Key findings of the Community Calculator

March 2020

The Community Calculator

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Executive summary

This report presents the results of Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey in 2018/2019, which enabled older people in Wales to assess how age friendly is their community. An age friendly community is suitable and empowering for people of all ages, with facilities that help people to enjoy health, wellbeing and quality of life.

The Community Calculator, based on our original 2010 version,[1] enabled survey respondents to allocate a score (out of 10) to each of 10 key elements in their community that enable older people to remain active and to enjoy a good quality of life. The higher the score, the closer is the community to being suitable for all ages; the lower the score, the more work needed to make it age friendly. The survey was distributed to older people across Wales between August 2018 and March 2019, and we received more than 1,000 responses.

Collated results from the Community Calculator present an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of communities across Wales when viewed through the eyes of older people. The table below presents the average score in Wales (out of 10) across all local authorities for each element of an age friendly community. The average score for each local authority across all 10 elements is included in Appendix 1.

Element of an age friendly community	*Average score in Wales* (out of 10)
Public toilets	**3.30**
Your voice	**4.54**
Pavements	**4.60**
Public seating and places to rest	**5.52**
Neighbourhood safety	**5.84**
Information and advice	**6.20**
Health and social services	**6.53**
Places to meet	**6.55**
Public transport	**6.62**
Local services	**6.88**

[1] Age Cymru (2010) Towards Common Ground: Key findings of the Community Calculator™.

- Public toilets were found to be the worst scoring element in local communities, with over half of the respondents scoring their community three or less out of 10. The lack of public toilet facilities was the key factor. Issues were also raised over the cleanliness and accessibility of facilities and limited opening hours.

- Older people told us that their voices were not heard locally, with more than a third of respondents scoring their community three or less out of 10. Some older people felt excluded from online consultations which they were unable to access. Some respondents felt that forums helped to enable people's voices to be heard.

- More than a third of respondents rated the pavements in their community a score of three or less. Uneven pavements and brick pavements that are slippery when wet were seen as hazardous. Pavements obstructed with parked cars, bins and street furniture restricted access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Problems with dog fouling and litter were also highlighted.

- 22.9% of respondents rated public seating and places to rest a score of three or less, with a general lack of public seating in communities being a key issue.

- A number of older people told us that they do not feel safe in their communities. Concerns were raised over a lack of police presence and fears of anti-social behaviour and crime. Speeding traffic and a lack of safe facilities for crossing roads were also highlighted, along with poor street lighting.

- Valuable modes of delivery for the provision of information and advice included newsletters, forums, libraries, community venues and voluntary organisations. Some older people raised concerns about not knowing where to find information, and being unable to access online information.

- A key issue raised in terms of health and social services was the difficulty in accessing GP appointments and healthcare services. Issues were raised over the quality of some social services, and that more support was needed for carers.

- Older people told us about the importance of voluntary and community groups in facilitating community activities. In many areas, however, places to meet and socialise are increasingly at risk and many have already closed.

- Key issues relating to public transport were problems with physical accessibility to public transport, cuts to bus services, and a lack of public transport in rural areas. There were also issues over the frequency and reliability of bus services and the lack of bus and community transport in the evenings.

- 63.4% of respondents rated local services in their community a score of seven or above. Some respondents felt they lived in well serviced areas and vibrant communities, with good access to essential services. For others, however, access to money was a pressing concern (loss of banks and post offices), along with the closure of GP surgeries, libraries and shops.

Respondents to the Community Calculator highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of communities across Wales, which provide a snapshot of the current status of communities in Wales and how prepared areas are to respond to current and future demographic changes.

The findings of the Community Calculator indicate that improvements are needed in communities across Wales in terms of community design and service provision to meet the needs of people of all ages.

The results of the current Community Calculator survey were compared with those of Age Cymru's previous Community Calculator survey in 2010. It would seem that little has changed; public toilets, your voice, pavements and public seating/places to rest still remain the four lowest performing elements in communities across Wales.

The report makes reference to the budget cutbacks faced by local authorities and public bodies, and advances made in the provision for older people, such as local authorities' Ageing Well plans.

'As an older person I am concerned regarding the issues which prevent or limit many older people being involved in the community. Un-coordinated transport services, very limited access to public toilets, anti-social behaviour and hazards for people with mobility issues add to the number who feel isolated and lonely'

(Community Calculator respondent)

Introduction

Being able to take part in community life, with good access to local services and facilities, is a lifeline for many older people. An age friendly community is one that has the capacity to support older people to enjoy the best possible quality of life. It includes facilities, services and amenities that are accessible and that accommodate the needs of older people, to help them enjoy health and wellbeing and to fully participate in society.

