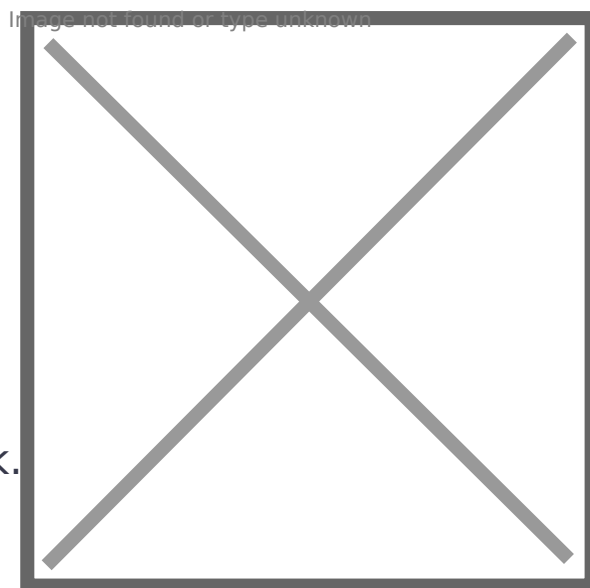# Introduction

Information about the framework.

First published: 22 August 2023

Last updated: 6 February 2025

Information about the framework.

This guide is for people who want to understand and work with communities to develop ideas, partnerships and projects.

It's designed to be used by people who work for public bodies. This includes councils, health boards and support organisations who want to work with communities.

We created '*Working with communities*' with the Community Resourcefulness Partnership.

We used information from an action research project to help write it. The project tested a community resourcefulness framework in two Welsh communities.

This guide has been shaped by what communities think and what we know works.

The case for change: working with communities

Why it's important to work with communities.

First published: 22 August 2023

Last updated: 6 February 2025

Why it's important to work with communities.

Working with communities can be rewarding, sustainable and beneficial for everyone.

Projects and activities have huge potential to support community well-being.

They can also help join up gaps in society and community services.

There are lots of ways to help communities use their knowledge, skills, relationships and support networks in practical and positive ways.

Public bodies and support organisations assess and ask communities what they need. But evidence shows they don't usually explore or understand what communities need to help make this happen.

These organisations don't always recognise how communities can be effective partners.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 makes public services and partners responsible for developing services that prioritise individual well-being. This is so individuals can live independently in their own communities.

Public services and partners need to work with the community, and use its strengths to help create services and activities that help individuals thrive without targeted services.

This framework explains how to build, work with and talk with communities.

'Working with' principles
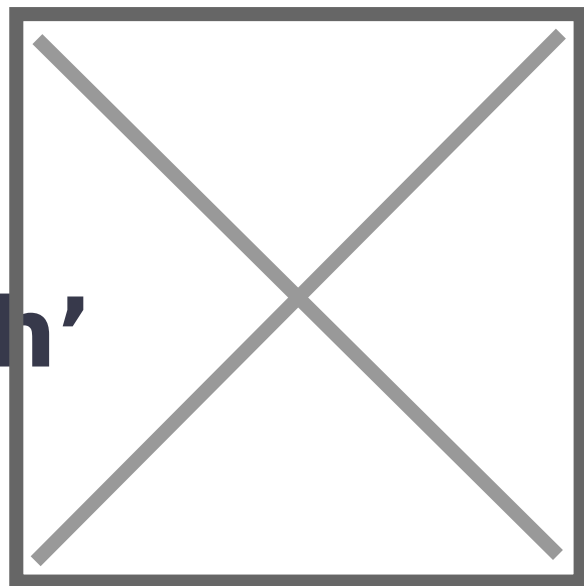
The principles of working with communities.

First published: 22 August 2023

Last updated: 6 February 2025

Read these guiding principles.

Think about how they could help you work in communities and use them in your plans.

Set the right culture

1. Develop your understanding of communities

Spend some time getting to know the communities you'd like to work with.

Research the local history, background and politics. Find out what's going on, and if there are community groups or organisations running projects.

2. Place this work at the heart of your organisation

It's important to put the voice and experience of people and communities at the heart of your work.

This will help you and your partners understand:

- what people need

- what works

- what can be improved, and

- how to work together for good community well-being.

