



Life in Rural Conwy Research

Conwy People's Partnership on behalf of the
Building Resilient Communities and Tackling
Poverty Board

May 2016

www.conwy.gov.uk

Contact us

If you would like further information regarding this report please contact us at:

Conwy People's Partnership
Government Building
Dinerth Road
Colwyn Bay
LL28 4UL
Email: cpp@conwy.gov.uk

Phone: 01492 574077

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Executive Summary

Anecdotal evidence suggests that rural poverty and deprivation is an issue in Conwy. Conwy County Borough. The Council's Building Resilient Communities and Tackling Poverty Board commissioned a piece of research looking at life in rural Conwy. In particular this work looked at those citizens who are in financial difficulty, as well as those who are not accessing or having difficulty accessing services within the county.

It was agreed that primary research was required to identify the issues facing citizens living in rural Conwy. Primary research included workshops, interviews and group discussions with members of the public.

Key Highlights

- The research found that there are strong communities in rural Conwy. Many of the individuals interviewed were happy living in their communities, and enjoyed the strong community spirit and rural lifestyle.
- Many stated that they felt safe in their communities and that they would not wish to live anywhere else.
- Villages in rural Conwy are socially active, for those that wish to get involved.
- Rural communities expressed concerns with regards to the future of their villages; they were keen to see the next generation of volunteers take on more responsibility in their communities.
- Rural communities expressed concerns regarding depopulation of young people, due to lack of employment opportunities, lack of affordable housing and the closure of facilities such as local village shops. Communities stressed the importance of having a village school in order to retain and attract families to rural communities.
- Rural communities wanted to retain current services in their communities, to ensure that they remain strong and sustainable.
- Those that used Job Centre Plus wanted to see a base in rural Conwy, and an improvement in consistency and staff attitudes towards them.
- Many rural residents stated they were unsure where to get general advice, information and support. They look at local community papers and local press to find out about events in their communities. Those with access to the internet used social media to find out about events in their community. Community notice boards and word of mouth were also popular for finding out advice, information and events.
- Rural residents explained that they expect to receive feedback from consultations that they participate in. Some rural residents did not feel listened to by Conwy County Borough Council and Town/Community Councils.
- Some rural residents who described themselves as computer illiterate raised concerns that they felt excluded because they are unable to use a computer

to complete forms, find out information, and for shopping and banking. Some also stated that they felt socially excluded because they are unable to use social media. Those that lived in 'not spots' or did not have access to the internet at home raised the same concerns.

- There are residents in rural Conwy who do not wish to learn how to use computers and the internet. They expect to be able to access advice and information either in person or over the telephone.
- Mobile phone data signal is poor in some rural areas. This has a negative impact on residents as they are unable to use social media, or access advice, information and services on their phone. Examples provided included job searching, completing homework, social media and council services.
- Public transport in rural areas is vital to those service users that rely on the service. The research found that some of the service users either did not have family or friends to ask, or they did not like to bother them. Communities wanted to see more frequent buses, timetable information kept up to date at bus stops and buses to run on time.

The considerations included in the report aim to address some of the issues that arose through the consultation, to enable them to remain strong and resilient communities.

Introduction

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Research Methodology

There were four strands to the research undertaken.

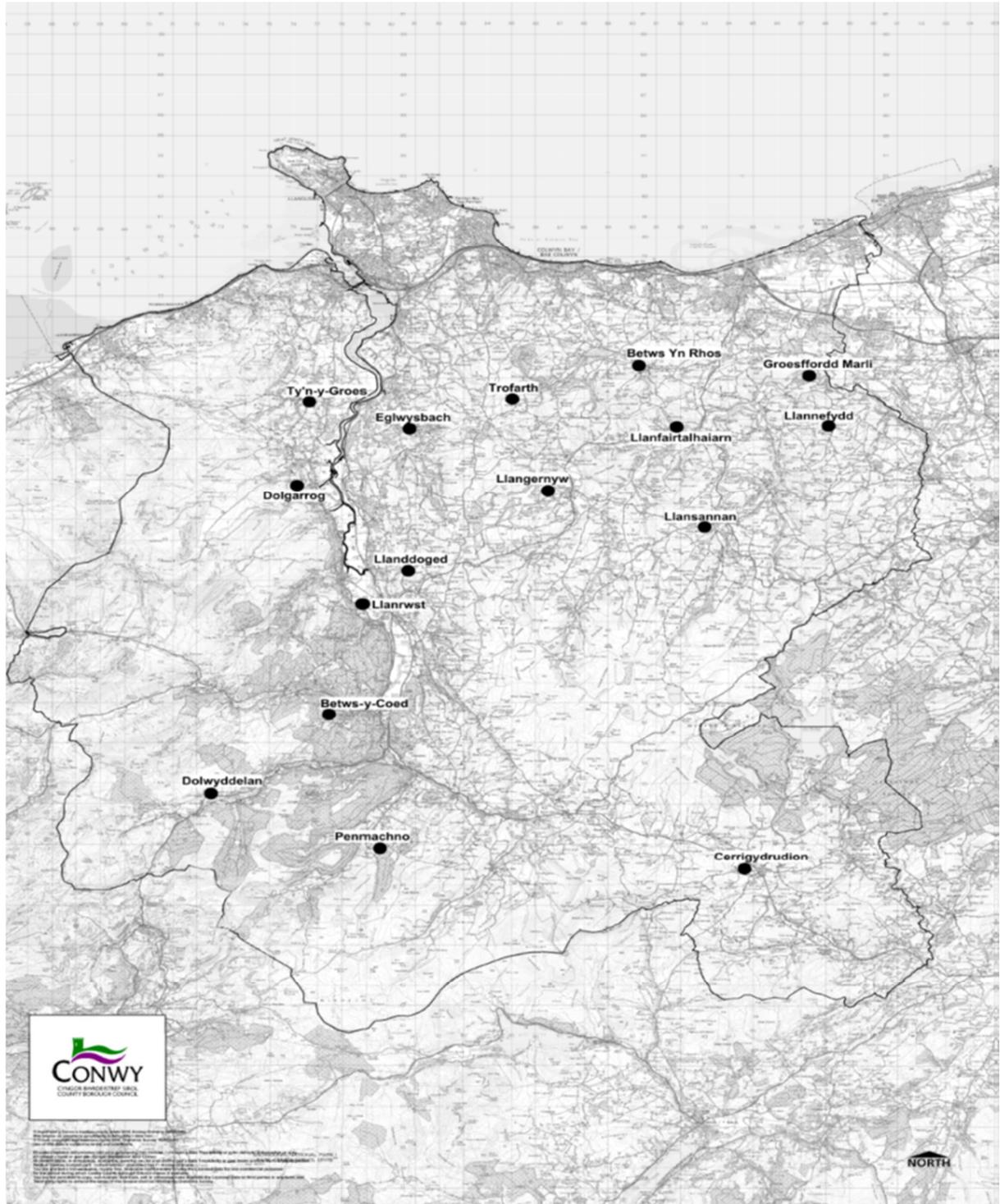
1. Desk top research: Identifying and analysing relevant research relating to rural poverty and life in rural areas.
2. Consultation with Conwy County Borough Councillors who represented rural wards: A workshop was held in October 2015. Councillors were also consulted through email.
3. Consultation with professionals: The Research and Development Officer met with professionals from Conwy Council, partners and other organisations who work directly with vulnerable people in Conwy's rural communities.
4. Qualitative research with citizens of rural Conwy: This strand focused on the lived experiences of the people living in rural Conwy. This included semi-structured interviews to listen to their stories on a one to one basis, telephone discussions, group discussions with existing community groups and finally informal workshops with young people and larger community groups.

