

Amanda Nally, Gordon Waigand, Annie Smith and Jenny Pitts, National Development Team for Inclusion
March - May 2023

The following report summarises the insights and reflections of the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) gained through a series of discussions that took place between March – end of April 2023

The work and report have been commissioned by Menter Môn on behalf of the Council. The overarching goal is to determine whether or not the core ingredients and mindset required to achieve a true 'community led' approach to helping people live the best possible life within their local area are evident. The Getting Ready exercise enables the NDTi team to understand to what extent efforts are aligned and to consider how, if at all, links between stakeholders could be strengthened and enhanced. The geographic scope of the work was the Bro Llew Regeneration Area, focussed on Dyffryn Nantlle and Penygroes.

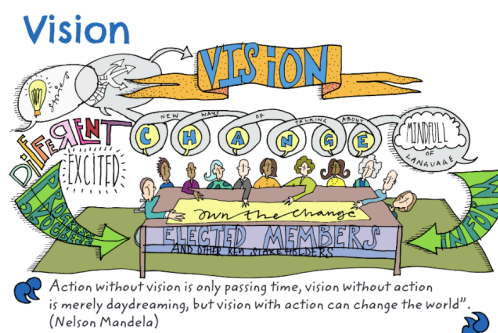
Key points can be summarised as follows:

- Agreeing a local vision that is joined up and coproduced would bring clarity and focus to the work going forwards.
- An overwhelming sense of Community spirit and pride shone through every conversation.
- A willingness to understand how to do things differently that will improve the lives of citizens, staff experience and relationships locally.
- Strong partnership working and leadership is evident at several levels.
- Some wonderful approaches and examples of coproduction with local communities that needs to continue to be embraced and modelled as part of any work going forward.
- A consistent message about short-term funding streams and needing longer commitment to build longer term stability and resilience.
- There is an opportunity to build on the work to date, to expand a culture of strengths based practice across all teams, services and partners with aligned processes and systems.

The structure of this report follows the CLS Getting Ready Framework.

Vision

The council as a whole has a clear ambition to strengthen its relationship with the citizens of Gwynedd and a community focussed, strengths based approach is consistent with this broad direction. Gwynedd, like many areas of the country, saw significant changes during Covid-19 with local initiatives developing and relationships building and there is a great deal to continue with.



Currently there is significant work underway in the 5 localities and 16 patch areas with pockets of good practice all over the county having a strong community focus for several years. Social Care and Health are working towards better integration and recognise there are real opportunities to further develop this. Other development work includes the implementation of a new model for Home Care and work relating to Building Community Resilience. The Council has a delicate role and needs to ensure it supports and nurtures the existing work and strength of the local communities without taking over, and this is something that there is an awareness and recognition of.

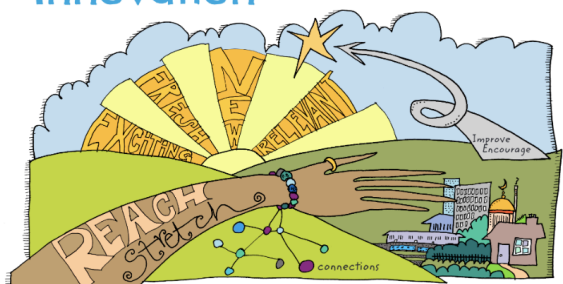
Developing a shared vision that clearly articulates the change programme, that is coproduced with people, partners and organisations is a critical first step to ensuring the intent, resources and commitment are aligned across all involved and this would be a positive step locally.

When local citizens need more formal help or support there are a number of Council 'front doors' with clear processes that practitioners follow. The developing community hubs could provide an opportunity to consider a more community-based approach to this formal route ensuring people get the information, advice and support at a time and place that's best for them and avoids pulling people unnecessarily into formal processes with the delays that are often associated with that. Residents are not always getting information and advice easily and yet we know this is a vital requirement in preventing reliance on services. Smooth processes between the community hubs and statutory services for people who do need formal support will be vital and such a response needs to be aligned with a strengths based approach.

Cross agency partnership appears strong in most areas we spoke to and there is a shared vision of success, even if this isn't formally written down. This is especially encouraging given that a number of people had not met before meeting with us, even though they were working on projects together or closely aligned.