3. Be clear that this work is everyone's business

This work isn't just the role of community engagement teams. Leaders, programme teams, and wider stakeholders need to listen to, and act on, what they learn.

For advice on how to carry out the work, speak to people who have experience working with communities.

This is adapted from *Understanding integration* (The King's Fund, 2021).

4. Recognise the challenge, use what's there and be prepared to do things differently.

Find and speak to community groups and activities, places to meet, local services and buildings. These all help make a community vibrant and resilient.

Make a start

5. Focus on promoting people's well-being

Focus on promoting people's well-being. Following the Five Ways to Well-being will promote good mental health for all.

6. Start by building trust and two-way relationships

Listen, respond to and value what everyone has to say.

7. Make sure information is accessible, appropriate and doesn't use jargon

8. Encourage and make it easy for people to take part in community

activities

Community activities:

- involve people who aren't connected or part of community life, or in touch with services
- give people a sense of belonging and purpose
- create friendships
- make people feel better and more confident
- make it easier to get information, support and help.

9. Involve people to make a difference

Involving people and working together makes sure that a community is involved from an early stage. It's a way to encourage the community to own the project, have a say on policy, and decide how services are designed and run.

Be creative, and don't be frightened to try different ways to involve people.

Develop

10. Recognise and always build on existing community assets.

Everyone has skills, and knowledge that they can share and the networks in local communities are the greatest asset.

There may also be community groups and activities, places to meet, local services and buildings which contribute to having a vibrant and resilient community.

11. Make more opportunities for people to connect with each other.

Make sure that communities want the activities on offer, and can run them themselves where possible.

Activities should be based on what communities say they need, and not what 'experts' think they need.

These activities should be low cost, accessible and inclusive.

12. Work with people in communities.

Listen and respond to the community; its people are best placed to know what they need.

Don't plan for them; work together to build resilient communities.

13. Support local ownership and decision-making in service design and delivery.

Encourage co-production so people have the power and opportunity to make their own decisions about their life and community.

This means they'll own the services they help design. Find new creative ways for professionals and communities to work together.

14. Make sure everyone has the opportunity to be involved.

Find specific groups and work with them to target and shape resources. Work together to decide what's important and help them to make that happen.

You should do this without undermining their control.

Reflect, invest and share

15. Develop appropriate and meaningful ways to record change.

Stories are powerful ways to show change within communities. They bring life to numbers that count 'how much' or 'how often'. Measure what matters, using targets that promote and focus on making the community more resilient.

16. Invest in community projects and build sustainability.

Make the link between listening and doing. Long-term, stable funding makes community projects more sustainable, and can help those who provide skilled support.

Growing at a natural, sustainable pace can encourage and inspire confidence in a community.

True sustainability is leaving a legacy where a community can learn and do things themselves.

17. Communicate progress and share the learning.

You should keep promises to build and keep trust.

Keeping everyone informed, sharing lessons learned and successes is a good idea, too. It will give you space for reflection, learning and improve your practice.

18. Look at others, take ideas and benefit.

There are fantastic examples of community partnership work across Wales and beyond. Visit, ask questions and learn from others' experiences.

What to focus on

Explains what you should focus on when working with communities.

First published: 22 August 2023

Last updated: 6 February 2025

Explains what you should focus on when working with communities.

Risk

What to focus on

- Taking a balanced approach to risk, rights and responsibilities. You should think about the risks and impacts of both acting and not acting.
- Removing the fear of being blamed if things go wrong.
- Encouraging an open culture that recognises and learns from mistakes.
- Using risk registers so you can see any opportunities that come with risks.
- Talking to others from similar projects about their journey, and what they learned from their successes and mistakes.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **A positive approach to risk** – **Social Care Wales**
  Sets out what's expected of practitioners when it comes to balancing perceived risks, rights and responsibilities.
- **Positive risk and shared decision-making** – **Social Care Wales**
  Explains the challenges and opportunities to taking positive risks and making shared decisions, includes examples of good practice.

