the Covid-19 pandemic 40% of employees globally chose to change jobs to employers whose values around equality aligned with their own.<sup>35</sup>

**Research with Wrexham Youth Services report a generation concerned about the risk of close contact and highlights how changed society norms will affect the role of communities and workplaces for good mental wellbeing.**<sup>36</sup>







# Being free of financial stress and being financially secure

**Wealth – or lack of it - has a profound impact on mental wellbeing across all stages of life. Financial resilience and wellbeing is vital for good physical and mental wellbeing. As a measurement of security, those who own their own homes seem to have a higher sense of life satisfaction, less anxiety and a higher sense of happiness than those who live in rented accommodation.<sup>37</sup>**

Conversely, poverty causes stress, anxiety and poor health. It reduces happiness, wellbeing and shortens lives.

**Economic case for addressing poverty.** Poor health and mental wellbeing led to £27 billion lost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 (pre-pandemic).<sup>38</sup> During the pandemic disadvantaged communities were most at risk financially. In 2021 alone, average sick days rose to 17 days. Those on low pay or zero hours contracts were most at risk of reduced income and job losses.

The global incident is adding further pressure, pushing up fuel prices, food prices and inflation. This means more households will be pushed into poverty and the risk of poorer mental wellbeing.

**Breaking the poverty cycle.** Currently, about 30% of children in north Wales are in low income families.<sup>39</sup> Children born into poverty are more likely to struggle to break free without access to opportunities, experiences and environments that bring better educational success, more secure well paid jobs, and greater access to choices that promote physical and mental wellbeing.<sup>44,45</sup>

Freedom from financial insecurity is an essential equality, societal and economic agenda. Financial wellbeing is about feeling secure and in control. Analysis shows that parents and carers play a crucial role in the development of a child's financial behaviour and can be shaped between the ages of 3 and 7 years old.<sup>66</sup>

Local access to fresh affordable food

Education and good quality environments nurture personal value

Levels of deprivation across North Wales [click here](#)



A living wage for all jobs

Better environments<sup>40,41,42</sup>

Good free or affordable transport

Insulated and affordable housing<sup>43</sup>

# How they connect

The four factors we have just explored are closely connected. Improvements or challenges in one area have a knock on effect across the others.

This is good news, as taking a positive step in one area will show benefits across the others, and help improve overall mental wellbeing.

Stephen's story below is a true example of how these connections work.



**The Five Ways to Wellbeing tool** - a Five-a-day for mental wellbeing, help us to Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn and Give



## Stephen's story

Stephen, who is in his mid-thirties, must work away from home because his employer relocated the site 100 miles away. He lives in rented accommodation during the week and goes home at weekends.

When Stephen first moved away, he missed his family and cycling to work with his friends back home. In this new job Stephen drove to work each day even though it was only a 10-minute cycle. He bought ready meals most days as it was easier than cooking just for himself. He felt anxious and stressed most of the time. He was concerned he had lost fitness and was finding it hard to cover the costs of running two homes, travel, and food. He felt isolated and had started to wonder if he should just look for a new job back home. After a friend at work told him about the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, this is what he did.



I decided to cycle to work instead of driving



Quite a few of my colleagues do too – so I've found a group to ride and chat with outside work



My kids are learning about air pollution and did their school project on how I lowered my carbon footprint



Savings on travel costs helps with other bills



I feel happier and less stressed about working away from home



I'm getting fitter and having to tighten my belt

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people who are overweight or obese ranges from 53.5% in the Isle of Anglesey to 63.4% in Denbighshire. This worsened for the 2 years of the pandemic. (Source: National Survey for Wales 2021-22)



# Section 4



## Insights from the Covid 19 Pandemic



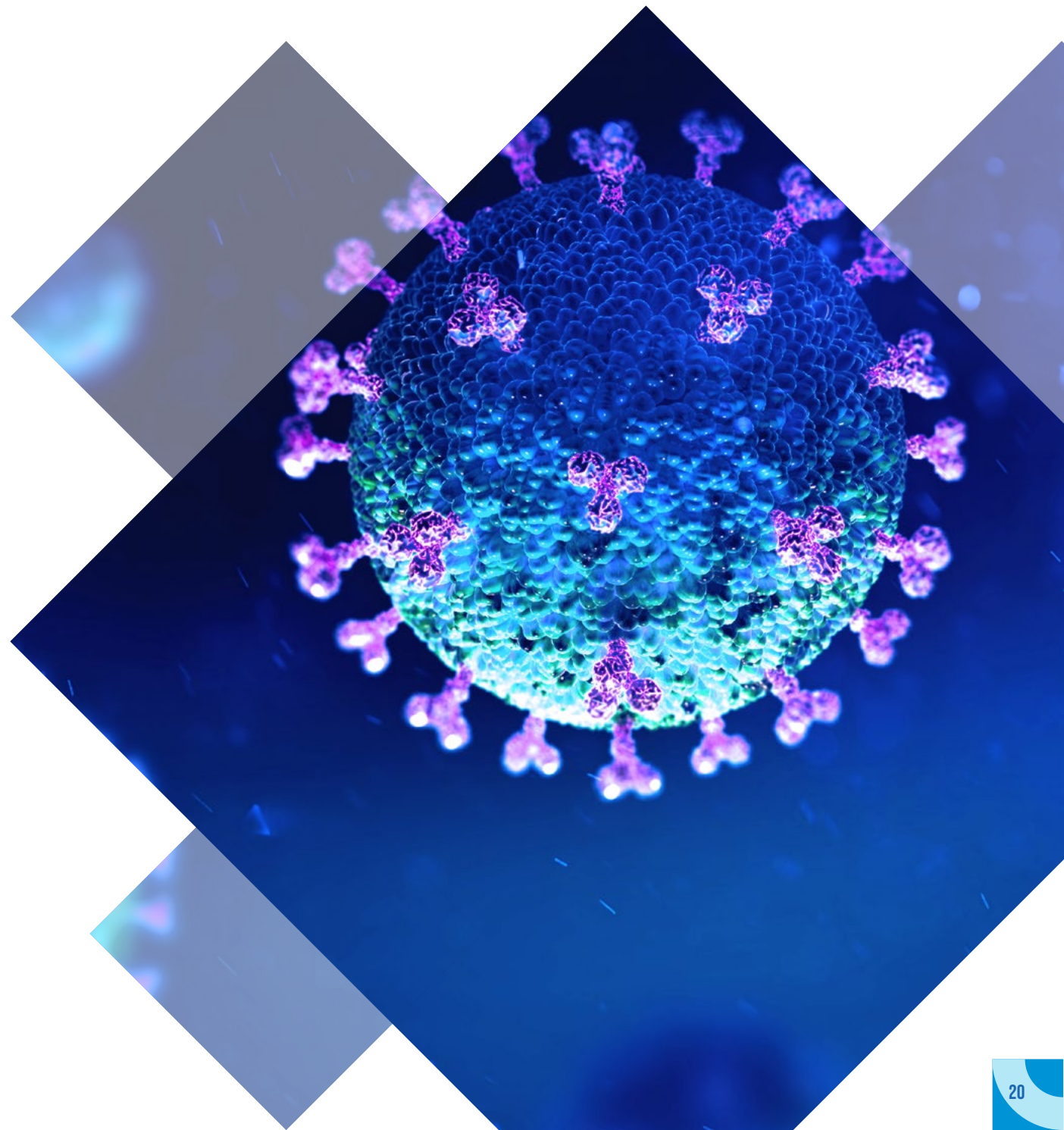


# Context

The Covid-19 pandemic affected everyone to varying degrees, even those with secure family and friendship groups. Groups who were most affected were:

- Young people, in particular females
- Those with long term illnesses and the vulnerable, particularly the elderly
- Disadvantaged communities

This section looks at how people experienced the pandemic through the lens of the four factors for mental wellbeing outlined in the previous section. While the pandemic improved mental wellbeing for some, for many it made it worse.





# Poor physical health and inactivity reduced mental wellbeing

## Less activity increased risk of poor physical and mental wellbeing<sup>51</sup>

With lockdown and the introduction of working from home, home schooling and shopping on-line many became more sedentary. This was compounded for some by poor home working set-up, with many experiencing mobility, joint problems and injuries.

[Click to see activity levels in North Wales](#)

However, it was not all bad news. For some, working from home reduced the stress and costs of travel, and some joined community activities.

## Pre-existing health conditions increased risk and anxieties

Covid-19 and long-term conditions increase risk of death during the Covid-19 pandemic. Awareness of their vulnerability increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression for many.



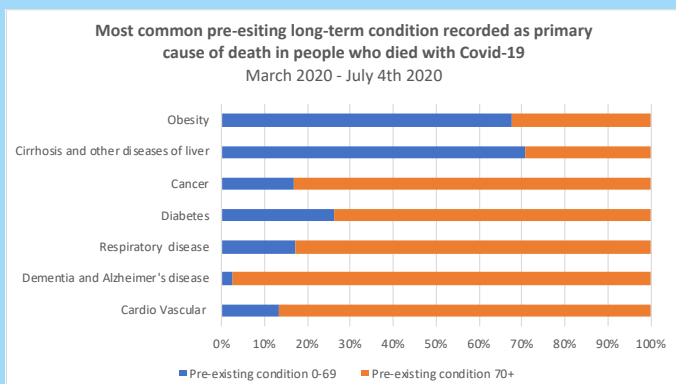
Joined in local activities



No commuting

In Wales 9 out of 10 Covid-19 deaths between March and July 4th July 2020, had pre-existing conditions recorded as the primary cause of death.