The qualitative strand saw 20 individuals interviewed about their experiences of living in rural Conwy, 7 group discussions with existing community groups and 7

informal workshops. There was a mixed demography including young people, older people, families, job seekers, and individuals with health related issues.

Qualitative Consultation Map

Qualitative consultations took place in the following rural towns, villages and hamlets:



Desktop Research

Definitions of Poverty and Deprivation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines Poverty as:

*“When a person’s resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation)”
(Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2012)*

This includes the need to be part of society, by being able to participate in common customs and activities, for example buying a birthday present for your partner or sending your child on a school trip.

The Office for National Statistics describes Child Poverty as:

“... a subjective topic which is difficult to define. It is relative; being not just about having income and resources, but also about having a good quality of life including health, education, housing, and wellbeing.”

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the Welsh Government’s official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales.

It defines deprivation as:

“Deprivation is the lack of access to opportunities and resources which we might expect in our society. The domains listed above relate to both material and social aspects of deprivation. Material deprivation is having insufficient physical resources – food, shelter, and clothing – necessary to sustain a certain standard of life. Social deprivation refers to the ability of an individual to participate in the normal social life of the community.”

Rural Poverty Compared to Urban Poverty

Rural poverty is less visible than urban poverty because poverty is less geographically concentrated within rural areas. Wealthy households and households in poverty often live side by side and there is less obvious clustering of different socio-economic groups. This is due to the more scattered and less uniform mix of housing, employment, and other factors affecting material and economic well-being. This makes it more difficult to identify households living in poverty than in urban areas. Poverty can feel intensified in rural areas because of the lack of access to services and support. In rural areas there are more examples of informal systems of support, such as relying on family, friends, neighbours and members of the community. These informal systems of support are often used in place of support services offered by Councils and other organisations. (Rural Wales in the twenty first century, Milbourne, 2011)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation completed a piece of research on poverty in rural England. They estimated that people in rural areas will typically need to spend 10-20% more on every day requirements than people in urban areas. This cost increases again in more remote rural areas. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010)

Research Themes

The vast majority of those consulted spoke positively of life in their rural community. When asked what they liked about living in their community many said it was 'the people' and the 'community spirit'. Many also claimed that they felt safe in their communities, and that they enjoyed the rural lifestyle.

The research found that the majority of those living in rural villages did not have a big expectation from Conwy County Borough Council, they did not expect to have the same level of services as the nearby towns and coastal areas. However, those living in rural villages recognised that they pay the same level of Council Tax as coastal areas, and subsequently they expect to have some form of Council supported/subsidised public transport that meets the real need of their community. They also expect to have their refuse collected regularly and for roads and parks to be maintained.

Group discussions and interviews with people from the market town of Llanrwst found that residents expect to have a similar level of services as the coastal towns in the county.

Those consulted recognised that there are barriers to living in rural Conwy which are detailed in alphabetical order below.

Advice, Information, Support and Community Events.

The research found that there are cases where citizens in rural Conwy do not know how or where to access advice and information. Those already accessing services such as Rural Families First, Golygfa Gwydyr, Ti a Fi and Conwy Youth Service stated that they would turn to the staff at these services as their first point of contact. Those with access to the internet stated that they would look online for advice and information.

There were concerns in rural communities regarding older people being able to access support services, such as social services. There were also concerns that there are cases of older people who feel socially isolated as they are less able to leave their homes.

Across most age groups the majority of consultees said they rely on local press (Daily Post, community papers and The Weekly News) to get information and find out about events in their communities. Word of mouth, leaflets and community noticeboards were also popular sources.

Case Study 1

Quote from the daughter of an Older Person who has health issues:

“To be honest, this is a field that we’re really ignorant on. Because we’ve never been a family to go out and get help. We cope, that’s what we do, we cope. We’re not used to benefits, we’re not used to hand-outs or anything like that. We don’t really know how to source things. I know there’s things available via the computers and things but, you know. My mother certainly can’t do anything like that, she dislikes the phone, hates the phone. So, it is difficult. Before she got ill she got all the local papers Gadlas, Daily Post and Weekly news”.

Family Centre and Golygfa Gwydyr

Group discussions and interviews with service users in Llanrwst found that both the Family Centre and Golygfa Gwydyr were popular services. Positive comments were received regarding the friendliness of staff and volunteers, and the open door policy at both centres. The majority of service users using the two centres were from Llanrwst itself, however there were examples of people who travel to the town from outside villages.

Group discussions with mother and baby groups in rural villages identified that mothers found going to the family centre in Llanrwst too intimidating, because of not knowing the other mothers at the centre. Others stated that they felt it was too busy, or that they weren’t sure what services were offered at the centre. Group discussion at Golygfa Gwydyr revealed that one of these members claimed that he had felt socially isolated before coming to the centre. The centre had been a help to him.

Case Study 2

Quote from a Mum who uses the Family Centre and Golygfa Gwydyr in Llanrwst:

“So I come here for the kids and then find out about the other things that are on. Now I’ve got to the point where I’m confident enough to come in with the problems and say ‘I’ve got this problem, is there any way you can help?’ Whereas I wouldn’t have done that before, so you need that, to come here for the kids and to get through the door and then get to know everybody here and be comfortable here...I’m the sort of person that finds it really difficult to go to a new building for the first time and go in. Also, if there was really big groups I’d be intimidated so, I know it’s quite selfish, but it’s quite nice for me if there’s small groups. And I know, speaking to other people, they feel the same. If it’s a big group and you’re being taught something, it’s quite intimidating but the more informal approach is nice.