Strategic thinking

What to focus on

- Public service organisations including:
  - public service boards
  - regional partnership boards
  - local authorities
  - health boards.
- Planning and commissioning for social value using the *National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMS) Framework* and *Can Do* toolkits.
- Making it easier to use resources flexibly.,
- Investing in local and social businesses.
- Developing a shared vision based on location.
- Agreeing how statutory, third and private sector services can help get results.
- Encouraging partners to share information with each other.
- Choosing a pilot project to test new approaches, then capture and share the learning.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Reimagining community services** – **The King's Fund**
  Explains how the health and care system could change to meet the population's needs.
- **The National TOMs: Themes, Outcomes and Measures** – **Social Value Portal**
  A framework to help you measure and report on social value.
- **Can Do toolkits** – **i2i project**
  Resources to help you put the Can Do approach into practice.
- **A guide to community resilience** – **National Institute of Standards and Technology**
  A six-step planning process to help towns, cities, and counties better withstand

hazard events and recover more quickly.

Leadership

What to focus on

- Finding the 'natural' and 'appointed' leaders within the community
- Considering peer support as a way to introduce mentoring
- Setting clear, shared goals, and the steps you'll take to achieve them
- Changing how you act when things are difficult so you can meet your goals, and working with everyone else to get through it
- Designing or finding the help you'll need to help you reach your goals.
- Looking at the rules:
  - are they the right ones?
  - how are they interpreted and applied?
  - are they being used in the spirit of the policy framework, especially the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014?
- Helping all types of community organisations in a leadership role to talk to decision-makers, and offering to help
- Sharing your journey with others so they benefit from what you learned along the way.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Learning how to be a community leader** – **Community Tool Box**
  E-learning module which shares the skills and qualities successful community

leaders need.

- **Compassionate leadership for managers** – **Social Care Wales**
Resources which explain compassionate leadership and support leaders and managers to embrace it in their practice.
- **People-powered results: the 100 day challenge** – **NESTA**
A structured 100-day process for health, social care and voluntary organisations to create the best conditions to make change happen.
- **Approaches to community resilience** – **Social Care Wales**
Gives evidence for planning and developing community resilience initiatives.
- **How to listen to and learn from people and communities** – **The King's Fund**
Practical, evidence-based ways to help partners work with communities to find out what people need, what works and what could be improved.

Policy

What to focus on

- How the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 are being applied in your community: is it in the spirit of the acts?
- Checking if your actions follow your vision
- Thinking whether commissioning, procurement and funding can be changed to provide more long-term stability to service providers
- Introducing collaborative bid processes to encourage more people to work in partnerships and make it easier to get funding
- Working with service providers before tendering for services so that you work to the same vision and goals
- Putting systems in place to record discussions and evidence that come from place-based conversations, for example, stakeholder engagement

- Simplifying monitoring and evaluation processes so that it doesn't hold up the work.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Approaches to community resilience** – **Social Care Wales**
  Gives evidence for planning and developing community resilience initiatives.
- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** – **Future Generations Commissioner for Wales**
  Legislation to make a long-lasting, positive change to current and future generations.
- **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014** – **Welsh Government**
  The legal framework that brings together and modernises social services law.

Politics

What to focus on

- Making informal relationships into formal strategic alliances.
- Setting up productive relationships between local authorities and local town and community councillors. These should be based on positive leadership, trust, attitudes and skills.
- Getting rid of historical barriers to working together.
- Using the knowledge and skills of elected members and officers in place-based planning.
- Developing relationship-based compassionate leadership.
- Establishing place-based community teams.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)**
  Represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales.
- **Welsh Council for Voluntary Associations (WCVA)**
  The national membership body for voluntary organisations in Wales.
- **Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA)**
  A think tank and charity, independent of government and political parties.

Commissioning

What to focus on

- Making sure that you have good local leadership, trust and communication with new and existing providers throughout the commissioning cycle. This will help make sure that commissioning is truly flexible
- You should use qualitative methods, (such as personal stories that have been co-produced) to measure outcomes or value for money. This will help you to measure how effective the investment in community resourcefulness has been
- Learning lessons from community challenges in hard-to-reach and rural areas, which have needed more problem-solving.
- Local, regional and national policy-makers should continue to focus on what good policy should do. This will make sure that communities get the best help to grow, innovate and succeed.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Together for Change**
  A unique collaboration between the Public and Third sectors, Solva Care, PAVS and Planed.
- **How commissioning is supporting community development and community building** – **Local Government Association**
  Article by Dr Janet Harris from Sheffield University.
- **Creating social value in Bristol toolkit** – **Bristol City Council**
  Explains how Bristol City Council commissions services, and when and where the council looks for opportunities for social benefit.