Leadership and Innovation

Innovation



Learning and Innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. (William Pollard)

Strong leadership at all levels that supports the principles of a community focused, strengths based approach is a key success factor in both the implementation of further change its sustained ongoing development. The need for leaders in all organisations overtly and continually to reinforce the culture they are wanting to embed through communication and actions has a direct impact on how it is embraced and the reach of that impact.

Over recent years, many initiatives by various partners have led to significant regeneration within Dyffryn Nantlle, with efforts continuing and many projects likely to lead to better quality of life underway. There has been development by statutory bodies and large public sector organisations alongside grass-roots community initiatives where citizens have developed local assets.

Partners we spoke to during the Getting ready exercise provided invaluable insights:

"Covid has shown us that you can trust people, believe it and not just say it. Covid taught us a lot in how to work differently together. But old approaches are coming back, and we need to guard against this".

"The community-facing primary school is very much seen as a place where future leaders are being trained – investing in the youngest amongst the community: leaders at all levels".

"Community-based hubs are the evolving model at the moment, with a lot of hubs providing different support to different people, communities and types of support. The council recognises the need to invest to help these connections work well. There are lots of services and interventions, but not all of these are known about".

There are consistent themes regarding funding for projects and innovation where this is frequently shorter term, often 3 years in duration. Recognising that development takes longer in many communities this can lead to disruption and instability. It can also mean that stakeholders are more likely to have transactional relationships, meaning the investment in getting to know people and organisations and growing those relationships can be jeopardised.

People of all ages, all interests are supported within the area. Some projects are more leaning to formal health and social care, but the golden thread is helping people to have a good life in their community. Regeneration of the area, investment in training, skills development and employability will ensure that local people will have the skills and job opportunities without having to leave the area – a real investment in the local community and its growth.

There is a shortage throughout the county of units for people to start running their own business and a need to expand what can be offered. The Housing support is very much based on a 'whole person, whole life' approach, offering so much more than a place to live. Offering good quality housing, linked to support if needed, employment initiatives and building a future locally ensures local people can remain within their community and thrive.

In many respects there does appear to be a permissive approach that has supported innovation and creativity. The messaging relating to any subsequent change programme needs to be clear that it is building on the work underway, continuing to listen to the voices and ideas of those involved. The branding, the underpinning narrative and the positioning of such change will therefore be important to consider prior to wider engagement. In addition, it is important to consider how best to involve and engage people locally to maximise their time and energy whilst ensuring their voice is heard.

Community Focus and Connections

Cyngor Gwynedd already adopts a genuine, community focus in its approach. Corporate support for the place-based change programme is essential in 'everyone playing their part'. Taking a citizenship-based approach to people who may require support will, by nature, require all statutory agencies, services, and local communities to work together around the person, or indeed, around the family. This could be an excellent opportunity to bring together a range of teams, organisations and professionals to work as a virtual team in further shaping a place-based approach.



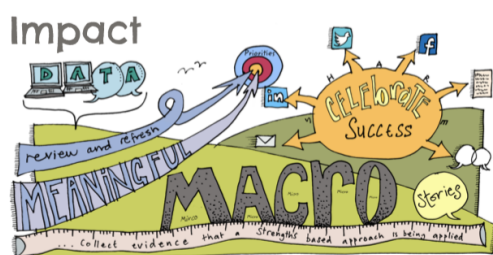
The primary obstacles for community organisations appear to concern commissioning, especially for smaller, local provision, and the need to recognise some of the challenges these organisations face, especially the nature of shorter-term funding envelopes. Partnerships across members of the third sector offer a real opportunity to further understand and fully utilise the richness of local communities, particularly the opportunity to build on the neighbourhood, volunteers and community initiatives that have emerged during the Covid pandemic (and before).

Local authority structures need not be a barrier to this approach but there will be a need for all Social Care and Health teams to support a place-based approach; inevitably this can be

disruptive and will require strong leadership but will enable a range of practitioners to connect with those community organisations, increase their knowledge of specific communities and to bring their expertise and 'specialism' to bear. Knowledge of local communities and the existing 'community engagement' groups and partnerships will be invaluable to share with statutory colleagues. Inevitably, this is likely to require changes in process and behaviours between teams so that people experience seamless and timely support.