The **top pre-existing long-term conditions** are shown here.<sup>68</sup>



## Obesity and high Body Mass Index (BMI) were key risk factors

During the pandemic BMIs generally increased as we became less active and ate more. This was across all age groups. A higher proportion admitted to hospital and intensive care had BMI levels considered obese. Those who were obese reported poorer mental wellbeing.<sup>46</sup>



Obesity reduced activity<sup>47</sup>



Inactivity worsened food choices



Increased and worsened mental wellbeing<sup>50,52</sup>

## Social inequalities and vulnerability were linked to reduced activity<sup>48</sup>

More people from disadvantaged and deprived groups were more adversely affected.<sup>49</sup>

About 1 in 5 adults drink above the recommended level – a risk to their health and wellbeing

Since the pandemic just over 50% of the population achieve 150mins of exercise each week

About 6 in 10 adults are obese – a risk to their health and wellbeing

*"I would like to attend the gym again but worry about mixing too much with others.... My grandmother had to stay home a lot more and this has had a negative effect on her mobility and fitness level" – Emily, Anglesey, 18-64*

# Family, friends and community were essential for mental wellbeing



## Resilience came through informal family & community emotional support.

Prolonged isolation caused anxiety, loneliness and low confidence.<sup>53</sup> For new mums, isolation affected their birth experience and delayed social skills development in children and young adults.

Read why support networks were important for a new mum.

**People had different experiences.** Isolation exacerbated conditions such as dementia, disorientation, and early death. For many it caused enormous distress. For others it was a welcome relief from social pressures, with a reduction in suicide ideation and suicides.<sup>56</sup>



*"inconsolable" quote from the manager, Leonard Cheshire Care Home*



## Anxiety fell for those in friendship groups,

Safe, shared public spaces were sought by all, especially by young people for independence and social relationships.<sup>54</sup>

*"In Penrhyn House we all got closer. We had a gym, cooked and ate together, had film nights. Walked together."  
- Anthony, 18-64, Gwynedd*

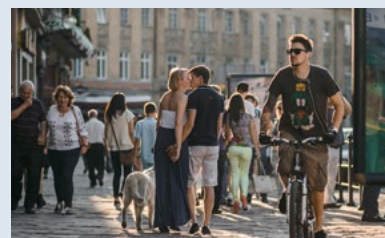
## Adversity can be a catalyst for new friends and intergenerational support.

43,000 community groups supported wellbeing in the pandemic such as the PenPal and Friendship Benches in Gwynedd.<sup>57</sup>



**Social media and digital tools have changed society and how we work, study, communicate, shop, access services.** Its made keeping in touch with family and friends easier. For many, wellbeing podcasts, such as those by Dr. Michael Mosley offered ideas and support.

*"Set up a group on Facebook to keep the street connected. It was nice to know there were people around. I felt more secure knowing they were there." Rosie, 65, Wrexham*



**Adversity strengthened community capital and created connectedness, collaboration and being valued.** These bonds were also a source of emotional support, particularly in children and young people.<sup>55</sup>

*"I saw communities pull together more to support each other such as elderly vulnerable people" - Sara, 18-64, Flintshire*

[Click here to see Levels of reported loneliness across North Wales](#)



# Neighbourhood, nature and the environment came to the fore



**Disconnected and deprived communities were supported with housing, food, and helped to meet the cost of heating during the pandemic.** This improved their mental wellbeing.

The percentage of people who felt they belonged in their own area ranged from 59% in Wrexham to 73% in Gwynedd (National Survey for Wales 2021-22)



As the cost of living crisis grows, mental wellbeing may well be at risk again.

Increase in crime, youth violence and fear for women's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic increased anxiety for personal and loved ones' safety.

*"Stuck indoors all the time, could not make plans because we didn't know when the pandemic would end so nothing to look forward to"* Student, Wrexham

Levels of reported belongingness across North Wales [click here](#)



*"went out for walks more and started running"*



**Re-found pleasure was found in outdoor activities.** Children and adults missed being outdoors and active during lockdowns. Many more people have taken up walking and cycling than before the pandemic.

**Nature has become important to us,** with many parks and nature reserves seeing numbers doubling compared to pre-pandemic years.

Being in nature reduced anxiety and stress. We are now spending more time enjoying being in gardens, allotments, parks or wider countryside. Many are feeling less stressed and less anxious.

*"It was nice to go to the beach with my dogs, and not see many cars or people which made me look around at nature and the sea."*



Global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions dramatically fell during the first pandemic lockdown when industry and transport almost completely stopped. The impact on air and noise pollution was profound.

**Air quality improved in urban areas** and respiratory problems and anxiety levels fell.<sup>58</sup>

Our awareness of the environment, nature and our impact on it has increased. People reported hearing birdsong for the first time, enjoyed the silence of no cars, and fresher air. Many have not returned to the same level of pre-pandemic car use.

*"No cars on the road, quiet and peaceful, positive effect on the environment made me feel good"* Female working in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector

How many people felt able to influence their community across North Wales [click here](#)





# The impact of financial inequalities on mental wellbeing

## Low wage jobs were insecure and limited choices.

People on low/zero wages were at higher risk of financial stress and poor mental health<sup>x</sup> One in five (1:5) earning less than £20,000 lost their jobs.<sup>59</sup>



## Those already under financial stress were most at risk of poor mental wellbeing.

In the 3 years before the pandemic, 22% of working-age adults in Wales were living in relative income poverty. During the pandemic some people, for example, unable to access food & jobs, developed poor mental wellbeing and felt unable to cope.<sup>60</sup> 30,224 food parcels were distributed in North Wales<sup>62</sup>.



**Financial wellbeing was good for mental wellbeing.** Those who could work from home or were furloughed, reported better mental and/or physical health. Many saw reduced commuting costs to work and they could save more. Others, dependent on parents for example, found lack of financial independence stressful.<sup>60</sup>



See impact of employment status on mental wellbeing [click here](#)



16,000 jobs lost in 2020  
Welsh Government

63% claimed universal credit in May 2020<sup>63</sup>

11.3% living in relative poverty post-pandemic  
Welsh Government

34% of children now live in poverty  
Welsh Government

## Financial problems were also found to be stressors for suicide.

Factors most strongly associated with suicidal thoughts and behaviours were financial problems, as well as, food insecurity, domestic abuse, relationship problems, redundancy, and social isolation.<sup>60</sup>

## Financial pressures were a predictor for poor mental wellbeing.

Economic vulnerability or financial difficulty was a good predictor of mental health stress in over 40% of cases.<sup>61</sup>

## The cost of living crisis looks likely to prolong the distress caused by the pandemic.

People in low income/ social rented accommodation are now paying higher fuel costs than average in the UK. Rising food and energy prices, and lower buying power of the pound, may significantly increase stress and anxiety, particularly households already financially insecure.

*"I had no money which caused problems at home" - LS, 6-17, Conwy*



# Section 5



Life Course Actions - let's look at what we each can do to protect our wellbeing. It's never too early or late to start.

**Taking care of our mental well being is a life-long journey. Insights from the Covid-19 pandemic are valuable to help us think about how we can protect our own mental wellbeing throughout our life. It also importantly provides us with a clear steer on what is needed for our youngest at the start of their lives, and whilst growing up, to help them achieve life-long good mental wellbeing.**

Early  
Years



Children  
and Young  
Adults



Working  
Age Adults



Older  
Years



Follow each life course line to see what steps we can take to protect our mental wellbeing

Click on the link below/tab above to see what we each can do as we grow, mature and age to look after our mental wellbeing. You can also see examples of how the Health Board has supported - and where to find information about what else is available in your area



# Looking after our physical health throughout life is the most protective step we can take for mental wellbeing

## Where can I go for further support



Please visit [dewis.wales](https://dewis.wales) for more information about help to be active in your local area.

### Early Years

Our **first 1,000 days** shapes our future health and wellbeing.

**Every movement counts.** Make being active outdoors part of everyday life.

**Breast milk for the best start** followed by early healthy eating habits, including 5-a day fruit and vegetables. Avoid processed food and high sugar drinks.

### Children and Young Adults

Develop healthy habits for life.

**Be super active.** Walk or cycle, play sports, choose outdoor activities to boost energy levels and brain power.

**Develop eating habits for good health.** Eat more 5-a day fruit and vegetables. Avoid processed food, high sugar drinks, alcohol and drugs.

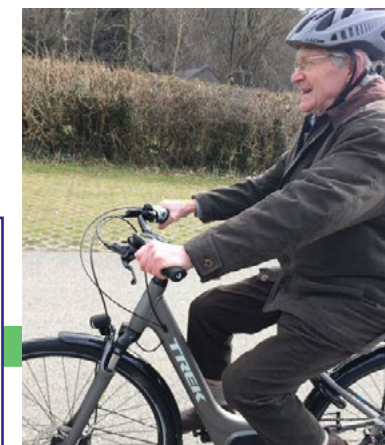
The danger zone for poor physical and mental wellbeing.

**Build daily physical activity into work and home life.**

Exercise to keep muscle strength, cognitive function, weight control and mental wellbeing.

**Check what you eat.**

Eat more 5-a-day fruit and vegetables – it's better for your health, planet and wallet.