Case Study 3

Quote from a Mum who uses the Family Centre in Llanrwst:

“I would be absolutely lost without this place. I think especially since my daughter went through diagnosis and was diagnosed autistic. She was moved from school to school and she’s only 5 and she is on school number 3. The panic - I was really frightened about being a mum and finding out that she had additional needs as well. When we first met I was a blubbering mess. I would be absolutely lost without them. I really, really would.”

Case Study 4

Quote from a Mum who uses the Family Centre in Llanrwst:

“I like the assurance of someone else saying. That’s what I miss about my husband. He would say I agree with you then. It’s having to make decisions on your own it’s quite hard. It’s nice hearing from some of the other mums because it’s not just me going through it. Like the sleeping pattern bit. All kids go to bed at different times. I’m not on my own. I am happy for what we have here because some places don’t have anything do they?”

Community Spirit

Other than those living on Llanrwst’s Glanrafon estate, people spoke positively about the community spirit in their area. A common claim was that people look out for one and other, and that they lived in a close knit community.

The research found that rural villages are socially active, with various community groups which are led by volunteers from within the community. These groups ranged from Young Farmers, coffee mornings, Welsh lessons and computer lessons.

Case Study 5

Quote from a resident of Betws yn Rhos:

“I wouldn’t be anywhere else. It is certainly home for all of us and we are certainly very happy living here. Just that people look out for each other and you feel that you are within a community which warms the cockles of my heart really.”

Community Buildings

Community buildings appeared to be well used in rural Conwy, from rural public houses used as community ‘hubs’, to community halls, and schools. The research found that community groups and individuals expressed concerns that community buildings require maintenance to ensure that they can continue to be used by their communities.

Consultations and not feeling listened to

Group discussions and workshops on life in rural Conwy found that participants often did not receive feedback from consultations. While they are happy to be consulted they would like to know the outcomes of the consultations.

Interviews and Group discussions found that there are individuals from across rural Conwy who do not feel listened to by the council. Examples given included refuse collections, Glanrafon estate in Llanrwst and road safety concerns.

In Llanrwst in particular the research found that some residents felt angry towards Conwy County Borough Council and the Town Council because they did not feel listened to. The examples given were that residents felt that the money spent on the trees in the town centre could have been better spent on the community.

The research found that there was some confusion over Conwy County Borough Council responsibilities and decisions and the role of Town/Community Councils.

Some young people felt that although they are consulted on issues they do not receive feedback on decisions, consequently some feel that they are not listened to, and that their opinions aren't important.

Case Study 6

Quote from a resident of Cerrigydrudion:

"The only thing I would say about living here is the speeding from the village down to the A5, along King Street, it's atrocious. We've reported it to the local councillors and to the Police. Nobody takes the slightest bit of notice of you."

Case Study 7

Quote from a resident of Llanrwst:

"When they put these trees in town we thought the money could be spent on the community centre."

Case Study 8

Quote from a resident of Llanrwst:

"I suppose there seems to be, with planning and decisions about the town, things seem to happen and I don't know but maybe I'm missing the consultation. Maybe that's not a fair judgement and maybe I should go up to town council meetings or something... things like the way they've redeveloped the square. Not how they've done it but it just seemed to spring up overnight. I know there are lots of things in the town where they conflict over things. There seems to be a bit of a separation between those who plan and those at the bottom. Maybe those at the bottom could have some good ideas, so a bit more of a mix would be good."

Employment and Opportunities for Young People

Workshops and interviews with young people found that:

- Young people spoke positively that there are part time employment opportunities during peak tourist times.
- Golygfa Gwydyr's report along with this research found that communities feel there is a shortage of opportunities for long term careers in the area.
- Many young people felt that there was not enough for them to do in rural Conwy. Suggestions received included youth clubs open more frequently, internet/Wi-Fi cafés and parks improved with lighting for winter months.
- It was felt that better public transport links are needed between rural villages for people who work in rural communities.
- Young people from rural villages stated that by living in their rural communities they expect to travel to go to work.
- Many stated that they don't feel far away from towns.
- It was felt that there is a need for more free/affordable activities for young people in Llanrwst to keep them off the streets and car parks.
- Young people wanted to see more courses offered via a combination of skype and classroom learning.
- Young people would like more wi-fi hot spots in rural Conwy – internet cafés were suggested.
- Golygfa Gwydyr's community consultation reported that young people are not encouraged to join in community life.

Case Study 9

Quote from a single mum who is educated to degree level but finding it difficult to find employment that fits in with collecting her children from school:

"It's the only thing I've ever thought that maybe one day I'd have to leave Llanrwst. Everything else, I can cope with. But that's the only thing that I think will maybe force me to leave and I would be really sad because the girls love the school and they're settled. I don't want to move... we've moved, since they were born, four times and I don't want to move again. It's taken me this long to build up connections here and I'm a bit of a slow-burner with things like that. I wouldn't want to move again for a bit."

Health

Positive comments were received regarding GP surgeries in rural areas.

One telephone discussion raised concerns regarding ambulance waiting times, while a group discussion in Dolgarrog raised concerns regarding appointment waiting times in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd.

Housing

The issues raised around housing in rural Conwy are as follows:

- Affordable housing: citizens of rural Conwy raised concerns that there aren't enough affordable homes for young people wishing to live in their communities. Residents expressed concerns that this will have a negative impact on their community as it will force young people to live elsewhere. Residents felt that this would subsequently have a knock on effect on village schools, community spirit and the future of rural villages. Concerns were also voiced that while affordable houses were required many villages did not want to see their communities expanding and risk losing the 'village feeling'.
- Concerns were raised by residents of the Glanrafon estate in Llanrwst that they did not feel safe living on the estate due to anti-social behaviour from some of the residents. Residents of the estate also claimed that they did not feel listened to by the Council and housing association around this issue.
- Concerns were raised regarding the number of holiday homes in rural villages. Residents felt that this was impacting on community spirit, as well as raising house prices and pushing young people out of the housing market.
- While the majority of residents felt safe in their community, there was one example of a village in rural Conwy where residents had moved into the area and were causing anti-social behaviour, and in their opinion threatening behaviour. As a result some residents reported that they felt less safe in their village.

Case Study 10

Quote from daughter of an older person living in Llangernyw:

"I think it's very important in somewhere like Llangernyw to make sure there's housing for local people. The neighbourliness and care comes from there, it's ingrown. It's like the house next door going to be a holiday home. You can't blame them, the owners, they're going to make more money but its things like that that break a community down. So, I honestly think that, somehow, we need to provide housing for young local people."