However, many older people come up against barriers that prevent them from taking part in community life. Poor neighbourhood design, an inaccessible built environment, and a lack of services can lead to older people being cut off within communities, and what should be an enjoyable stage of life can become a time of loneliness and isolation. If an older person cannot get out and about locally, they are at risk of poor health and a reduced quality of life overall.

In August 2018, Age Cymru launched the Community Calculator survey (based on our original 2010 version[1]) which enabled older people to assess how age friendly is their community. Survey respondents could allocate a score to each of 10 features in their community that enable them to remain active and to enjoy a good quality of life.

The Community Calculator aims to:

- provide a snapshot evaluation of each of 10 elements in communities across Wales
- present the issues raised by older people in their own words
- highlight examples of good practice
- increase awareness of the characteristics of age friendly communities across Wales.

The results and comments presented in this report are direct expressions of the experiences of older people across Wales.

[1] Age Cymru (2010) Towards Common Ground: Key findings of the Community Calculator™.

Survey methods

The Community Calculator survey was launched at the Age Cymru stand at the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff in August 2018. The survey, which was available in paper and electronic formats, was then distributed to older people's networks across Wales between August 2018 and March 2019. The survey was publicised on social media, and was sent to local authorities and the Age Alliance Wales partnership to circulate to their networks of older people. Although the Community Calculator was targeted at older people as the primary audience, people of all ages were welcome to participate.

Respondents were asked to rate each of 10 elements in their community a score out of 10, with 10 being the best score. Respondents also had the opportunity to add their own comments relating to any of the elements in their communities.

The 10 key elements of the Community Calculator were:

1. Local services
2. Public transport
3. Public seating and places to rest
4. Public toilets
5. Pavements
6. Neighbourhood safety
7. Places to meet
8. Information and advice
9. Health and social services
10. Your voice.

A copy of the Community Calculator questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

All comments quoted in this report are presented as written by Community Calculator respondents, and have been translated into English or Welsh, as appropriate.

In the following accounts, scores for local authorities with low response rates (namely less than 15 respondents per authority – see Appendix 1) are not cited as the lowest or highest local authority scores for any element.

Local services

How easy is it to access local amenities or services e.g. shops, post office, banks and libraries within a reasonable distance of your home?

Local services

Number of respondents (y-axis: 0 to 400)

Legend:
- Excellent 9-10
- Good 7-8
- Fair 4-6
- Poor 0-3
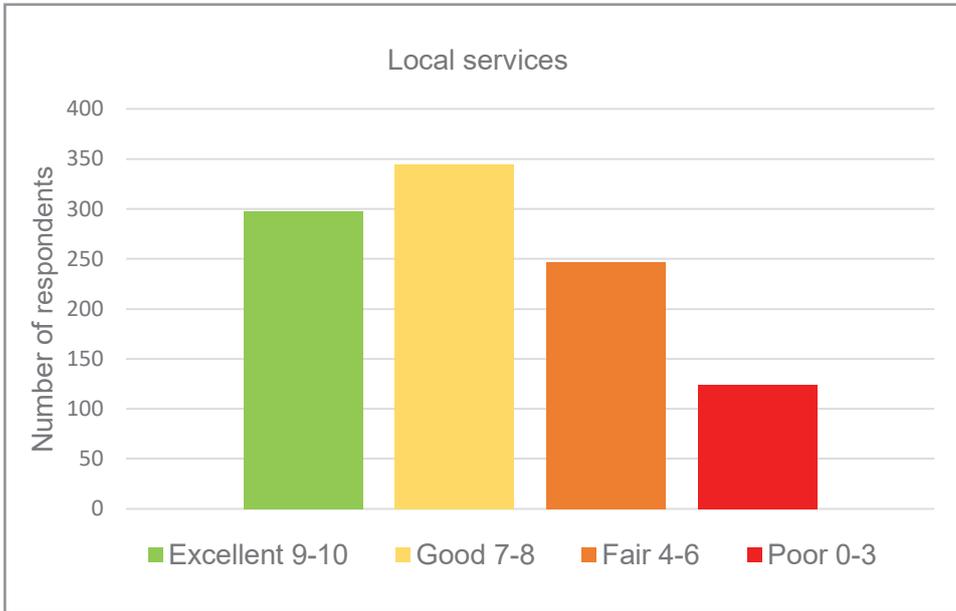
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 6.88
- Lowest local authority score: 5.48
- Highest local authority score: 7.90
- 63.4% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 12.2% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- I live in a well serviced area (Cardiff)
- Particularly the library service is vital as a source of information and help with internet communication (Neath Port Talbot)
- Like many areas, no bank within six miles. Good library, village/community hall and active District/Parish council (Bridgend)
- Treorchy is very vibrant, a very good shopping area, cafes etc, but traffic is horrendous (Rhondda Cynon Taf)