Stay active for a longer, healthier life.

**Move it or lose it!** From Iron man to gardening, being active protects muscle mass, bone density & cognitive ability.

**Eat a healthy diet.**

Food high in calcium and vitamins is essential for physical wellbeing and mental agility.

### Working Age Adults

If we measured health gain as money

**£1 adds 50p**

Physical health gained

Mental wellbeing

**Turbo charge mental wellbeing** - exercise daily, eat more healthy food, drink sensibly and don't smoke

### Older Years





# Financial wellbeing supports mental wellbeing from birth to older years

Download: Talk, Learn,  
Do Teach your children  
about money  
booklet



## Where can I go for further support



Please visit [dewis.wales](https://dewis.wales) for more information about community activities in your local area.

### Early Years

#### Society needs to support

**parents'** through fair pay, job security and affordable housing, fresh food and childcare.

#### This will help parents provide

their little ones' with the safety of a warm home, food, emotional security, clean air, green spaces and the safe communities they need.

### Children and Young Adults

**Address inequalities** Lift all children out of poverty by ensuring they grow up in a home without excessive financial stress or job insecurity.

**Give them the best opportunity for success.** Ensure they have good schooling and home environment for learning.

**Teach financial literacy** and promote early financial independence

**Look after your physical and mental wellbeing** to improve job opportunity and income security.

**Improve financial literacy and wellbeing** and seek help or advice if unsure or struggling to make ends meet. Build a pension for later.

**"Go Green" to reduce costs while protecting your health** - for example, walk/cycle more, eat fruit and vegetables, insulate your house.



**Prepare for financial sufficiency in retirement** – plan during your working years

**Be financially literate** and avoid financial scams.

**"Go green" to reduce costs while protecting your wellbeing** – remain active, walk and cycle, insulate your home, eat more fruit and vegetables.

### Working Age Adults

49% of single parent households were in material deprivation in 2021-22<sup>64</sup>

11, 948 food parcels given to children in North Wales 2021-22

Money Helper - a one stop shop for advice<sup>66</sup>



### Older Years



# Support networks are for the good times and the bad

## Early Years

**Encourage** strong parental and family bonds from birth.

**Encourage play with others** to improve social and communication skills

**Build community support networks** and sense of belonging for the family and child by joining in community groups, activities, and social events.

See how a family support worker helped a distressed family



## Where can I go for further support



Please visit [dewis.wales](https://dewis.wales) for more information about community activities in your local area.

## Children and Young Adults

**Protect and strengthen family bonds** as a safety net while navigating towards adulthood

**Build close friendship groups** at school and socially (off-line) for peer-group emotional and wellbeing support.

**Find a trusted adult** who you can turn to for support, advice, safety, and protection.

5,761 parents who completed the Solihull Parenting on line course during the pandemic found it helped them build supportive networks



**Build and strengthen support networks** – with family and friends to help manage the stresses of daily living.

**Create a positive workplace** – create the environment that makes it a great place to work

**Get involved in social activities** – and give back, such as in community clean-up days or in a charity.



**Stay in touch with family** – in person, by phone or social media.

**Maintain a network of friends across all age groups** – to stay connected, current and mentally agile

**Get out and about with friends** – be part of social groups and clubs to boost your feeling of value, independence, and happiness.

## Working Age Adults

**The Five Ways to Wellbeing tool** – a Five-a-day for mental wellbeing, we believe will help us to Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn and Give



Read about the Early Years/NESTA programme in Flintshire



## Older Years





# Protect and look after your neighbourhood/community and natural environment

## Early Years

**Be outside** – in forests, playgrounds and beaches- they are free and accessible all year

**Get little ones involved in community projects** - to build pride, belonging and responsibility

**Join forest events** - to nurture love of nature and understanding of why it's worth looking after.

## Children and Young Adults



**Take pride in your neighbourhood** - get involved, help to keep it clean and safe.

**Get involved in local or online community and environmental projects** that add social value and impact.

**Be the change** – make daily choices that reduce your carbon footprint. Walk, cycle, eat more fruit and vegetables, recycle and upcycle.

## Working Age Adults

**Get involved in community and work-based projects** - enhance your neighbourhood

**Step into nature** – enjoy, support, learn and get involved in local preservation work.

**Take daily steps to reduce your carbon footprint.**

## Where can I go for further support



Please visit [dewis.wales](https://dewis.wales) for more information about community activities in your local area.



Healthy Charter for North Wales promotes sustainable travel

Read about how being in nature helps people in North Wales



Read Helen's Story – an iCAN volunteer



## Older Years

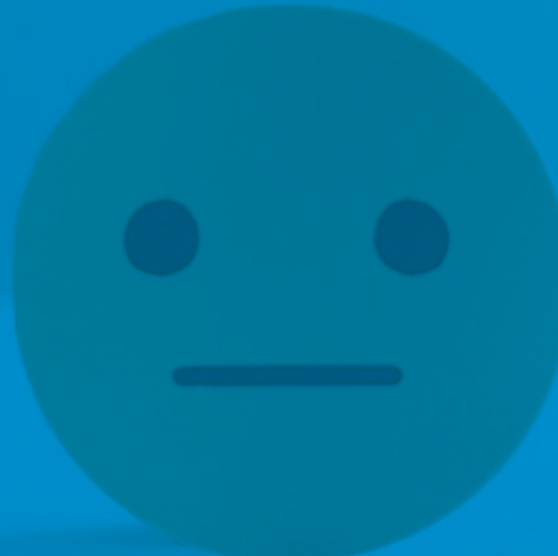
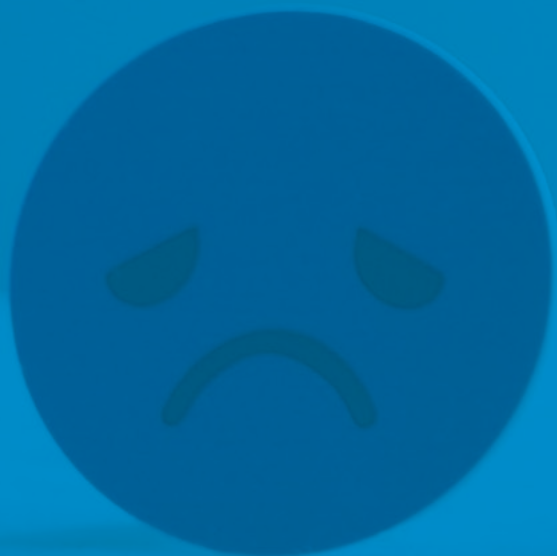
**Remain visible and part of the community** – be a champion for community safety and cohesion

**Share your skills and experience** with the younger generations.

**Buy green** – buy local, buy green, invest green, recycle and upcycle, improve insulation, reduce energy use.



# Section 6



## What have we learnt

# What we have learnt and how do we level the wellbeing playing field

The pandemic has clearly affected everyone to varying degrees. Few would dispute that they experienced some level of anxiety and stress over the past two years. Many have shared positive stories of strong family relationships, reconnecting with nature, learning new skills and improved fitness. Others are still recovering from deep-rooted depression and disruption to their lives. Inequalities have played a major factor.

Of course, there will be other events, small or large, personal, national or global, that may well put pressure on our mental wellbeing. Other viruses may emerge to disrupt life again. Currently, we are all aware of the economic, energy and cost of living crisis and concerned about the impact it will have over the coming months.

But, looking back on the pandemic and what we know, there is much we can do personally as individuals, as families, as a community and as a partnership of services, to strengthen our mental wellbeing - whatever life throws at us in the future.



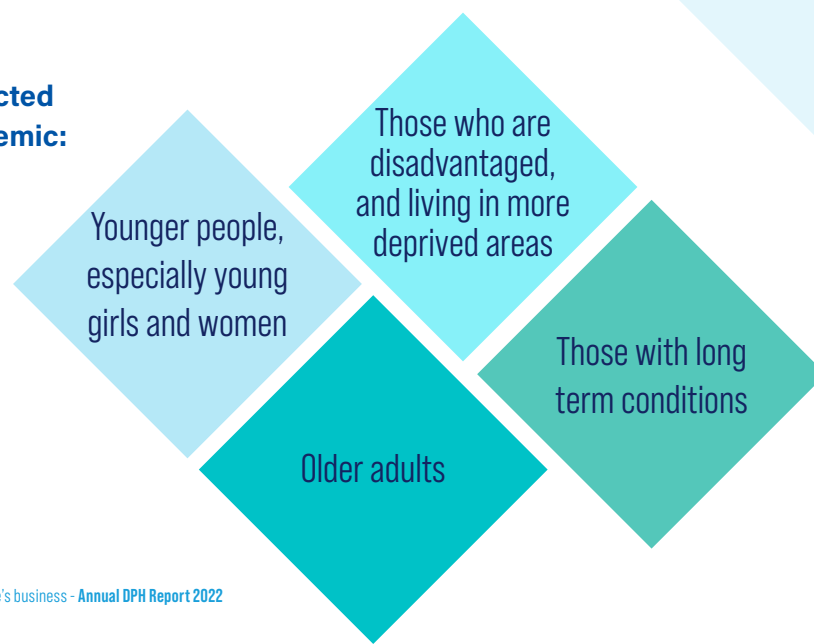
# Lessons from the pandemic

**Those most at risk of poor mental wellbeing in moments of crisis are the most vulnerable in our society.**

Insights from the pandemic confirm Sir Michael Marmot's well known position that good physical health, strong community support and networks, a safe and nurturing environment and financial resilience were important factors for mental wellbeing.