Co-production

What to focus on

- Valuing and building on people's strengths
- Helping networks to talk to each other
- Finding out what matters for the people involved
- Building relationships with trust and shared power
- Helping people to make change.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Co-production Network for Wales**
  Community of practice for people working with citizens in Wales.

- **Public services inside out** – **NESTA**
  Shows how co-production can work in practice.

Collaboration

What to focus on

- Setting your principles and values from the beginning. This is more important than setting your outcomes. Working together to achieve these outcomes will make them easier
- Investing time and resource into building relationships
- Developing a shared approach to measuring meaningful impact
- Working out if third sector organisations could share staff, such as back office and fundraising staff.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Embracing resilience: collaborative and equitable resilience practices** – **New Cities**
  A six-step process to planning resilience.

Resources

What to focus on

- Developing the right structures, including funding processes, to make sure community and voluntary organisations can continue to work in the future

- Advising, helping and encouraging organisations to get different types of funding so they can stay flexible and strong.
  - More funding can help organisations make more of a difference. You should emphasise the social value of investment
- Finding ways for organisations to work on bids and tenders together. For example, organisations could look at how they can share fundraising staff
- Making it easier for organisations to apply and report how they use resources, and make it easier for organisations to receive long-term core funding. It can be difficult and expensive to innovate for every grant application.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Re-thinking grant-making** – **New Philanthropy Capital**
  Blog post explaining how to support charities.
- **Creating Resilience** – **Charity Aid Foundation (CAF)**
  Explores how funders can support charities.
- **Welsh Council for Voluntary Associations (WCVA)**
  The national membership body for voluntary organisations in Wales.
- **Funding Wales**
  Search for grants and loans opportunities from local, national and international sources.
- **National Lottery Community Fund**
  Grants for different groups in Wales.
- **Community Foundation in Wales**
  Funding to support groups in Wales.

Trust

What to focus on

- Setting your principles and values from the beginning. This is more important than setting your outcomes. Working together to achieve these outcomes will make them easier.
- Investing time and resource into building relationships
- Developing a shared approach to measuring meaningful impact
- Working out if third sector organisations could share staff, such as back office and fundraising staff**.**

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Embracing resilience: collaborative and equitable resilience practices** – **New Cities**
  A six-step process to planning resilience.

Housing

What to focus on

- Investing in regeneration that prioritises places and people who need it most
- Supporting investment in housing and the wider infrastructure, including community development
- Designing procurement strategies with communities that benefits the community and uses local investment to build wealth.
- Let registered social landlords be flexible so they can have the best impact on their local communities by helping them to:
  - build capacity and skills

- develop contractual and governance processes
- decide on their roles. For example: are they funding, are they taking the lead or are they; entering into a partnership with other organisations?
- Registering social landlords, and working together to the same vision and strategy, with a clear description of how this will help planning for the area
- Thinking about developing community hubs or clusters with partners including local authorities, voluntary and community organisations to help make sure activities are relevant to the local situation and build the partner organisations' capacity.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Communities in Control: Developing Assets** – **Cormac Russell, ABCD Institute and Nurture Development**
  Collection of short case studies about developing community assets.
- **Can Do toolkits** – **i2i project**
  Resources to help you put the Can Do approach into practice.
- **Great Places Report** – **National Federation Housing**
  Ten recommendations to make somewhere a great place to live.

Prevention

What to focus on

- Developing a shared understanding of what prevention is and supporting it
- Recognising the value and contribution of:
  - informal neighbourliness that has taken on caring and companionship roles
  - community support and activity groups

- green spaces
    - other community assets.
- Understanding that the community knows what's best for it
- Gathering evidence and research over time to measure the impact of prevention
- Taking a community-centred approach to health and well-being by:
    - developing an approach that works across the sector
    - making sure communities are involved in designing and running services
    - mapping and using local assets
    - commissioning in ways that give everyone access to activities that support well-being
    - measuring outcomes that matter to communities
    - emphasising prevention activities in strategic planning and commissioning.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Future generations report** – **Future Generations Commissioner for Wales**
  Explains what the Commissioner achieved between 2015 and 2020.
- **Community-centred approaches for health and well-being** – **Public Health England**
  Explains why communities matter, why being connected matters for your health, and how to build social capital with community-centred approaches.