There is therefore real potential for Social Care, the Community Resource Teams, Housing and Communities to further connect around place, join up practice and to develop knowledge and relationships at a very local level and we get a strong sense that people are up for this.

Impact and Measuring Change



The danger is not merely that we should believe wrong things... but that we lose the habit of testing things and enquiring into them. (William Kingdon Clifford)

There is, therefore, an opportunity to create a set of joined up measures that will provide vital information on whether the changes taking place are achieving the desired improvements against an agreed set of local outcomes. It will be particularly beneficial to agree those across organisations and service areas, including commissioning, including the voice of people with experience of using services locally, and to collect evidence and measures from a range of places to create a multi-dimensional learning and understanding of change.

There are so many positive things happening at present in the Dyffryn Nantlle and Penygroes area which, through rigid and traditional performance reporting could be missed or, worse still, such reporting could divert activity away from work that matters. A framework for understanding local impact needs to capture the difference (personal, social, economic and cultural) that these are making and to be developed collaboratively with those organisations. The Social Services and Wellbeing Act is an important part of that local framework but, we suggest, could be adapted and added to in order to reflect local context and priorities.

There is an opportunity to rethink locally about what data is gathered and by whom, how government returns can be serviced, how information is used internally, as well as across agencies and, importantly, the culture and leadership that needs to underpin this activity in order for this to be a positive and integral aspect of moving to a strengths-based, community led culture of practice.

There is therefore a need for a shared understanding of impact, evidence and outcomes and for this to be integral to the change process to inform learning on the ground. These measures will need to be identified and a baseline, wherever possible, established.

There was a local evaluation of community responses to Covid-19 and learning that was mentioned in many of the discussions. Health and Social Care saw that when people had to work together differently, and almost overnight in some cases, solutions came from the community. Unfortunately, some of these relationships have not been maintained and there is a need to recover some of that innovation. Pre-Covid, statutory organisations weren't working as much on prevention and it was reflected that there is a danger of the learning becoming forgotten and opportunities missed.

Co-production

There is a need locally to embrace and recognise the local culture of genuine coproduction in a meaningful way. There are so many examples where consultation has formed a key part of previous change initiatives and it is therefore important to be mindful of citizens not having to repeat this exercise where information already exists, but to build on what has already been gathered to avoid repetition and duplication.

Local people love the area and are fiercely proud of it.

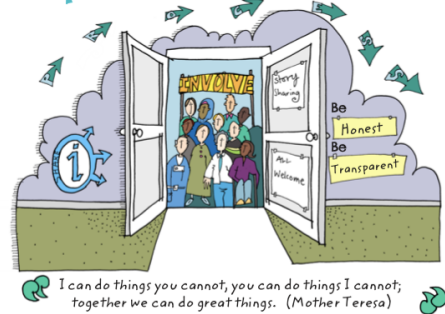
As a post-industrial area, evidence shows the resilience and character. There is a well put together community network and, we understand, local citizens don't describe themselves as 'volunteers', they just see themselves as getting on with community life. On the ground, no matter how stressed people are, there is a desire to look after each other; Covid-19 seems to have highlighted and reinforced this community spirit.

There is a risk that this culture of 'Welsh people just do, they don't become an official volunteer' misses the opportunity to capture, celebrate and support (only where needed) their activities and vibrant contribution. Two community mapping exercises showed over 60 community organisations providing weekly/monthly activities.

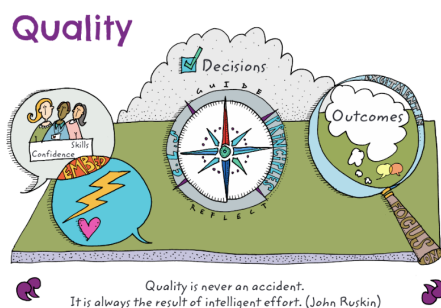
It was felt that the council has gained more trust with the community, stating it is the strongest it's been, and this has been building over the last 3-4 years. This has been achieved by constant communication with local people and hosting regular events where 50 people join and share a meal; other examples include 25 older people coming to social events and the community pantry able to distribute free food from supermarkets. The voice of the community is strong in everything with lots of community consultations and reacting to what the community wants and needs; it is very important to those involved: "It keeps us going".