They are valuable reminders about how we can protect our own mental wellbeing in general during, these turbulent times. It also importantly provides us, as parents and wider society, a clear steer on what is needed for our youngest at the start of their lives, to enable life-long good mental wellbeing, better life opportunities and lower dependency on an increasingly challenged health care system.

**Those most affected during the pandemic:**



**Look after our physical health** – Start early to build healthy life habits in young children to support a long life in good health and mental wellbeing. It is never too early or late to start - focus on a healthy diet, being active, building strength to protect our physical & brain function and mental wellbeing.

**Nurture and protect our support networks** – Our response to stresses and anxieties of growing up, day-to-day life, or major life events, is stronger when we feel valued, confident and protected by family, friends and community at home and work. Letters, phones and social media can all help extend friendships – but are not a long-term substitute for in-person contact.

**Strengthen our financial resilience**  
Look after our physical health and mental wellbeing to optimise job opportunities and security. Strengthen financial wellbeing and don't be afraid to seek help and support.

**Make our home, neighbourhoods, communities and our natural environment accessible and safe places to be** – Know what you can control and where to get support. Spend time in nature and protect it. Doing our bit through daily life choices, no matter how small, to protect our planet, makes us feel happier.





# Section 7



## Call to action

# Call to action for everyone

## What can we each do ?



**Adopt the “5 Ways to Wellbeing”** approach – it’s a mental wellbeing “5-A-day healthy food for the mind”. Many use this and find it really helps.



**Reflect on the four areas that influence your wellbeing** and take action on the things that will help your wellbeing. It could range from dealing with an overdue bill to relieve financial anxieties through to planting trees to protect your environment! It’s about taking personal control.



**Talk to a friend, or seek community support.** If you need help to tackle something that is causing you stress, don’t worry alone. Try [this link](#) for information on support available to help in North Wales.

## What can the wider system do to protect and improve mental wellbeing?

- ✓ Strengthen strategic planning and investment to create a nurturing environment for early years. The return on investment will be seen through reduced poor health and longer years in good health.
- ✓ Encourage more outdoor and community activities for children and young adults. This will reinstate confidence in face-to-face social networks and encourage physical activity.
- ✓ Work with employers on workplace wellbeing and improving job security to support financial and mental wellbeing.
- ✓ Support and promote the work of Community Connectors who help build strong communities to support people who are isolated and vulnerable.
- ✓ Continue to develop an integrated approach through implementing the Together for Mental Wellbeing Strategy.
- ✓ Promote social prescribing as a first response to poor physical, mental and financial wellbeing.
- ✓ Ensure social, physical, financial and mental wellbeing is embedded in all policies, such as economic development, welfare, planning, early years, education and the wider health and care system.
- ✓ Consider using Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment (MWIA) to strengthen strategic, policy and operational plans.
- ✓ Continue to work in partnership with public, non-statutory and voluntary organisation, such as [2025 Movement](#) to support mental wellbeing

# Case study:

## A family in Conwy

### Family Support



*"Support from Marnie, our Family Worker allowed me to feel proud as a parent about how now we manage day to day - we couldn't have got through this without the support of Marnie." Mum*

**This story is about a family at breaking point during the pandemic when the father was ill and his daughter was very distressed. The social care team stepped in to provide the family with much needed support.**

As a Social Care team we started working with the family, when their daughter had overheard a conversation between her parents about her father's illness. Because she was frightened, she started behaving out of character.

Marnie, the Family Worker visited them at home, and found out about his illness. He seemed quite low, and had not received any support with coping with his feelings and emotions about the illness.

The Family Worker arranged counselling for both the father and for the daughter, and offered a parenting course to support the family with their communication.

Through this support the family were able to talk openly with one another. This helped their daughter to cope with her feelings which has improved her behaviour.

**Shared by the Social Care Team, Central Area.**



# Case study:

## Healthy Ageing and Intergenerational Projects in Gwynedd and across North Wales, promoting a sense of wellbeing



Thank you so much for finding us something to go to together, we are really excited, everything seems to be coming together for us now" Nerys, Anglesey

**A Welsh Government grant during 2021-2022, funded a programme of activities and support for older people and their communities across each Local Authority in North Wales**

Mirain Llwyd Roberts, Gwynedd Age Friendly Co-ordinator, believes that the only way to create age-friendly communities is to work together and ensure everyone plays their part.

The Gwynedd team used part of the grant to run social events in their community to reduce loneliness, isolation and promote mental wellbeing. Working with the Community Connectors across Gwynedd, they reached a total of 1,948 older residents demonstrating the desire for social connection.

Like many other counties in North Wales, Gwynedd continues to build intergenerational projects to bring people of all ages together to improve mental health & wellbeing. Here are some examples of their recent projects:

**Gwynedd Local Authority hopes to join the WHO global network of age friendly communities to share and access similar success stories.**

# Case study:

## Helen W's Story



The positive impact was that my physical health improved and I had a positive way to help control my weight, anxiety and general feeling of lethargy.



**Helen is an employed, working-aged female from the Flintshire area. This is what she kindly shared for the report.**

I was very isolated as I lived by myself and had just lost my pet dog. I struggled to cope with day-to-day life and how I had to interact with people. Although living by myself was a personal choice, I suddenly realised how important the daily physical interactions I had before the pandemic were - interactions at work, in the activities I undertook as part of general day to day life. I only appreciated their importance when they were all taken away and I was left by myself 24/7.

The only positive impact was I had a lot of time to think about me, what made me tick and how to begin to support myself during these times. There was a lot of time for self-reflection, reading and understanding why I behaved the way I did during these times. It gave me the time to step back and reflect on what I needed to keep going.

Unable to get out and move, I began to put on weight which ultimately meant that I felt low, lethargic and left with little motivation. So I tapped into my love of running and scheduled in regular runs to help build a routine, exercise and a form of relaxation. This gave me motivation to then continue my daily routines.

# Case study:

## Helen's Story



*"We support and improve your mental wellbeing through a range of service across North Wales"*

**Helen is an employed, working aged female from the Flintshire area. This is Helen's story.**

### ICAN Volunteer

I live on my own and during the pandemic I felt pretty lonely and useless. As I could empathise, I threw myself into volunteering for 2 mental health services to support and advocate for people who were struggling. It was not just about volunteering, but promoting mental health awareness and understanding the plight of many people. Having spent 10 months volunteering with ICAN, (a new approach to supporting the mental wellbeing of people within the community), I knew it needed its volunteers 100% during lockdown. Due to my own struggles with isolation, it was also suggested that I volunteer for another NHS Mental Health Service, 'CALL', the mental health helpline for Wales.

Volunteering throughout the pandemic, as well as continuing to work from home, highlighted for me that no-one was immune to the impact of the pandemic on our mental wellbeing. The uniqueness of the situation is that we all had to adapt our way of life and build resilience, while supporting each other to cope during the lockdown.

Family, friend and colleagues at work all recognised that our mental wellbeing is valuable, and, now we have all shared in the impact of the lockdown, we need to continue the mental health discussions, share our own experiences, and help others who are struggling know that we are all in it together.



# Case study: a new mum during the pandemic



**Having a baby at the start of the pandemic was a very strange experience. I was very fortunate to have a home birth because the baby came two days before the home birth restrictions came into effect. In one way it was lovely to be in a safe and cosy little bubble, but on the other hand it was very difficult. With two other children home from school, and a partner who continued to work virtually, it didn't reflect the maternity leave I had imagined!**

As someone who is from a large, close family, I would have had a lot of help and support under normal circumstances. I was used to seeing them so often – it was very hard not to. It was also hard not to be able to confide in them face-to-face.

My partner took the children for their 'daily stroll' once a day, and so at that point I was having time alone with the baby. It was also strange not having visitors – everyone loves a new baby – and I feel for people like my Nain (Grandma) who didn't get to hold the newborn baby – as she has done for the other little ones.

I had periods of being incredibly grateful for the time with my children, time I would never have again. The baby was extremely lucky to have everyone from her family at home with her every day through lockdowns. The children helped me (at times) as the baby grew up and started communicating and playing.

I also had a period of feeling quite low and depressed as things were quite 'intense' and I was extremely tired. I took much longer to lose weight after this birth as I wasn't doing anything physically strenuous, and so this was affecting my spirits as well.

From a financial point of view, I wasn't in a worse position than usual – because we couldn't go out and spend, I was able to save a little bit extra. Weekly food costs certainly increased with everyone at home 24/7 emptying the cupboards.

*"I will look back on the period as a happy time, but there were certainly days when I didn't feel happy at all!!"*



# Early years case study: Flintshire Early Years and NESTA Cymru Programme



## NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts)

For all children to have the best start in life all early years services need to work collaboratively to develop a seamless, responsive system that provides strong foundations and clear outcomes for young children.

To better understand our population within this age range, their families, and their needs, the Flintshire Early Years' Service partnered with NESTA Cymru to determine available data, assess need, and identify opportunities for early years and child development.

As a result we now use innovative methods to create change, through collaboration and partnership working to support informed decision making.