Understanding communities

What to focus on

- Spending some time getting to know the communities you'd like to work with
- Exploring the local history, background and politics
- Finding out what's going on, and if there are community groups or organisations running projects
- Asking a local organisation to give you a community induction, or just go for a walk around
- Talking to local people, asking them what works, what doesn't work, what could be improved
- Looking at data about the community
- Finding case studies or stories to learn more about the community
- Find out about local assets within the community.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Asset-based community development for local authorities** – **NESTA**
  Explains how to rebuild relationships with communities through asset-based approaches.
- **Mapping Community Assets in Wales** – **Building Communities Trust**
  Reflects emerging themes and findings connected to mapping of community assets across Wales and associated case studies.
- **Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)** – **Welsh Government**
  Welsh Government's official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales.
- **Data map Wales** – **Welsh Government**
  Data and maps from the Welsh public sector.
- **Approaches to community resilience** – **Social Care Wales**
  Gives evidence for planning and developing community resilience initiatives.

Foundational economy

What to focus on

- Working with local businesses that contribute to the foundational economy. They're an important partner, and can provide:
  - provide essential local services
  - offer jobs
  - can provide community-wide leadership.
- Community interest companies (CICs) and micro-businesses can work at a very local level to develop and improve community resilience. Bigger companies can't always be as flexible
- When organisations outsource work, they should use the TOMs (themes, outcomes, measures) procurement process to support social value and community resourcefulness.

Where can you find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **The National Social Value Measurement Framework for Wales** – **Welsh Local Government Association**
A framework to help organisations measure what they do and get involved with activities that make a difference.

Community action

What to focus on

- Planning how to get more local people involved in community action and planning, design and running local services
- Finding which specific challenges you have. Think about what actions, skills and resources you need for each challenge, including:
  - what you want or need from community action
  - which kind of people you need to engage with
  - where they are
  - how many people you need
  - when's a good time to engage with people?
  - how should you approach people who may get involved?
  - who's going to find people and get them involved?
  - what happens if you get a yes, a maybe, or a no?
  - which things might stop you succeeding? How will you get around them?

- Find and take away barriers, to make it easy for people to access community activities
- Working with the main stakeholders to decide on a vision and priorities.
  - You should agree how you'll do this, and make sure partners know what their role will be.

- Explaining how digital communication platforms can help, and their limitations:
  - find any features of your digital platform that aren't accessible or easy for your audience to use, and how you'll address these
  - are there print, radio or television formats of important news and information?

- Finding volunteering in the community and making opportunities for it to develop
- Find out:
  - what volunteering has done for the area?

- how is volunteering resourced?
- do they need more resources?
- Understanding the different people in your community and finding out if resources and services meet everyone's needs.
  - For example: Welsh language, culture, and different age groups.

- Finding ways to record and learn from good work happening at community level.

Where can I find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **Developing Community Action** – **Community Tool Box**
  Explains how to make a plan to involve different stakeholders in communities.
- **Building Better Futures** – **WCVA**
  A toolkit to help communities, and the people who work with them, to plan better futures.
- **Approaches to community resilience** – **Social Care Wales**
  Gives evidence for planning and developing community resilience initiatives.

Primary care

What to focus on

Primary care clusters should:

- carry on building and developing working relationships with communities
- find out how community-led action has helped people, communities, and public services before and after Covid-19

- learn from each other and the strategic programme for primary care. For example, the Accelerated Cluster Development programme could help to make this happen quickly and consistently across Wales
- find what works at a local level when you use or develop health and social care models
- collect information about communities and use it to make primary care clusters, health boards' and regional partnership boards' plans better
- find evidence of local social and healthcare models and find what works.

Where can I find out more?

These resources may not be bilingual or accessible. We're not responsible for resources produced by other organisations.

- **The King's Fund**
  Charity working to improve health and care in England.
- **Primary Care One** – **NHS Wales**
  Toolkits and resources to developing primary care in Wales.
- **Health and social care programmes** – **Welsh Government**
  A summary of projects that have received funds to improve local health and social care services.

Key ingredients for success

What to focus on

- Understanding how much the community wants something
- The local context
- Meeting a community's needs
- Mapping assets
- Making time to build relationships

- Positive community mindset
- Supporting community leadership.