Case Study 11

Quote from a mum from Betws yn Rhos:

“They can’t afford the houses! That’s the only thing my children couldn’t afford to buy a house here. There aren’t any affordable house for people who are just starting out... there isn’t anything that’s actually affordable in the village now. The houses that have been built in recent years are the quite expensive ones. So that’s why, possibly, younger people move out. Not an awful lot of Betws youngsters come and live in Betws anymore. But you do find that people come here to live and then commute to Liverpool or whatever, they’ve got no time to join in to village life.”

Case Study 12

Quote from a resident of Eglwysbach:

“But the trouble is one can’t expand the village really too much because most people wouldn’t want it because it would destroy the village. Yet if there isn’t that sort of mix of housing it will be destroyed anyway in a different social way. It’s a no win situation I think.”

I.T., Internet and Mobile Phones

The following issues regarding I.T, internet and mobile phones were identified:

- Computer literacy: The research found that 20% of those interviewed described themselves as computer illiterate. Half of those were keen to have I.T lessons. One person had already received a three hour one-to-one lesson, but expressed that it was too much to take in. The remaining half had no interest in learning how to use computers.
- ‘Not spots’ – One person interviewed lived in a ‘not spot’. A not spot is an area that does not have broadband internet signal, and/or mobile phone signal. The family did not have access to broadband internet, or mobile phone signal. They stated that they found it frustrating that they could not use internet banking and use websites such as NHS Wales and Conwy County Borough Council’s web site. They stated that not having access to the internet or mobile phone coverage had a negative impact on their day to day life, as they felt disconnected from friends, family and their community.
- Poor mobile phone data signal: Group discussions revealed that data signal in the Llanrwst area, and some surrounding villages was poor. This had a negative impact for those who could not afford to have broadband at home.
- Access to advice, information and services: It was felt that those that could not use or did not have access to the internet were at a disadvantage as they missed out on information, support and services available to them. Examples provided included job searching, completing homework, social media and Conwy County Borough Council’s web page.

- Some young people commented that schools expect young people to have access to the internet in order to complete homework.
- Young people who did not have access to broadband at home also stated that they were either too far from a library or that they were not able to spend enough time at the library on the weekend due to opening hours, and the computers being too busy.

Case Study 13

Quote from a Mum who lives in a 'not spot':

"There's so much stuff that's done via the internet now. So we have to go into town to do that, go to McDonald's or restaurants.... the internet's a major one really... You know it really is everything"

Case Study 14

Quote from a Farmer who's in his 70's who can't use the internet, he has received a three hour one to one lesson, but said he was unable to digest the information. He did say that he would now like to have lessons because he felt it was a necessity:

"Oh I hate them, I get angry over everything. It's come to a head for me now. I had to register calves this morning and had to phone the union to do it over me like some old baby"

Case Study 15

Quote from a person in their 50's::

"It would be nice to have computer lessons but they are expensive"

Case Study 16

Quote from Older Person::

"I can't do with them"

Case Study 17

Quote from Daughter of Older Person::

"No, no computers. She won't use the telephone unless she has to.... I think modern technology is really good but it's not good for the elderly. ... Everybody expects you to be online. To access things you've got to be able to do that sort of thing. ...It's all 'you can do this online, you can do that online' but if you can't then you can't, you're missing out really. People who aren't online, how do we communicate things?"

Job Centre Plus

Research found that the current signing on system for Universal Credit dictates on what day an individual is able to 'sign on'. For example if an individual signs up on a Wednesday their 'sign on' day will be a Wednesday from then on. Consequently it would not be practical to arrange a transport scheme to ferry groups of job seekers to Llandudno to sign on. Those that remain on Job Seekers Allowance's sign on day is dictated by their national insurance number. Job seekers claiming Job Seekers Allowance usually have to sign on once a fortnight. Signing on requirements vary according to personal circumstances for those that are claiming Universal Credit.

Group discussions and interviews with citizens who had experience of using the service raised the following issues:

- **Travel:** Participants felt strongly that Job Centre Plus should have a base in rural Conwy. They explained that it is a 4 hour round trip from Llanrwst to the Job Centre Plus in Llandudno if using public transport. The journey would be longer still from more remote rural areas. This was especially difficult for those needing to collect children from school. Individuals stressed the importance of buses in rural areas running on time. One service user gave an example of where he was sanctioned by Job Centre Plus as he was 40 minutes late for his appointment, but stated that this was due to his bus being late. This cost of this trip is currently £5.50 for a day ticket with Arriva Wales buses. Charges may change from 3rd May 2016 when Llew Jones takes over the number 19 bus service.
- **Staff:** Concerns were raised regarding staff treatment of service users at both Llandudno and Colwyn Bay Job Centres. One young person was no longer able to use the service because the treatment received triggered panic attacks, so much so that she is no longer able to physically walk through the doors, while another young person chose not to use the service because of staff attitudes.
- **Consistency:** Concerns were raised regarding consistency of information and services offered. Examples were given where service users were not informed that they were entitled to claim their travel costs if they have been asked to attend Job Centre Plus for additional meetings. Desk top research found that signing on through postal services (Job Seekers Allowance only) and over the telephone (Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance) are also possible. Who exactly is eligible is decided by Job Centre Plus staff who conduct initial interviews with service users, and the postal/telephone option isn't offered to rural clients consistently.
- **Volunteering:** Concerns were raised by some individuals who fear that volunteering to help their local community may result in sanctions by Job Centre Plus.

Jobs Clubs service users in Llanrwst highlighted the importance of the Jobs Club to them in searching for employment, and helping with all other aspects of job seeking such as completing CV's and interview hints and tips. The group highlighted the need for more computers at the jobs club for peak times.

Case Study 18

Quote from single mum from Llanrwst. At times she has struggled to return in time to collect children from school.

“Transport is really difficult. I do drive but I can’t afford a car at the moment... to go to the Job Centre is a four hour return journey, just to sign a piece of paper... Literally, in the Job Centre, I just sign the pad and that’s it. There’s no real service in that sense...they don’t help you with anything ... I went in one week and she said ‘how’s it going?’ and I said ‘oh, it’s quite disheartening, I haven’t had any call-backs or interviews and things’ and she went ‘oh dear!’ And I thought, I actually want some help with that, why is that happening, what do I need to do differently? And they haven’t got time to do that, which is fine but you still need that help from somewhere”

Pride / Asking for help

The research found that personal pride about asking for support were reoccurring themes in rural Conwy. There are examples of citizens of rural Conwy that do not like asking for help. There were many reasons given for this ranging from not wanting to bother others, wanting to remain independent and ‘making do’ as they always have.

The quotes below illustrate that those individuals who do not ask for help may be missing out on key benefits that they are entitled to. Examples could include school meals, universal credit, benefits as well as support from social services.