- Loss of only bank causing problems for older people (Blaenau Gwent)
- Due to lack of funding a lot of services have been cut (Wrexham)
- Services such as health care, banks and schools are being withdrawn from rural areas and at the same time public transport is decreasing (Conwy)

Key issues raised

- Examples of well serviced areas, with libraries, shops and community facilities
- Loss of banks; also closure of post offices, GP surgeries, libraries and shops
- Bus services being cut; need personal transport to access services. Lack of parking spaces, including blue badge parking, in communities in some areas
- Problems accessing essential services in rural areas.

Public transport

How good is public transport, including community transport in your area?

Public transport
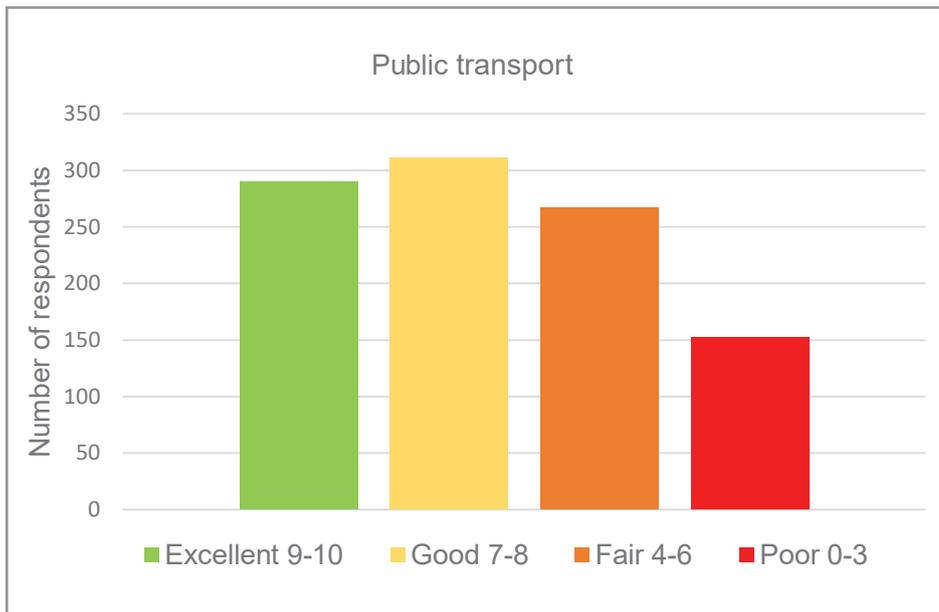
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 6.62
- Lowest local authority score: 5.33
- Highest local authority score: 7.92
- 58.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 14.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- The bus is rather like a mobile club with many people knowing each other (Cardiff)
- Nearest bus stop one mile away, which is fine to go to town but not when you return laden with shopping (Powys)
- I would love to join in activities and would be a useful member but I cannot get to places as there is no public transport readily available and I have limited mobility (Carmarthenshire)
- If you can't walk far – too bad. If you haven't a car – too bad (Merthyr Tydfil)

- Public transport a real problem for those without cars (Gwynedd)
- Although our environment locally is good, access to other areas is increasingly difficult because of lack of transport and difficulties of access to platforms at the station (Neath Port Talbot)
- No community transport in evening (isolates people) (Blaenau Gwent)
- It would be most helpful if there was a bus to the hospital once a day (Isle of Anglesey)

Key issues raised

- Problems with physical accessibility to public transport
- Cuts to bus services. Issues over frequency and reliability of bus services, and lack of bus and community transport services in the evenings
- Lack of public transport in rural areas. Need for more direct bus routes to health services.

Public seating and places to rest

How good is the availability and quality of public seating in your community, especially the main centre, bus stops and parks?