**Gail Bennett, Early Years and Family  
Support Manager, September 2022**



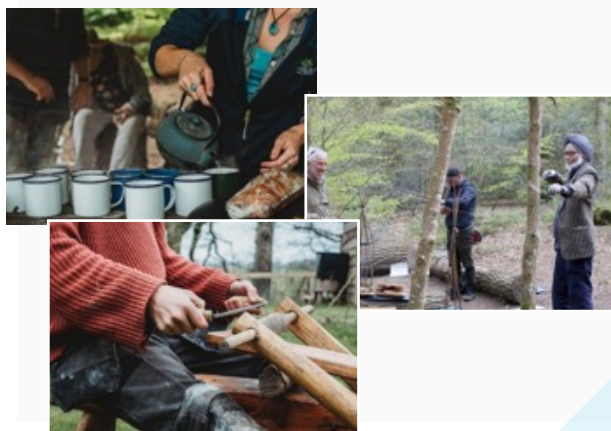
Visit the NESTA Website [Click here](#)



What if instead of  
relying on children  
to be resilient,  
we create a  
world that is  
less traumatic.

# Case study: Coed Lleol (Small Woods) – North Wales

[Click here](#) to see how Coed Lleol (Small Woods) project helps adults and children who live in areas with high health needs benefit from using their natural environment”



*“It has encouraged me to get outside even when it’s wet and windy and this has had a beneficial effect on my overall mental health and wellbeing”  
(Walking Group Gwynedd, Outdoor Health Project)*

**Improving mental well-being, physical health, learning new knowledge and skills, improves social wellbeing and increases confidence.**

Coed Lleol’s (Small Woods) Actif Woods Wales Programme began in 2010 to connect people with their local woodlands for their health and wellbeing, whilst also helping to maintain and promote healthy woodlands.

The Actif Woods Wales programme engages adults and children who predominantly live in areas that have high health needs, low employment rates and often poor access to services.

It supports social prescribing, working in partnership with health services and GPs who refer people to the Programme. It also runs training courses for GPs and health workers, and helps develop outdoor health hubs that connect people to a range of outdoor services in their area.

Sessions are delivered in all 6 local authority areas - Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.

A typical Coed Lleol (Small Woods) Actif Woods session covers:

- woodland skills and knowledge
- healthy eating
- woodland exercise – guided walks to meet various abilities

## Sessions cover (for example)

- Bushcraft and fire lighting skills
- Coppicing, green woodworking, whittling, willow-weaving,
- Tree and wildlife identification
- Campfire cooking with a focus on healthy eating responsibility
- Light woodland management

**Supported by: Welsh Government’s EnRaW (Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being scheme) and the Healthy and Active Fund. Additional funding is also received from Anglesey AONB.**



# 5 Ways to Well Being - a new “5-a-day” for good mental wellbeing

**Pum ffordd at les**  
**Five ways to wellbeing**

Pum peth syml y gallwn ni i gyd eu gwneud i roi hwb i'n lles  
Five simple things we can all do to give our wellbeing a boost

<p><b>Bod yn sylwgar</b> Take notice</p>	<p>Cymrwch amser i chi'ch hun, sylwch ar bethau o'ch cwmpas a sawrwch y foment</p> <p>Take time for yourself, notice things around you and savour the moment</p>
<p><b>Cysylltu</b> Connect</p>	<p>Gwnewch amser i gysylltu â ffrindiau a theulu i helpu i gyfoethogi'ch diwrnod</p> <p>Make time to connect with friends and family to help enrich your day</p>
<p><b>Bod yn fywiog</b> Be active</p>	<p>Mae bod yn fywiog yn gwneud i chi deimlo'n dda. Symudwch - dawnsiwrch, canwch; camwch allan - ewch am dro, i redeg neu i feicio</p> <p>Being active makes you feel good. Get moving - dance, sing; step outside - go for a walk, a run or cycle</p>
<p><b>Dal ati i ddysgu</b> Keep learning</p>	<p>Gall dysgu rhywbeth newydd fod yn hwyl, gwneud i chi deimlo'n dda a datblygu'ch hyder</p> <p>Learning something new can be fun, make you feel good and build your confidence</p>
<p><b>Rhoi</b> Give</p>	<p>Fe all gwellthredoedd o garedigrwydd, helpu eraill neu hyd yn oed gwirfoddoli eich gwneud i deimlo'n hapusach</p> <p>Acts of kindness, helping others or even volunteering can make you feel happier</p>

GIG NHS  
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Betsi Cadwaladr  
University Health Board

GIG NHS  
Welsh Government  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

**Pum ffordd at les**  
**Five ways to wellbeing**

Visit the BCUBH video [Click here](#)



# 2025 Movement - a partnership for wellbeing



**Mental wellbeing is a key priority for all partners who have joined together to work differently as part of the 2025 social movement to end avoidable health inequalities across North Wales.**

Widening inequalities, caused by the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, are only going to make this challenge bigger for all our organisations. **Children and adults in households in the lowest 20% income brackets two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems.** This is why it's even more important that we work together across organisational boundaries to achieve the change our region needs to improve mental wellbeing for the communities we serve.

Anyone interested in joining 2025 and becoming part of a growing movement of people and organisations all committed to tackling health inequalities, can visit [www.2025movement.org](http://www.2025movement.org) to find out more.

**Movement 2025, Avoiding avoidable health inequalities in North Wales, Annual Report, 2019/20, Clare Budden, Chair**



# Acknowledgements

**Once again, our Annual DPH Report is a joint effort. We have been delighted with everyone's enthusiasm to contribute – its focus on personal and community mental wellbeing and insights from the pandemic has hit a nerve for many.**

So this report is the work of not only the Public Health Team, but also of our local communities in North Wales, colleagues from across the Health Board, Local Authorities and the Voluntary Sector. Your insights and experience have been invaluable, and we hope we have done your contribution justice.

Our thanks and gratitude go to everyone.

Many thanks to our Health Board strategic leads for their continued enthusiasm, expertise and contribution to this preventative lens for mental wellbeing.

Dr Alberto Salmoiraghi	<b>Clinical Lead and Medical Director for Mental Health</b> , for his contribution in the Foreword, and passion for a preventive approach to mental wellbeing
Lucy Reid	<b>Chair, Together for Metal Health Partnership Board and Vice Chair, BCUHB</b> , for her continued oversight of our mental health and wellbeing work, and for her support and contribution to this year's Annual DPH Report

Particular thanks go to members of the Public Health Team who lead on mental health and wellbeing, and provided data insights and much of the research that underpins the report. Their expertise, insight, and support has been constant and invaluable. Also to Karen Bryson for taking the lead overall on collation of the report.

Dr Robert Atenstaedt	Consultant in Public Health Medicine
Anna Varela-Raynes	Senior Public Health Practitioner
Dafydd Gwynne	Principal Public Health Practitioner
Basil McDonald and Matthew York	ST1 Specialty Registrars in Public Health, for their research on the factors that affect wellbeing, their objectivity and critique

Wider members of the Public Health team, Health Board, Local Authorities and Voluntary Sector who have supported, contributed, sought people's insights and advised, are included below (in first name alphabetical order) My apologies if we have inadvertently missed anyone from the list.

Ceriann Tunnah	Consultant in Public Health
Ceri Mcgaugie	Senior Secretary, and PA for Lucy Reid
Clare Budden	Chair, Movement 2025
Claire Jones	Public Health Intelligence Specialist
Emma Hughes	PA to Teresa Owen, Director of Public Health
Gail Bennett	Early Years and Family Support Service Manager, Flintshire Local Authority
Hannah Lloyd	Administration Support to the Report team
Hannah Lloyd	Public Health Principal Practitioner
Jackie Irwin	Public Health Principal Practitioner
Jinette Hindmarsh	Business Manager, for removing hurdles and connecting people
Lisa Goodier	Integrated Strategy & Portfolio Development, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities
Louise Woodfine	Consultant in Public Health
Mirain Llwyd Roberts	Community Coordinator, Gwynedd Local Authority
Nel Griffith	Public Health Practitioner
Nia Thomas	Public Health Practitioner
Paul Kavanagh	Consultant Lead, Test Trace & Protect – our thanks to Paul and the TTP Team across the 6 Local Authorities who gathered people's mental wellbeing experiences of Covid 19.
Rhiannon Mair	Public Health Practitioner
Sarah Andrews	Consultant in Public Health
Siwan Sutton	Senior Public Health Practitioner
To those who shared their experiences, many whom are quoted throughout the report.	Unfortunately, we couldn't include all, but your insights have been invaluable in helping us shape the report. Thank you .



# Appendix 1 - Data

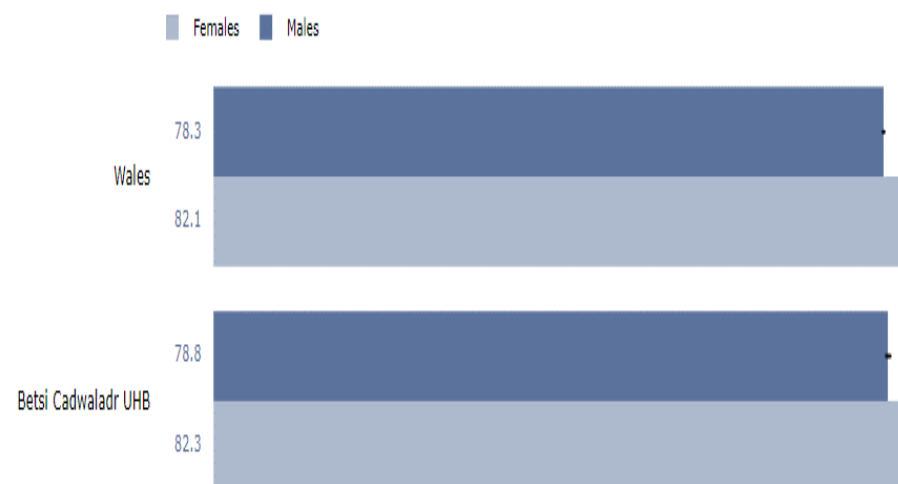
## Life expectancy in North Wales

Life expectancy for males in BCUHB is statistically significantly higher than Wales; for females it is similar to Wales.