Case Study 19

Quote from Daughter of Older Person:

“We never have had help. We were very, very poor but there was never any help so you didn’t ask for it. You just got on with it and if you want something you work for it and get it that way. You look after your own. It’s just a different world now that we’re not really used to it.”

Case Study 20

Quote from Older Person:

“Well to me it’s like giving in really. I just try to do things as much as I can myself”

Case Study 21

Quote from person in their 50’s :

“You don’t want to bother people. People are busy and they’ve got their own stuff to do.”

Public Transport

Many citizens in rural Conwy expressed their concerns regarding public transport to and from communities. The main areas of concern included:

- Frequency of buses
- Practicality of bus times
- Buses not running on time
- Out of date timetables at bus stops
- Cost of bus fares for young people

The research found that although public transport may not be considered to be widely used in some rural areas, it is a vital service for those that are using the service, as they have no alternative means of transport.

Those who do not currently use public transport also expressed concerns as they worry how they would manage should a time come that they are unable to use their own vehicles. Public Transport service users raised their frustration with local residents who do not support current public transport routes in rural areas.

Young people wanted more public transport on Sundays. The research found that those consulted were keen for Conwy County Borough Council to pilot transport schemes which meet the real need of their communities. The research also found that there were some myths and confusion surrounding public transport, where some residents were misinformed about bus routes.

Positive comments regarding public transport were received from residents of Llanfair T.H, Dolwyddelan, and Llanrwst.

Case Study 22

Quote from a resident of Llangernyw who wanted to use the bus to Abergele:

“There is only one bus a day. If you get the bus it comes back a couple of hours after which is not enough time to do anything. The way it's worked is stupid. I don't understand just because it's a village and it's out in the sticks it's the bus company too I know. But I think the council should look in and pay towards something so that there are enough buses to serve the community. I just think it's totally wrong.”

Retain Current Level of Services

Rural communities were eager for Conwy County Borough Council to retain current level of services in their communities. They felt that rural areas could not afford to receive further cuts because of the damaging affect this would have on the community as a whole.

- Workshops with young people attending youth clubs expressed the importance of the youth club to them. Many stated that the youth club is the

only activity outside of school that they participate in. Some young people commented that youth clubs were particularly important during winter months because of the dark evenings. They said that they are unable to play sports or meet friends outside in the winter months. Some young people claimed that if it wasn't for the youth club, the only way they would be able to socialise with friends outside of school would be through social media, but not all of the young people consulted had access to the internet.

- Concerns were raised regarding the closure of public toilets.
- Public Transport: Citizens in rural areas wanted to see public transport increased rather than decreased in rural areas.
- Conwy Rural Sports received positive feedback during the consultation, and those using the service were keen for this to continue.
- Parks: Families were keen to see parks updated and better maintained in rural Conwy.
- Schools: Communities felt that primary schools are at the heart of their community, and they felt that the closure of primary schools would have a detrimental impact on community life, because they felt it would be less likely for families to stay in the communities, which would then have a knock on effect on community spirit and support networks.
- Refuse: Concerns were raised regarding reducing bin collection in rural areas due to the wildlife getting into the bins in the area, and the increase in fly tipping.
- Condition of roads: Rural communities feel that it is important that roads and pavements are maintained and improved in the area. Rural communities also raised concerns regarding the volume of traffic and speeding through villages.
- Community Groups and Social Enterprises: Communities stressed the importance of retaining community groups in their communities. Some groups felt that community groups and social enterprises required further support to ensure that they are able to continue – such as building maintenance, financial support and volunteer recruitment.
- Parking: Llanrwst residents felt that free parking spaces should be increased to encourage people to visit the town. They also felt that 2 hours free parking in the town centre was not long enough for older people and families. They also stated that the car park on Watling Street requires attention.

Retiring to Rural Conwy

The research found that rural Conwy is a popular area for people who wish to retire in a rural setting. The main reason for moving was wanting to live in the countryside. The research found that those that had moved from urban areas to rural villages were very happy with their decision to move. Group discussions and interviews found

that some of the resident that had moved from an urban area to rural Conwy had not fully considered the long term practical aspects of life in a rural village. Examples provided included being unsure how they would manage without their own vehicle, location of the property within villages or hamlets, and accessing services such as health and shopping.

Safe

The North Wales Police report on 'Recorded Crime in Rural Conwy' states that crime in rural Conwy accounts for approximately 8% of all recorded crime in Conwy in 2015. It reports that there is little difference in the types of crime that affect rural and urban Conwy. The report explains that the nature of crime reports may be different. The example given is that someone in urban Conwy may report that their car wing mirror has been damaged, while a farmer in rural Conwy may have a large area of fencing damaged. These offences may be classed as the same offence (Criminal Damage), but these crimes could affect people and businesses in a different way.

	Reported crime 2014/15			Wales	Rural Conwy 2012
	Rural Conwy	Urban Conwy	Conwy CB		
Total no. reported crimes	411	5,881	6,292	181,715	527
Rate per 1,000 population					
All crime 2014/15	23.18	59.95	54.32	58.95	31.2
Violence against the person	6.71	15.23	13.92	15.29	8.4
Theft & handling	5.02	14.81	13.31	-	6.7
Criminal damage	3.89	13.23	11.80	9.80	4.8

(Source: Crime incidence reports by electoral ward, North Wales Police)

The table above shows that Conwy County Borough Council as a whole is a safe place to live and that rural Conwy is safer still, with lower rates of reported crime across all categorisations. The table also highlights that crime rates have fallen in rural Conwy since 2012.

The Life in rural Conwy research found that a large majority of those consulted stated that they felt safe in their communities. There were many examples of residents in rural Conwy not feeling the need to lock up their homes overnight.

Those living on the Glanrafon estate in Llanrwst expressed that they did not feel safe living on their estate because of the anti-social behaviour on the estate. Golygfa Gwydyr's consultation found that Llanrwst residents felt intimidated in their own homes because of individuals drinking and taking drugs around flats and in the square.

There was an example of a rural village where several of the residents mentioned that they did not feel safe in their village due to the new residents that had moved into rented accommodation in the village causing anti-social and at times threatening behaviour. These residents did not wish for the name of the village to be included in the report because of the fear of being identified. These villagers did mention that the police had been notified and had increased their presence in the village, however the increased presence made these residents more nervous.

Case Study 23

Quote from a young Mum who lives on the Glanrafon esate in Llanrwst:

“Not in my home no. I feel safe in Llanrwst because I know where to go, but not in my home no because of the people who live around us.”

Case Study 24

Quote from a Mum from a rural village in rural Conwy. She did not want the village to be named.

