

# BEVAN EXEMPLAR PROGRAMME

*Achieving Change Together*



## Putting Communities at the Heart of Transforming Outcomes:

Testing Collaborative Partnership Approaches of  
Community Engagement and Participation

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***How to develop a model of understanding what truly matters to communities, and the impact of participative co-design at the micro-local level on population health outcomes?***

The aim of this study was to develop a better understanding of how to engage with communities to understand what truly matters in respect of population health & wellbeing.

The findings of this study can be used to influence a more participative model of co-production, which can be applied at the various system levels (local, regional and national) in order to rebuild trust in public services and encourage shared accountability for outcomes.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Articulate the benefits of improved community co-production, and the impact that this can have upon population health outcomes
2. Work with local stakeholders to provide a baseline evidence of current practice
3. Work with local stakeholders to test and evaluate ways to engage more effectively and collaboratively with communities at a micro-local level
4. Influence development of local Place Plans and Wellbeing Plans to address what truly matters to local communities through participative co-design processes
5. Consider opportunities to scale and spread

## Executive Summary

Wicked challenges require radical thinking. Our public services need to adapt and evolve to more relational and outcomes focussed models of planning and care delivery, and we need to do this **alongside** the communities we serve.

All of the strategy and policy direction in Wales requires public services to shift away from the traditional paternalistic models of statutory service delivery and into the realms of empowered communities with voice & agency to participate in the design & delivery of services to meet their needs, with shared accountability for outcomes.

The persistent challenge of health inequalities and the growing burden on health and social care systems necessitate a fundamental shift in *how* services are designed and delivered. A central issue that requires urgent attention is the limited integration of community voices in shaping health interventions, despite widespread recognition of the socio-economic determinants of health.

This review is intended to support that transformation by identifying effective community engagement and co-production methods, and evaluating their impact on improving population health and wellbeing. It aims to inform more collaborative, cross-sectoral approaches that empower communities and foster shared accountability for outcomes.

This Bevan Exemplar project provides an opportunity to test & evaluate a more collaborative approach to community engagement & co-production of Locality Place Plans, and Community Wellbeing Plans. Through this research and by testing new approaches we hope to give our communities voice & agency to take shared accountability for delivery and for evaluating shared outcomes.

The study comprises both a comprehensive literature and evidence review alongside practical insights gained from local practitioners and community groups.

The academic literature and evidence was used to inform the study through considering the research question: *“What are effective community engagement and co-production methods, and what impact can these have on population health and wellbeing?”*

Baseline self-assessments of the co-production and collaboration landscape were conducted with key stakeholders across the local area, and identified strengths and weaknesses were further explored through community conversations with stakeholder organisations.

Stakeholder Network Events were held to bring partners (including community groups) together with the intention of helping to build and restore trust through honest collaborative community conversations, and developing a better shared understanding of the challenges and constraints of the current landscape and provision of services across the locality.

Overall, local partners were able to identify many strengths concerning co-production, in particular relating to the following themes:

- Good community spirit and passionate community champions
- Key anchor organisations and local infrastructure
- Strong local leadership and willingness of local partners to engage
- Ability to play to strengths of the workforce and community volunteers

However, the following identified themes arose highlighting limiting factors, which stifle progress and potential of the community:

- Short-termism of budget and funding constraints
- Poor co-ordination and planning between services and organisations
- Reducing volunteer capacity
- Widespread public disengagement with politics and distrust in public services

The reflections from these workshops were designed to provide practical insight from operational and lived experience on the ground within the locality, which could be used to support and complement the academic evidence review in order to produce a practical framework for delivery within which stakeholders could co-operate more effectively.

Only with this shared understanding and mutual trust can partners move towards the delivery phase – effective co-design and co-production of the solutions that would be required to meet local identified needs and priorities. Building upon identified strengths which could be amplified, and where identified weaknesses could be addressed through collective action.

Collaboration should fundamentally be about broadening and deepening collective understanding. Effective community co-production and participation will not only deliver better outcomes for all, it will lead to shared learning and continual iterative improvements to the very process of achieving this.

Suggestions for how this can be approached are included in a [\*\*Suggested model for improving two-way dialogue.\*\*](#)

In order to plan more effectively - partners need a better understanding and sense of the place (geography and people).

Stakeholders should be encouraged to walk the streets and have conversations with the people involved – to see first-hand the assets and challenges of a community.



To participate in this process more effectively – the public need a better appreciation of the governance, planning, funding and reporting structures of the various bodies involved.

Stakeholders should be empowered to have open and honest community conversations about how things currently work and why.

Given a clearer shared understanding of the assets, constraints, and the rules of engagement, all stakeholders can then work together more effectively to **reframe the problem** and identify the challenge rather than jumping-in at solution design. Through ongoing conversations and active participation, stakeholders can work together to understand:

- *Why* is there a particular issue?
- *What* can be done about it?
- *How and who* will do something?

And most importantly to agree:

- How will we know when we've got there? **What does good look like?**

By truly understanding what really matters to the community we can not only mobilise more effectively and collectively to deliver, we can measure what matters. Performance can then be measured against what truly matters, rather than arbitrary targets, and we can begin to take shared accountability for improving the outcomes.

The benefits of adopting robust community engagement and co-production methods are increasingly evident, however, the literature and practice reveal a spectrum of interpretations, ranging from tokenistic consultation to genuine power sharing partnerships.