**PHW Public Health Outcomes Framework**

### Life expectancy at birth, years, males and females, Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr UHB, 2018-2020

Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory using APS, 2011 Census, PHM, MYE (ONS)



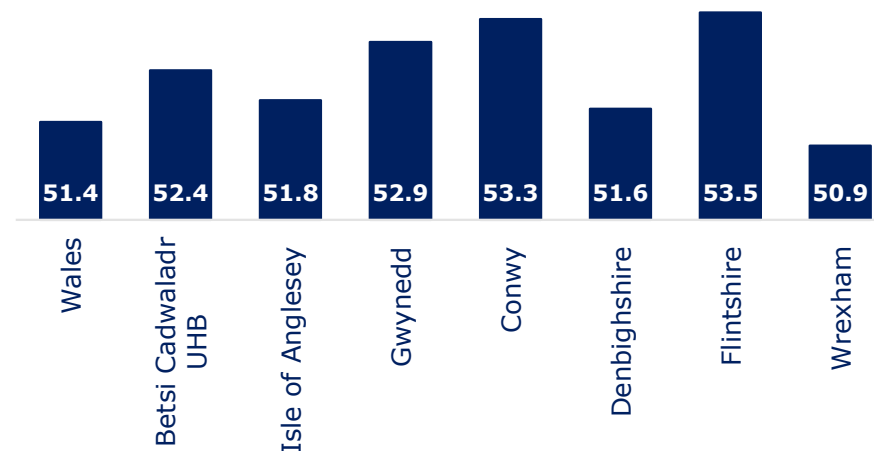
# People living in North Wales report better mental wellbeing compared to the rest of Wales

BCUHB has a mental wellbeing score of 52.4 compared to 51.4 across Wales; a higher score indicates stronger mental health. Across the region, mental wellbeing scores range from 50.9 in Wrexham to 53.5 in Flintshire.

## National Survey for Wales 2018-19

## Warwick-Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale\*, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2018-19

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2018-19 (WG)



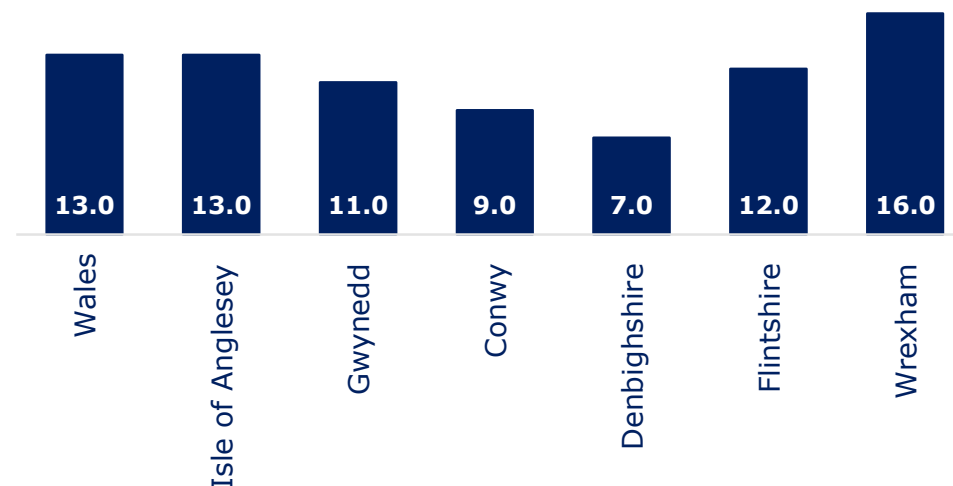
\*higher score indicates stronger mental wellbeing

# Mental Wellbeing challenges

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people reporting to be lonely ranges from 7.0% in Denbighshire to 16.0% in Wrexham.  
(Source: **National Survey for Wales 2021-22**)

## Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) reporting to be lonely, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



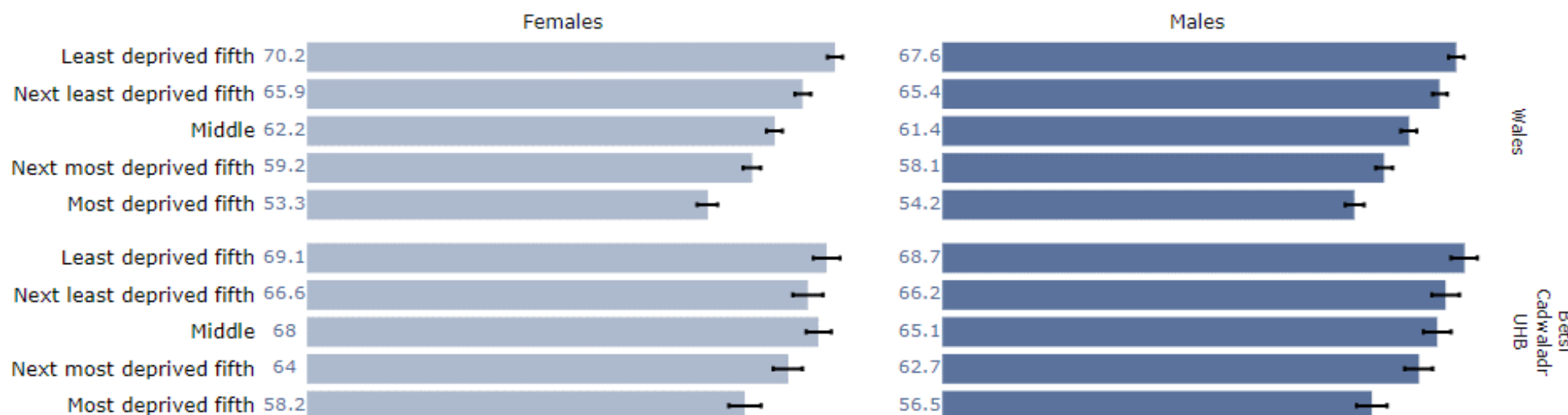


# Healthy life expectancy

The gap in life expectancy between the least and most deprived population in Wales has been generally increasing in recent years for males and females, suggestive of growing inequality. The inequality gap was over a year greater for males than in females.

## Healthy life expectancy at birth, years, males and females, Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr UHB by deprivation fifth, 2018-2020

Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory using APS, 2011 Census, PHM, MYS (ONS) & WIMD (2019)

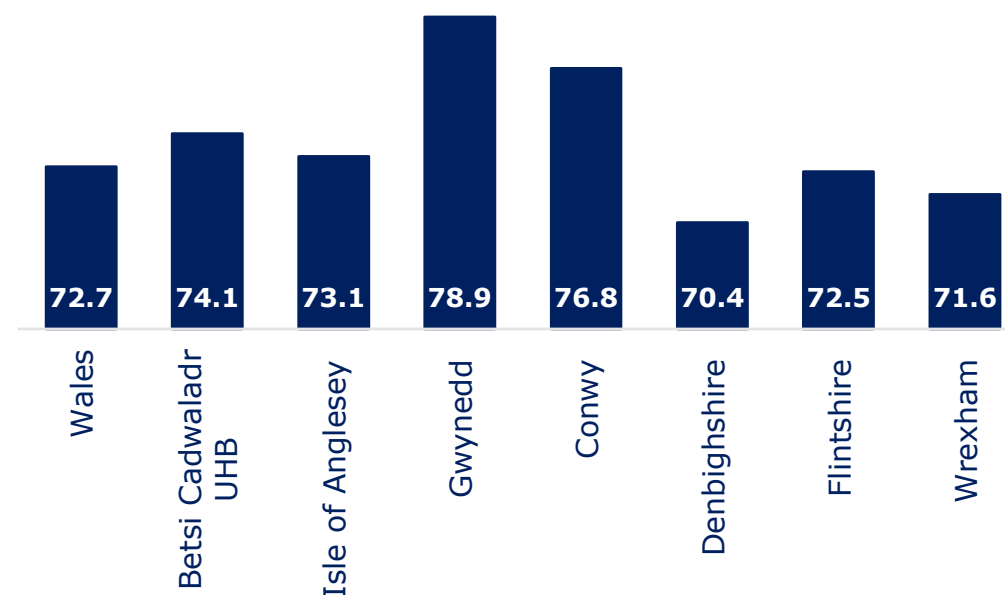


# Health status in North Wales

In 2021-22, 74.1% of BCUHB's population reported their health to be very good or good; 14% reported to be limited a lot by longstanding illnesses. (Source: [National Survey for Wales](#))

**Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) reporting their health to be good or very good, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22**

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)





# Feeling safe

## CRIME LEVELS

Total recorded crime and public order offences in BCUHB are both higher than the Wales average (Source: **ONS**)

## FEEL SAFE

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people reporting feeling safe at home ranges from 57.0% in Wrexham to 85.0% in Gwynedd (Source: **National Survey for Wales 2021-22**)