“Very much so, more than in a town or larger village but in respect of the people moving into the community there have been more thefts and more undesirable behaviour around and perhaps more undesirable characters which I am more concerned about the children coming into contact with. So I don’t let them roam freely... but if you see a police car it makes you wonder what is going on.”

Case Study 25

Quote from a Young Person from Cerrigydrudion:

“Yes, I don’t think there’s any sort of anti-social behaviour, really. A few kids but nothing major, not compared to what some people in the bigger towns have to go through.”

While other villages stated that they did feel safe, many felt that they would like to see an increase in Police presence in their village, to help deter crime and speeding through the villages. It was noted in group discussions that rural residents pay the same level of rates towards policing but they do not see their presence in the villages.

Group discussions in Llanrwst found that adults praised the police officers working in the town. Some of the young people who were consulted in Llanrwst felt that the police officers working in the town were judgemental towards all young people.

Shopping

The main areas of concern were raised as follows:

- The cost of shopping in Llanrwst: Concerns were raised regarding the cost of food shopping in Llanrwst. Individuals and group discussions said the town would benefit from having a more affordable supermarket. Young Farmers were of the opinion that if another supermarket open in the town, they should sell local produce.
- Clothes shopping in Llanrwst: It was raised on numerous occasions that there is no clothes shops in the town. Rural Conwy citizens must either travel to the coast or shop for clothes online.

- Golygfa Gwydyr's consultation found that Llanrwst residents feel that there is a lack of local marketing by the public sector to improve footfall to Llanrwst.
- Village shops: The village shop was seen by many as a vital part of village life. Those villages that had lost their village shop stated that it was a great loss to the community on both a convenience and social aspect.

Case Study 26

Quote from a Mum from Llanrwst who doesn't drive:

"At the co-op but if my daughter is not working she will take me down to the coast as it's much cheaper there. I went in to get a few things today and I spent over £25 and if you need anything it's so expensive. For example toilet rolls, at Home Bargains you can get a lot more for your money. Here it's just very expensive, more expensive than anywhere else."

Case Study 27

Quote from resident of a rural village who relies on public transport or friends:

"...the shop - that closed and people have to rely on friends. If they've got a busy day you're stuck. Its 3 miles to the nearest shop. Someone has to come to deliver Ann's paper. You don't want to bother people. People are busy and they've got their own stuff to do."

Case Study 28

Quote from an Older Person from Eglwysbach. The closing of the shop made them realise that the time had come for them to sell their property and move to a Coastal town to be closer to shops and services.

"We live just outside the village, within the village boundary but about half a mile from the main village centre. There used to be a shop in the village and a Post Office. I used to get the bus down there with my bus pass and unfortunately the shop and the Post Office closed which was very sad. So my wife and I really got thinking, "What shall we do?" Because it is very restrictive when you have got chronic pain. We thought we will have to swap.... the environment was restricted so we made the conscious decision a couple of months ago to change that to move into an apartment ... and have an environment in Rhos on Sea where I have got a bit more freedom and access so that was the defining time really....I mean the important thing was with the shop going, I lost a great deal of social interaction as there were people I saw most days and we lived on the memory of the half conversation that we had. We've noticed that we don't see each other as much now so that brings in a number of factors"

Tourism

Residents in Llanrwst recognised the importance of tourism in the area, however some expressed that they felt that tourists were put before local residents.

Case Study 29

Quote from a resident of Llanrwst:

“I’ve lived in lots of places that are very tourism based and it’s very much like: winter, forget about everybody who live there and in the summer, put on a show for the tourists. You end up with the people who live locally hating tourists and tourism instead of embracing it as a good industry and job opportunities. And feeling neglected by planning, by services like buses, opening hours of certain things you feel like you’re living somewhere that just exists for the tourists and visitors and not your own place. So, a better integration of them, I guess. Yes, more of the flowers and that sort of thing, keep it clean... more chances for the community to do stuff. Where it’s not a judgement, like ‘you should be doing this, you should be doing that’, it’s like ‘we’re doing this project, come along and join in’. I know they’re doing Llanrwst in Bloom and I think that’s really nice, getting everyone involved.”

Volunteering

While community groups and individuals spoke of the strong community spirit within their communities, and commended the community groups in their villages, there were concerns raised that it is the same volunteers who arrange community groups. Concern were expressed that the next generation of volunteers are not prepared to dedicate their time to volunteer and ensure that community groups are able to continue. The young people who were volunteering for their community spoke very positively about their experiences, of how they have learnt and developed skills and increased their confidence through volunteering.

Case Study 30

Quote from young person who volunteers for the Young Farmers:

“Since finishing uni, I’ve realised that it’s important for people to come back and take on the roles within organisations to carry it on. To show the importance of it, as well... The experiences that you pick up you don’t realise until you go and apply for a job, you can use these experiences. You don’t realise until you’re further afield.”

Case Study 31

Quote from Older Person Betws yn Rhos:

“Quite a few people have moved in and they’re commuting to work. I don’t know who lives in some of the houses, which is quite a sad reflection. And we haven’t got all the people who used to do all the arranging, fun days and whatever and now they’ve got older, in their sixties and seventies. And the younger crowd can’t seem to be bothered to sort anything out. They expect everybody else to carry on sorting. That seems to be the general opinion with committees..... But now, try to get somebody and ‘Oh no, they’re too busy’. They can’t have been any busier than we were but, no, very reluctant to take any role in any organisation. So sad.”

Case Study 32

Quote from a resident of rural Conwy who has mental health issues::

“...I’ve just started helping with Rainbows. That was a big challenge for me because I’ve never done anything like that before.... I’m really enjoying it. I didn’t think I would actually with all the screaming kids.... It’s really good. I’ve never done anything like this before.

Conclusion

The research found that there are strong communities in rural Conwy. Many of the individuals interviewed were happy living in their communities, and enjoyed the strong community spirit and rural lifestyle. Many stated that they felt safe in their communities and that they would not wish to live anywhere else. Rural Conwy villages are socially active for those that wish to get involved.

Rural communities expressed concerns with regards to the future of their villages; they were keen to see the next generation of volunteers take on more responsibility in their communities. Rural communities expressed concerns regarding depopulation amongst young people, due to lack of employment opportunities, lack of affordable housing and lack of social opportunities. They also wanted to retain current services in their communities, to ensure that they remain strong and sustainable.

There are many individuals in rural Conwy who do not have access to the internet. Reasons for this included not being able to afford broadband, poor/no broadband or mobile phone data signal, describing themselves as computer illiterate, or not wanting to learn or use the internet.

Public transport is a vital service to some residents of rural Conwy. The research found that some of the service users either did not have family or friends to ask, or they did not like to bother them. Communities wanted to see more frequent buses, timetable information kept up to date at bus stops and buses to run on time.