Public seating and places to rest

Chart: Number of respondents

- Excellent 9-10: ~108
- Good 7-8: ~298
- Fair 4-6: ~385
- Poor 0-3: ~235
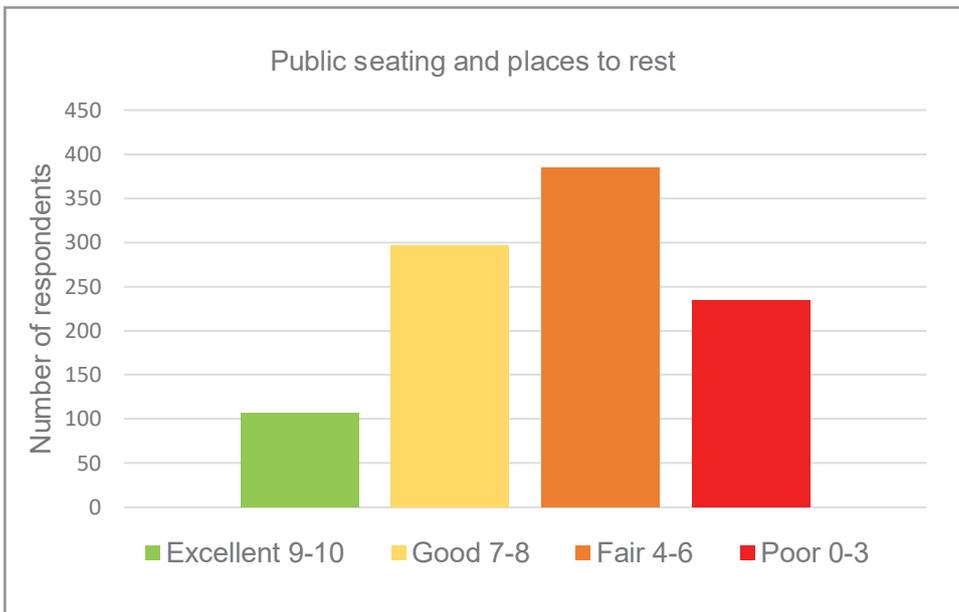
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 5.52
- Lowest local authority score: 4.62
- Highest local authority score: 6.27
- 39.5% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 22.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- There is no street furniture on the main street, the one bench that was available near the entrance to the park has been fenced off so is inaccessible for the community (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- The number 66 bus only runs after 9:30am, hourly. It's always late (no seat available to sit and wait) (Cardiff)
- No public toilets/seats/places to meet/ Post Office within walking distance (Neath Port Talbot)
- The seating in shops is very poor (Conwy)
- Most seats in the Dingle have been vandalised (Isle of Anglesey)

Key issues raised

- A general lack of seating in communities, including parks, bus stops and shops.

Public toilets

How good is the access to public toilets in your local area?

Public toilets
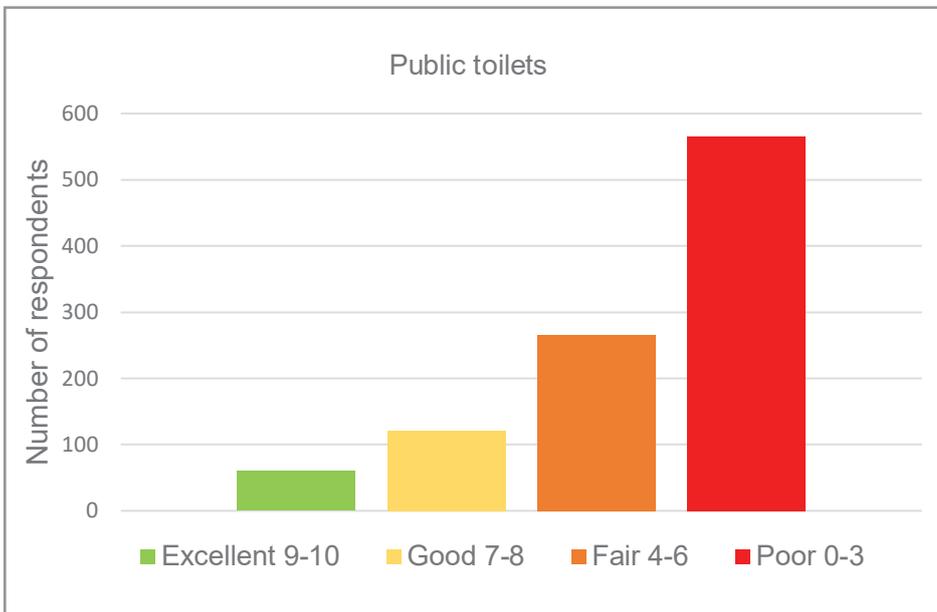
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 3.30
- Lowest local authority score: 1.33
- Highest local authority score: 5.26
- 17.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 55.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- There are no public toilets (Cardiff)
- Very limited access to public toilets (Swansea)
- No public toilets in Acton park or Acton area (Wrexham)
- Closure of public toilets is pushing people out of traditional towns and into shopping parks where every facility is available (Flintshire)
- Toilet facilities are very poor (Conwy)
- We desperately need toilets in the main bus station (Merthyr Tydfil)