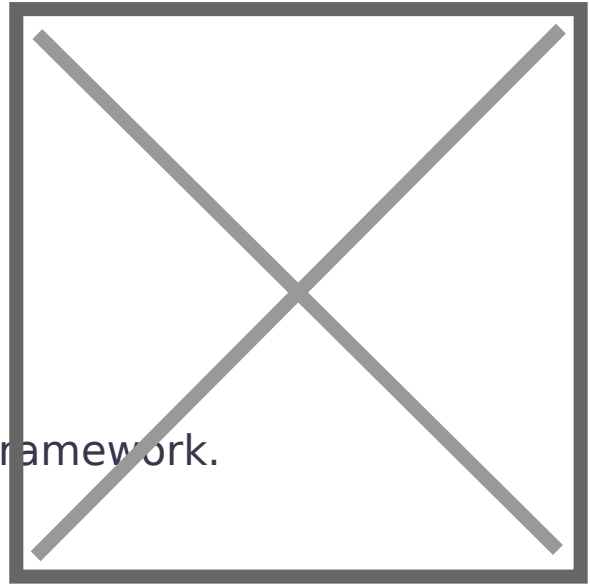Support decision-making with:

- toolkits
- guides
- helpful people.

Glossary

Explains terms you'll find in this framework.

First published: 22 August 2023

Last updated: 6 February 2025

Explains terms you'll find in this framework.

Action Research

A cycle of action, reflection and change.

Assets

A useful or valuable thing or person. Community assets can include:

- buildings and facilities
- people, and their skills, knowledge, social networks and relationships.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

Using the assets already in the community and bring individuals, associations, and institutions together to build a stronger community.

Co-design

Designing a project with users and stakeholders at every stage of the development. It means working with everyone who's interested.

Co-production

Sharing power and responsibility with the service users and working together in equal, two-way relationships. It makes it easier for people to get help when they need it, and to contribute to social change.

Commissioning

Understanding what's needed, available or missing, and developing new or existing services to fill any gaps.

County council

Provides services, including schools, social services, public transportation, highways, collecting rubbish and trading standards

County voluntary council (CVC)

Provides advice and information to local voluntary and community groups on volunteering, funding sources and other issues.

Deep-dive

A detailed investigation and analysis of a topic, reporting what and how things work.

Framework

A structure to show a way of working that can help get things done.

Foundational Economy

Essential services and products that keep us safe and help our everyday well-being.

Intervention

Actions that address problems or gaps, which can take place in a community.

Methodology

How a piece of research is carried out.

Multi-sector involvement

Active interest from local, middle, support and strategic organisations.

Objective

What you want to achieve.

Output

Something produced by what has taken place.

Policy

Ideas or plans used to make decisions.

Primary care clusters

Bring together all the local health and care services across a small area.

Procurement

Buying services or goods using a criteria.

Public service boards

Make it easier for all public services in each local authority area in Wales to work together.

Resourcefulness

How people can use knowledge, skills and relationships to help each other in positive and practical ways.

Resilience

How something or someone carries on when something goes wrong.

Regional partnership boards (RPB)

Bring together health boards, local authorities and the third sector to meet the care and support needs of people in their area.

Social Care Wales

Works with people who use care and support services and organisations to lead improvement in social care in Wales.

Stakeholder

A person, group, organisation or community that's interested in a subject and can either affect or be affected by the subject.

Statutory services

Services that the government pays for by law. For example:, NHS, social services, schools, Department for Work and Pensions.

Strategic planning

High level planning and decision-making. county councils, health boards and government are all organisations that use strategic planning.

Third sector

Charities, voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and cooperatives, housing associations. Usually non-governmental organisation.

Town council

Elected bodies which represent their communities and provide services for them.

Acknowledgements

The organisations who developed the framework.

First published: 22 August 2023

Last updated: 28 February 2025

The organisations who developed the framework.

Thank you to the following organisations for their support in the development of this resource:

Hico
Laura Sorvala Illustration
Together for Change
Medrwn Môn
Co-production network for Wales
Mental Health Foundation
Isle of Anglesey Country Council
ACE
RSPB Cymru
Nesta
Do-It!
Building Communities Trust
Invest Local
Gwenallt
MaesNi