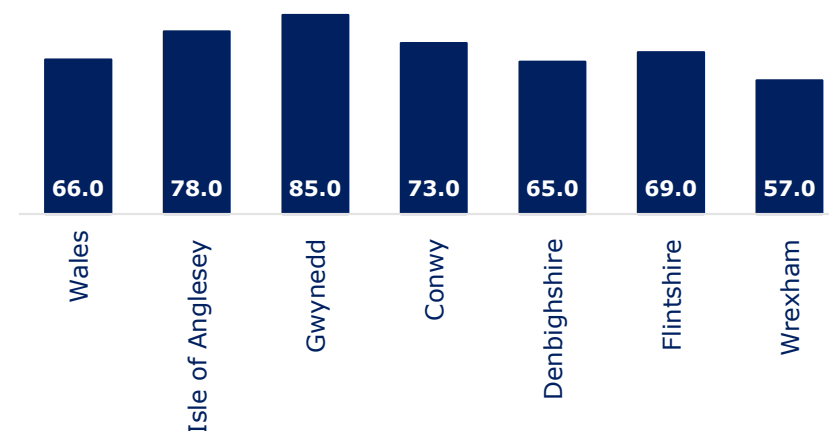
Police recorded crime per 1,000 population, Wales & North Wales police force area, year ending March 2022

	Total recorded crime (per 1,000 population)	Public order offences (per 1,000 population)
Wales	84.9	12.5
North Wales	96.2	14.4

Source: Office for National Statistics

Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) feeling safe at home, walking in the local area and when travelling, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)





# Satisfied and able to influence their community

## SATISFACTION

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people reporting to be satisfied with their ability to get to/access facilities ranges from 85.0% in Flintshire to 96.4% in Denbighshire.

(Source: [National Survey for Wales 2021-22](#))

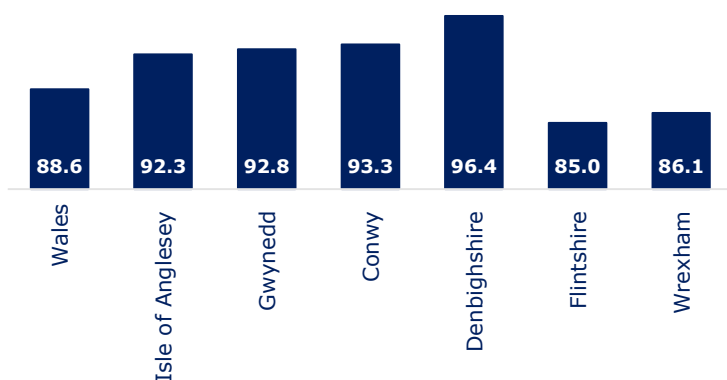
## ABLE TO INFLUENCE DECISIONS

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local areas ranges from 22.0% in Flintshire to 37.0% in Gwynedd and Denbighshire

(Source: [National Survey for Wales 2021-22](#))

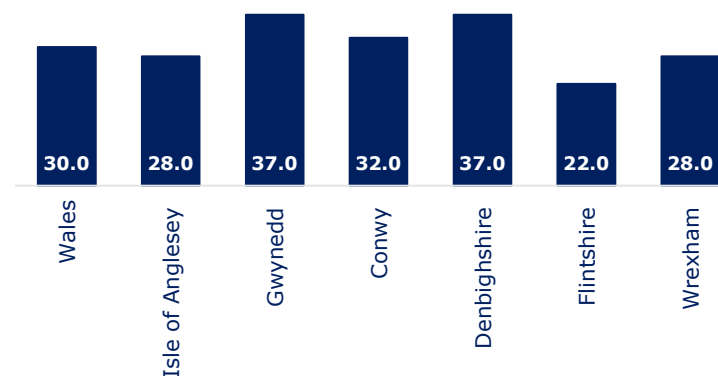
**Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) satisfied with their local area as a place to live, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22**

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



**Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22**

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



# Employment improves happiness and reduces anxiety

## Low sense of anxiety, age-standardised percentage, persons aged 16+, by employment status, Wales, 2018

Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using APS (ONS)



### ANXIETY

In 2018, 66% of employed persons aged 16 years and over in Wales reported having a low sense of anxiety compared to 56% of unemployed persons and 54% of economically inactive persons. ([Public Health Wales](#))

## High sense of happiness, age-standardised percentage, persons aged 16+, by employment status, Wales, 2018

Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using APS (ONS)



### HAPPINESS

In 2018, almost 78% of employed persons aged 16 years and over in Wales reported a high sense of happiness compared to 68% of unemployed persons and 66% of economically inactive persons ([Public Health Wales](#))

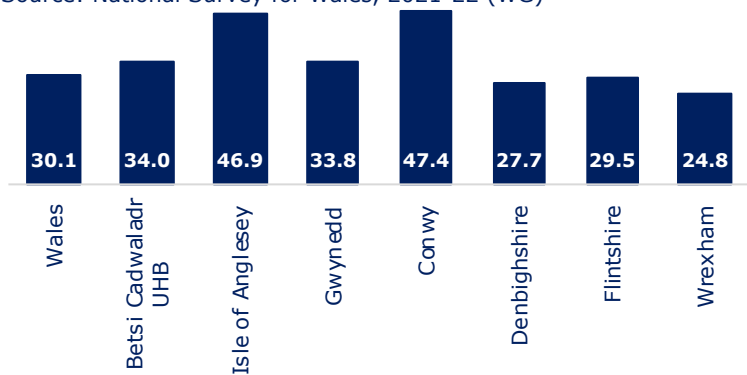
# Activity levels in North Wales

150 mins recommended levels of activity for adults each week

## Too little

**EXERCISING LESS THAN 30 mins per week**  
Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) reporting being active less than 30 minutes in the previous week, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22

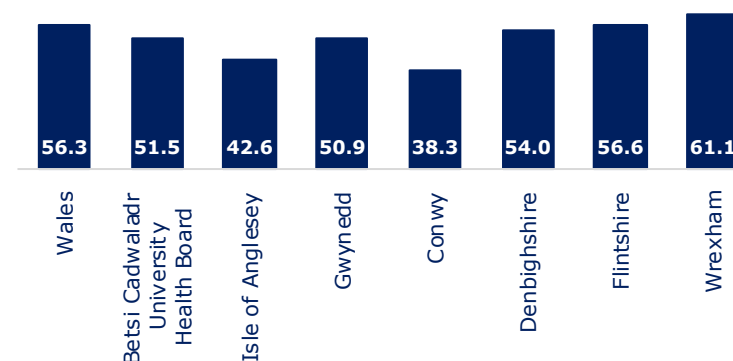
Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



## Reaching or above target

**EXERCISING AT LEAST 150 mins per week**  
Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) reporting being active at least 150 minutes in the previous week, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



Source: National Survey for Wales 2021-22)



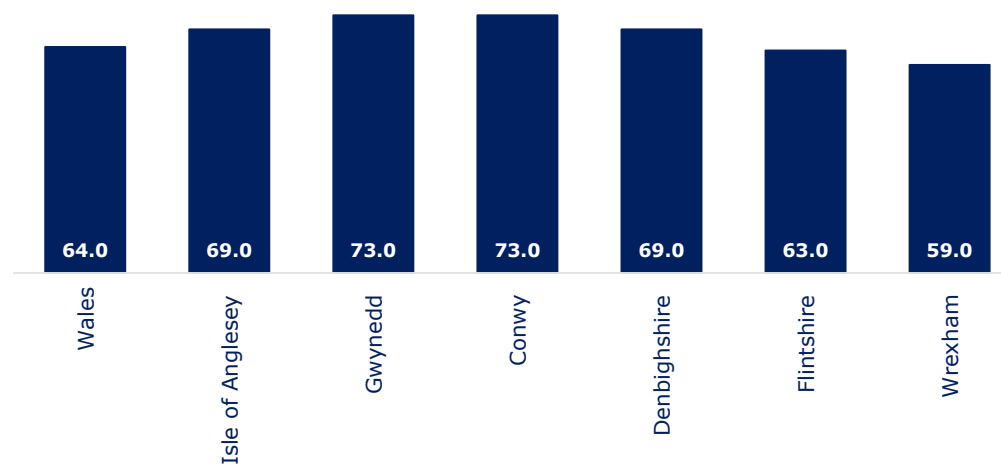
# Belonging

## BELONGING

In 2021-22, the percentage of people feeling that they belong to the area, that people from different backgrounds got on well together and the people treat each other with respect ranged from 59.0% in Wrexham to 73.0% in Gwynedd and Conwy (Source: **National Survey for Wales**)

**Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) agreeing that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22**

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



# Deprivation

## PEOPLE LIVING IN DEPRIVATION

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people living in households in material deprivation ranges from 8.4% in Conwy to 13.1% in Wrexham.