Those that used Job Centre Plus wanted to see a base in rural Conwy, and an improvement in staff attitudes towards them. Rural communities wanted to see

affordable housing to help young people stay in rural communities, but ensure that it does not compromise the 'village feeling'. Many rural residents stated they were unsure where to get advice, information and support and they look at local community papers and local press to find out events in their communities. Many rural communities. The research found that there are residents in rural Conwy who do not feel listened to because they do not receive feedback from consultations.

The considerations included in the report aim to address some of the issues raised through the consultation, to enable them to remain strong and resilient communities.

The Way Forward

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 place statutory duties on Conwy County Borough Council and its partners to assess the needs of the people of Conwy.

This research will form a fundamental part of these assessments and will inform other local plans and programmes such as the Tackling Poverty Programmes and Conwy Place Plans.

The Conwy Building Resilient Communities and Tackling Poverty Board will oversee an action plan that will be written following a review of the findings of this research.

The themes identified in this report should form the basis of the action plan and the following considerations should be given when it is being developed.

General

- Feedback and outcomes from this research should be shared with all relevant communities through various publications such as the Conwy Newsletter and local papurau bro. Where possible, direct feedback should be given to the groups and individuals consulted.
- Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) and its partners to use good practice identified in rural communities to empower communities in Conwy to build resilience.
- CCBC and its partners should co-ordinate approaches to support and sustain valued services currently provided in rural areas.
- CCBC and its partners to co-ordinate approaches to support and sustain local community shops.
- CCBC to lobby Welsh Government to consider current funding formulae and evaluation to take into account the value of services to the rural community when the allocation of funds directed at tackling poverty funding is calculated.
- Conwy People's Partnership Research and Development Officer to re-visit the outcomes of the research in 12 months' time to ascertain the impact of the agreed actions on rural communities.
- CCBC and its partners to use the research as a guide to supporting individuals and families that are not currently accessing services, but who may be in or on the cusp of living in poverty.

Community Buildings

- CCBC and its partners to support Community Councils to maintain community buildings to encourage their continued use by the community.
- CCBC and its partners to continue to promote and support access to projects and services in rural communities.

Job Centre Plus / Jobs Clubs

- CCBC and its partners to urge the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to have a Job Centre Plus base/facility in rural Conwy (Llanrwst).
- CCBC to feedback concerns that arose from the research to the DWP regarding its residents experiences of accessing and consistency of support provided by Job Centre Plus Services.

- CCBC and its partners to provide support to existing Jobs Clubs by promoting the services in Rural Conwy.
- CCBC and its partners to encourage DWP to provide Universal Credit sign on through post and online.

Education

- CCBC and its partners to review costs of public transport for adults wanting to access further education from Rural Areas.
- CCBC and its partners to maximise opportunities to offer courses via Skype or other similar methods.

Families

- CCBC to and its partners to continue to support and promote Family Support services in Conwy.
- CCBC and its partners to explore opportunities to provide outreach provision in more Conwy villages.

Housing

- CCBC to support the delivery of affordable homes in Conwy's rural villages to enable young people to continue living in their home village should they choose to do so.

Internet / I.T / Mobile Phones

- CCBC and its partners to encourage mobile phone companies to improve data signal in rural areas.
- CCBC and partners to provide and co-ordinate additional free, affordable and accessible internet lessons in Conwy's rural villages where they are required.
- CCBC and its partners to provide computers/laptops for use in community buildings where possible. This could be a recycling scheme put in place to refurbish and reuse computers.
- CCBC and its partners to consider installing Wi-Fi in community buildings that are used on a regular basis.

Retirement

- Conwy People's Partnership's COG 3 to develop retirement information booklet to include practical information for those who live or intend to retire within the County.

Advice and Information

- CCBC and partners to make use of Community Papers, Daily Post, Conwy Bulletin and community notice boards to advertise events, promote services and provide feedback from consultations.
- Awareness raising events for rural communities promoting CCBC and partner services.

Public/Community Transport

- CCBC and its partners to continue to support community transport pilots in rural areas.
- CCBC and its partners to ensure that bus timetables are kept up to date at all bus stops in rural Conwy and on the internet.
- CCBC and its partners to encourage bus services to run on time in rural areas.

- CCBC to ensure that bus times are practical and suit the need of the community (e.g. enough time for shopping).

Volunteering

- CCBC, CVSC and partners to hold volunteering events in rural villages, particularly focussing on the next generation of volunteers.

Intergeneration / social isolation

- CCBC and partners to offer intergenerational events in rural communities.

Safety

- Community Safety Partnership to hold safety awareness sessions in rural areas to help minimise their chances of becoming victims of crime.

Appendix 1 – Information sheet

CYMRYD RHAN MEWN CYFWELIAD • TAKING PART IN AN INTERVIEW

TAFLEN WYBODAETH • INFORMATION SHEET

<p>Helo</p> <p>Fy enw yw Cara Lynam. Rwy'n gweithio i Bartneriaeth Pobl Conwy (sy'n rhan o'r Cyngor). Fy ngwaith yw gwneud ymchwil penodol i Gyngor Conwy. Rwy'n gofyn i chi gymryd rhan mewn cyfweiliad fel y gallwn gael eich barn (ymgyngoriad). Cyn i chi benderfynu a oes gennych eisiau cymryd rhan neu beidio, mae gen i eisiau dweud wrthy ch pam ein bod yn ymgynghori, a beth allwch ei ddisgwyl os ydych yn cymryd rhan. Meddyliwch am yr wybodaeth hon yn ofalus a siarad â phobl eraill am y peth, os dymunwch. Mae croeso i chi ddod i gysylltiad a gofyn cwestiynau i mi. Cymerwch gymaint o amser ag y dymunwch. Mae'r ymchwil yn cael ei wneud i helpu i ni ganfod beth mae byw yng Nghonwy wledig yn debyg iddo, a chanfod a oes rhywbeth y gallwn ei wneud yn well.</p> <p>Beth yw pwrpas yr ymgynghoriad? Ein nod yw canfod am eich profiad chi o fyw yng Nghonwy wledig. Mae gennym eisiau gwybod er mwyn ein helpu i wneud penderfyniad ar ba wasanaethau sydd eu hangen mewn ardaloedd gwledig.</p> <p>Sut fydd hyn yn gweithio? Hoffem eich cyfarfod a gofyn i chi rannu eich profiadau gyda ni. Byddwn yn gofyn rhai cwestiynau i chi i helpu gyda hyn. Gallwch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ddewis lle yr hoffech ein cyfarfod (gartref, neu yn rhywle arall) - ofyn i rywun arall eistedd gyda chi, fel gweithiwr, aelod o'r teulu neu ffrind - ddewis gofyn i ni ddod i'ch cyfarfod ymlaen llaw i ddod i adnabod ein gilydd a siarad am y broses <p>Er mwyn ein helpu i wrando arnoch yn effeithiol a chofnodi'r hyn rydych yn ei ddweud wrthym yn gywir, hoffem ddefnyddio dictaffon, a theipio'r hyn</p>	 <p>Hello</p> <p>My name is Cara Lynam. I work for Conwy People's Partnership (which is part of the Council). My job is to complete set pieces of research for Conwy Council. I am asking you to take part in an interview so that we can gain your views (consultation). Before you decide if you want to take part or not, I want to tell you why we're consulting, and what you can expect if you take part. Please think about this information carefully and talk about it with other people if you wish. You're welcome to get in touch and ask me any questions. Please take as much time as you like to decide. This research is being done to help us find out what it's like living in rural Conwy, and to find out if there is anything we can do better.</p> <p>What is the purpose of the consultation? Our aim is to find out about your experiences of living in rural Conwy. We want to know about this in order to help us make decisions on what services are needed in rural communities.</p> <p>How will it work? We would like to meet with you, and ask you to share your experiences with us. We will ask you some questions to help with this. You can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - choose where you would want to meet us (at home, or somewhere else) - request that someone else sits in with you, like a worker, a member of the family or a friend - choose to ask us to come and meet you beforehand to get to know each other a little and talk through the process <p>In order to help us listen to you effectively and record what you're telling us properly, we would like</p>
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a ddywedwyd yn ddiweddarach. Gallwch ddewis gofyn i ni beidio defnyddio dictaffon, a byddwn yn gofyn i rywun arall ddod i gymryd nodiadau.