Increasing understanding and awareness of coproduction itself is going to be key in really working with communities and to engaging not just with the larger voluntary sector organisations, but the smaller (formal and informal) community groups some of which have come to the fore during the Covid-19 crisis.

Co-production



Quality



There are undoubtedly many areas of work that Gwynedd can celebrate and which have a direct impact on people's quality of life. A willingness to fully embed a culture of strength-based practice and outcomes-based support exists in pockets but will require a concerted and long-term effort throughout all partners to embed and sustain that culture.

We know that such approaches will only make a difference if the quality of interactions and conversations with people are backed up by internal processes and systems and, of course, by the quality of community supports and commissioned providers. This needs to include difficult decisions regarding over-provision of support that isn't promoting people's independence and it is likely to require a very

different approach to reviews and the quality of supports for people with Direct Payments (rather than seeing the mechanism of the Direct Payment a success indicator in itself).

Locally there are known issues surrounding care provision and this links with the key initiative to develop and embed a new model for Home Care provision, utilizing the strengths and assets of the person, their connections and community.

Demand for employment opportunities is growing in a positive manner. People want to better the quality of their own and their family's situation. More new businesses are starting off and living and working to enjoy the area is a driver in pushing up quality of life locally.

There is opportunity to increase the quality of people's experience of coming into contact with services; for those who contact any of the Council 'front doors' there is real potential for a different conversation underpinned by strong knowledge of the community and what is available which could prevent people being passed on unnecessarily and the subsequent delay to having their situation resolved. There is real potential to redesign the possible 'journey' people will experience through a range of approaches and to streamline and improve on that experience for people.

It is recognised that there is potential to further develop relationships with service providers to reflect a move to outcomes-based support, enabling positive risk and trust so that people of Gwynedd have more responsive and person-centred care and support. Promoting independence is a principle that runs through this work and indeed needs to be consistent across all the work of Social Care and Health. This will enhance the understanding of what quality of support can aspire to be and remove potential inefficiencies and limits to choice and independence that people may experience currently.

Conclusion and next steps

It was a really enjoyable experience listening to all who attended the meetings; as mentioned, the sense of pride was clearly evident regardless of who was sharing their experiences. There are undoubtedly lots of great things happening in Gwynedd. Community infrastructure is there with plenty of "community spirit". One person stated, "we have a massive opportunity here in a small window" and there was total agreement of this statement.

People were open, honest and respectful and left feeling they learned a lot from listening to others. There was also a consistent message that those involved did not want a report that sits on a shelf and doesn't serve a practical function. It was felt this needs to be a stepping-stone to something else.

There is so much to build on in Gwynedd and the crucial factor in determining the success of any next steps will be a **clear scope** for any future work. There is an opportunity to include the full engagement of those with operational responsibility for Social Care teams and the Community Resource teams, and to include the processes that support local people when they do need formal support from Social Care. Considering the person's experience through this and the role of 'community' in ensuring those processes are aligned, can only enhance and further develop the approach with people and community at the heart.

Agreement of a **clear, joined up vision** will enable all parties to articulate a shared definition of success and then to agree together how this will be evidenced and we suggest a co-designed

impact framework would be powerful and would support the governance of further innovation without micro-managing it.

The council plays a major role in ensuring a strengths based, community led culture is embedded, but it must be on the community's terms. There is an opportunity to bring partners together, with local people, to really define success and to build resilience across communities where people know where to go or who to contact, at the right time for them, with a supporting infrastructure of collaboration and communication across a range of organisations, teams and professional groups.

Any change programme going forward needs to join the dots between community activity and strengths-based practice and conversations, and commissioning. It needs to provide a framework to bring everything together, including local and national government agendas, in a way that starts with the community. Cyngor Gwynedd is in a very strong place to build on, consolidate and embed the fantastic work to date in this regard and it does feel, with the degree of motivation and enthusiasm across all partners we met with, that the time is right to do so.



The National Development Team for Inclusion
May 2023