(Source: **DWP/HMRC Statistics March 2022**)

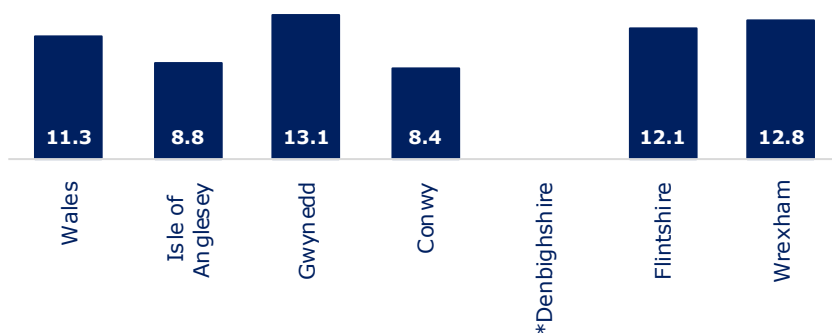
## CHILDREN IN LOW INCOME FAMILIES

Across BCUHB, the percentage of children in low income families ranges from 30.8% in Denbighshire to 35.6% in the Isle of Anglesey.

(Source: **National Survey for Wales 2021-22**)

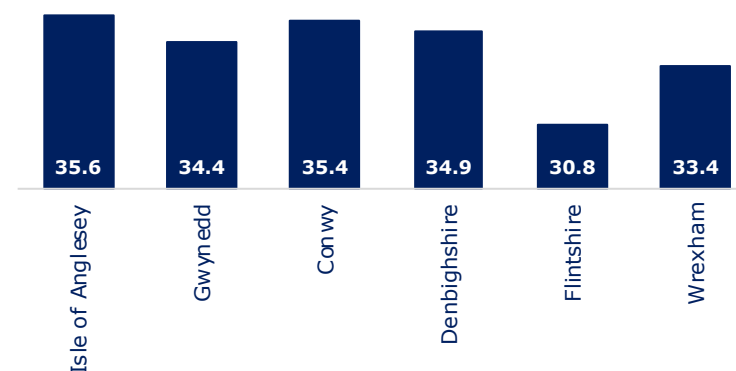
**Percentage of people living in households in material deprivation, Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22**

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



**Percentage children in low income families, North Wales unitary authorities, 2020/21**

Source: Children in Wales; DWP/HMRC Statistics (March 2022)



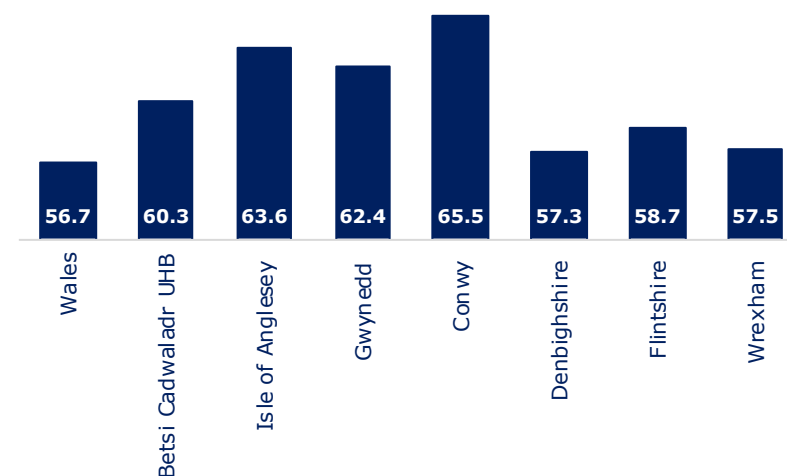
\*Data disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication

# Breast Feeding rates

Across BCUHB, the percentage of people breast feeding at birth ranges from 57.3% in Denbighshire to 65.5% in Conwy. The percentage in BCUHB is higher than the Wales average (Source: **National Survey for Wales 2021-22**)

**Breastfeeding status at birth (percentage), Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021**

Source: StatsWales (Welsh Government)



# Obesity levels in BCUHB

## OBESITY LEVELS

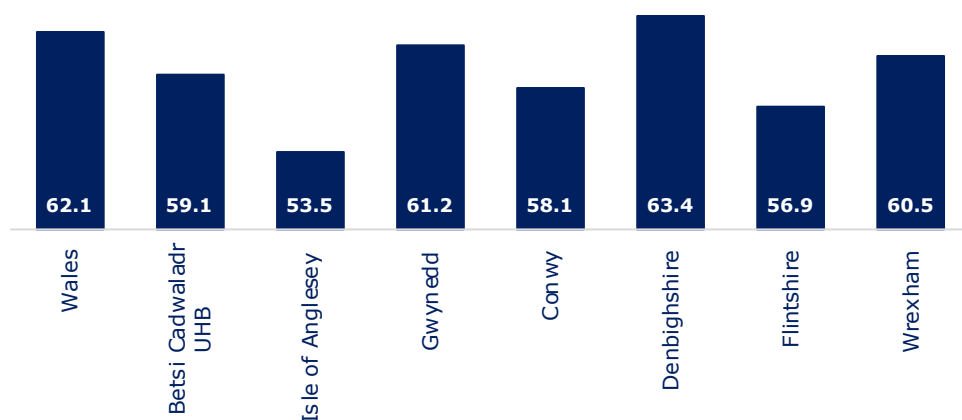
Across BCUHB, the percentage of people who are overweight or obese ranges from 53.5% in the Isle of Anglesey to 63.4% in Denbighshire. The percentage in BCUHB is lower than the Wales average

(Source: [National Survey for Wales 2021-22](#))

## OVERWIGHT or OBESE

Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) who are overweight or obese (BMI 25+), Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22

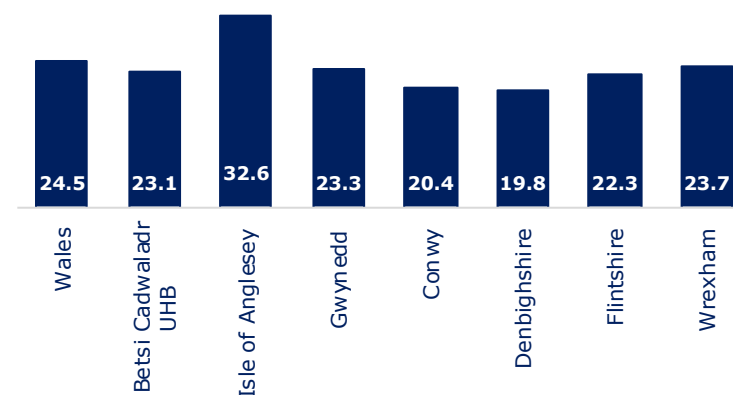
Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)



## OBESE

Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) who are obese (BMI 30+), Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)





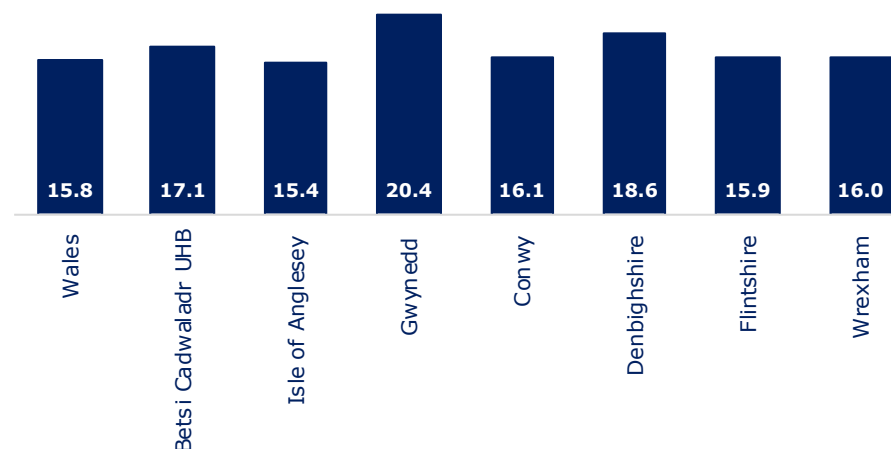
# Alcohol consumption

Across BCUHB, the reported average weekly alcohol consumption ranges from 15.4% in the Isle of Anglesey to 20.4% in Gwynedd. The percentage in BCU is higher than the Wales average

(Source: [National Survey for Wales 2021-22](#))

**Percentage of adults (aged 16 years and over) who report drinking above recommended guidelines (above 14 units per week), Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB & unitary authorities, 2021-22**

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2021-22 (WG)





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# Glossary of terms

<b>BCUHB</b>	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	<b>MWIA</b>	Mental Wellbeing Impact assessment
<b>BMI</b>	Body Mass Index	<b>NESTA</b>	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts
<b>CALL</b>	Community Advice and Listening Line	<b>ONS</b>	Office of National Statistics
<b>CO2</b>	Carbon dioxide ( also short-hand for all gases associated with global warming)	<b>PA</b>	Personal Assistant
<b>CVD</b>	Cardio-vascular disease	<b>PHW</b>	Public Health Wales
<b>DEWIS Cymru</b>	A website to help people access local support services in Wales	<b>TTP</b>	Test, Trace and Protect (the Welsh Government Covid-19 management programme)
<b>DPH</b>	Director of Public Health	<b>T4MHPB</b>	Together for Mental Health Partnership Board (North Wales' partnership for mental wellbeing)
<b>DR</b>	Doctor	<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>EnRaW</b>	Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing	<b>WG</b>	Welsh Government
<b>5-a-day</b>	UK Department of Health's Healthy Eating Programme	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>24/7</b>	Short-hand for everyday ( 24 hours each day – 7 days each week)
<b>iCAN</b>	Support network for wellbeing		
<b>MaPS</b>	Money and Pensions Service is an arm's-length body, sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.		

# Thank you for reading

## Annual DPH Report

Public Health Annual Report

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

November 2022



GIG  
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WALES

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