Sut fyddwn ni'n diogelu eich preifatrwydd a beth fydd yn digwydd i'r wybodaeth?

Os ydych yn penderfynu rhoi caniatâd i ni ddefnyddio eich cyfweiliad, bydd yn cael ei ddefnyddio gyda chyfweiliadau eraill. Bydd yr wybodaeth yn cael ei chyflwyno ar ffurf adroddiad fydd yn cael ei ddefnyddio gan y "Bwrdd Creu Cymunedau Cryf a Threchgu Tlodi" i helpu i benderfynu sut y gellir gwella gwasanaethau i pobl sy'n byw yng Nghonwy Wledig. Bydd pob data yn cael ei ddefnyddio yn unol â thelerau'r Ddeddf Diogelu Data (DPA 1998).

Oes rhaid i mi gymryd rhan?

Eich dewis chi yw cymryd rhan neu beidio. Os ydych yn penderfynu cymryd rhan, byddwch yn cael y daflen wybodaeth hon i'w chadw. Gofynnir i chi lofnodi 'ffurflen ganiatâd' hefyd. Os ydych yn penderfynu cymryd rhan, mae croeso i chi newid eich meddwl ar unrhyw adeg a does dim rhaid i chi roi rheswm. Ni fydd eich penderfyniad i gymryd rhan neu beidio yn cael unrhyw effaith ar y gwasanaethau rydych yn eu cael.

Bydd hyd y cyfweiliad yn amrywio, yn dibynnu ar faint sydd gennych chi i'w ddweud, ond mae'r rhan fwyaf o gyfweiliadau yn parhau tua awr. Os yw'n well gennych chi, gallaf eich cyfweld ar ddau wahanol achlysur, a gallwch chi stopio'r cyfweiliad ar unrhyw adeg.

Cysylltwch i gael rhagor o wybodaeth
Rwy'n gobeithio fod y daflen hon wedi rhoi'r
wybodaeth angenrheidiol i chi benderfynu a ydych
am gymryd rhan neu beidio.
Os oes gennych chi unrhyw gwestiynau ffoniwch
Cara Lynam ar 01492 575145.

to use a Dictaphone, and type up what has been said. You can choose to ask us not to use a Dictaphone, and we will ask someone else to come and take notes instead.

How will we protect your privacy and what will happen with the information?

If you decide to allow your interview to be used, it would be used along with interviews from other people. The information will be pulled together in a report, which will be used by the "Building Resilient Communities and Tackling Poverty Board" to help decide how to improve services for people living in rural Conwy. All data use is strictly within the terms of the Data Protection Act (DPA 1998).

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a 'consent form'. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time without giving a reason. Deciding whether or not to take part will not affect the services that you receive.

The time it takes for an interview varies, depending on how much you have to say, but most interviews last about an hour. If you would prefer, I can interview you on two different occasions and you can stop the interview at any time.

Contact for further information

I hope that this information sheet has told you what you need to know before deciding whether or not to take part.

If you have any questions at all please telephone
Cara Lynam on 01492 575145.

Appendix 2 – Interview prompts for researcher

- Introduction and explanation of my role, what interview is about, where the information will go etc and confidentiality
- Check we have a signed consent form
- Child protection or POVA
- Information about the interview process, you can stop the interview at any time by signalling or just asking to stop
- You can also stop the interview altogether at anytime if you are not happy
- I may make a few notes to remind me of something I maybe want to come back to
- If there are things you tell me that I may be able to give you some advice about, I will do this after the interview has finished and the tape has been turned off.
- Are you happy that you have understood everything I have explained? Have you got any questions you would like to ask me?

Semi structured interview Questions –

Try and use the following to get them to expand on answers:

“Tell me about...” “Can you explain what you meant by...”

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself, for example your background and where you grew up.
2. Can you tell me about where you live?
3. How long have you lived in?
4. Where do you consider your local area/community to be?
5. What do you like about living in your local area / community?
6. Is there anything that you dislike about where you live?
7. Do you feel safe at home? (expand on this if needed)
8. How do you get to, where do you go and How long would it take you to reach your GP, Supermarket, Post office, bank etc
9. Why these areas?
10. Have you or your family ever had to rely on family, friends or neighbours?
11. Would you or members of your family ask for help from the council, other organisations or health if you needed it?
12. How do you find out what's going on in your community and what services are available to you?
13. Do you have access to the internet at home? (Ask what the service is like if they don't mention it)

14. Do you use a mobile phone? How is the quality of mobile telephone reception at home and in your local area?
15. What community buildings do you use e.g. community hall, church, chapel, sports building?
16. What do you use it for?
17. Are there any other services would you like to see offered in your local area/village? And why?
18. How have services in your local area changed in the past five years?
19. How have these changes affected you or others in your household? (and other family members
20. If you could do anything you wanted to improve your community, what would you do?
21. Can you describe this community the way you think it should be in ten years time?
22. If you were able to send one message to Conwy Council about life in your local community what would it be?

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