In conclusion; the study notes that relationship building with communities and local partners does not 'just happen', it requires resourcing and long-term commitment. Dedicated staff-time is needed to work out how best to co-ordinate efforts with local partners to make the biggest collective impact on health and wellbeing outcomes and to reduce inequalities. There is an increasingly evident clinical and cost case to be made for skilled community development resources to support building of the connections between people and assets that lead to thriving communities.

In order to realise this potential, four system-level pillars are suggested:

### **1. Structural Investment and Systems Integration**

Firstly, a sustained structural investment is required to move beyond short-term, project-based models. Embedding co-production and community participation within commissioning and regulatory frameworks, and allocating core funding to support community infrastructure and leadership development, are all considered essential steps towards embedding and institutionalising these practices.

### **2. Capacity Building and Workforce Development**

Secondly, capacity-building must be prioritised across both professional and community domains. The health and care workforce requires capacity and support for training in facilitative, relational, and power-sharing practices while communities, particularly those which have been historically marginalised, must be supported to develop leadership, organisational capacity, and participatory confidence.

### **3. Embedding Equity and Inclusion**

Equity must be embedded as a guiding principle across all stages of design, implementation, and evaluation. This includes prioritising engagement in high-need communities, adopting intersectional approaches to understand differential impacts, and ensuring that power is re-balanced and shared meaningfully with those most affected by health inequalities. This shift represents not only a strategic imperative but a moral one: to ensure that health systems are shaped *with*, not merely *for*, the populations they serve.

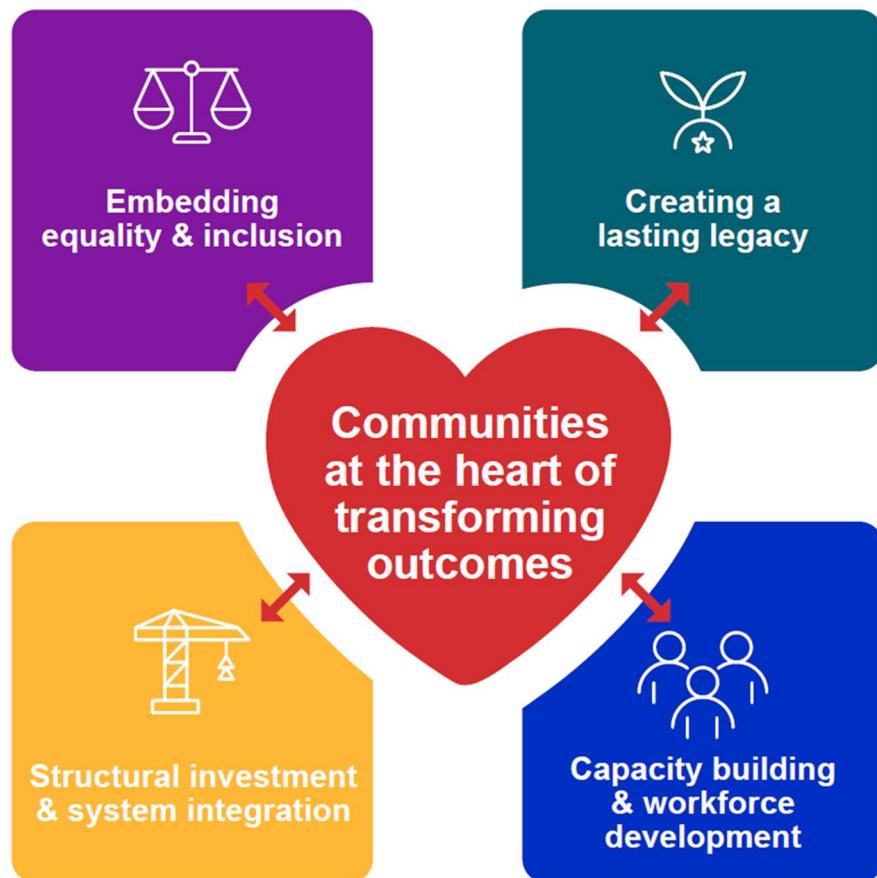
### **4. Creating a Lasting Legacy**

Finally, these approaches must be adopted as a means to create a lasting legacy through evaluation, learning & accountability. In order to re-build and maintain trust, shared ownership and accountability, organisations should come together in partnership *alongside* empowered communities.

through local and regional place-based plans, and into regional and national strategy and planning.

In order to achieve this community partnerships should develop evaluation frameworks that capture long-term and relational outcomes, and can establish feedback loops to inform iterative development of practice and evidence progress against shared longer-term goals and outcomes.

Finally, suggestions for how this can be applied are detailed within [a Practical Framework for Embedding Principles of Co-Production](#).



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This work will now be taken forward through the following Action Plan and Next Steps:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Who? - Vehicle for delivery</b>	<b>What?</b>
<b>Local</b>	Towyn & Kinmel Bay Town Council	To inform and influence approach to developing Place Plan  To share learning with other Town & Community Councils
<b>Regional</b>	Conwy & Denbighshire PSB	To inform and influence approach to developing Wellbeing Plans  To share learning with other PSBs / RPB and associated partner organisations
<b>National</b>	Bevan Commission	To report to Senedd to influence scale & spread across Wales