- I think that the toilets should be kept cleaner for everyone, visitors etc. (Gwynedd)
- Lack of public toilets in Pontypridd, none open after 5:00pm (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- More toilets and signposted (Isle of Anglesey).

Key issues raised

- Lack of public toilet facilities
- Issues with accessibility and cleanliness
- Limited opening hours, lack of signage in some areas.

Pavements

How well kept are the pavements in your community? Are they free from potholes and barriers? Do they enable wheelchairs and mobility scooters to move freely?

Pavements

Y-axis: Number of respondents (0 to 450)

- Excellent 9-10
- Good 7-8
- Fair 4-6
- Poor 0-3
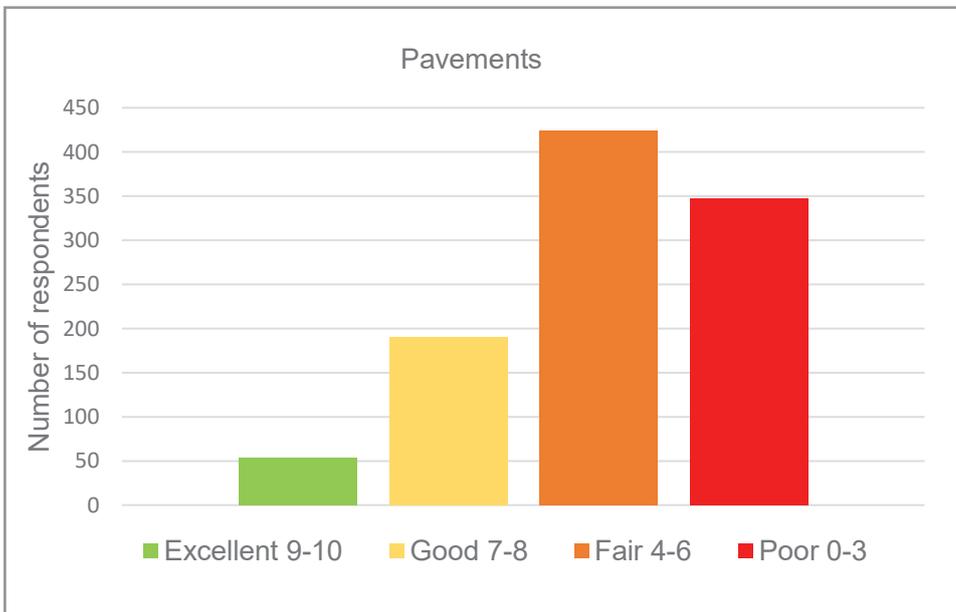
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 4.60
- Lowest local authority score: 3.79
- Highest local authority score: 6.24
- 24.1% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 34.2% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- Town centre pavements dangerous, not level, very hazardous! (Blaenau Gwent)
- Pavements paved with bricks in winter are very slippery (Isle of Anglesey)
- Cars parked on the pavement present difficulty in passing with prams or wheelchairs – in fact it can be impossible (Torfaen)
- Quite a few pavements in my area are blocked by cars, making it difficult for wheelchair users and mobility scooters (Swansea)

- I use a walker and can't get pass the bins left outside for the rubbish (Blaenau Gwent)
- Our streets are littered with furniture and the council doesn't have a policy for this issue (Ceredigion)
- Dog/animal excrement not being picked up by owners on pavements and in parks (Caerphilly)
- Dumping rubbish in street and dogs still fouling (Rhondda Cynon Taf)

Key issues raised

- Poorly maintained pavements leading to a risk and fear of falling
- Car parking on pavements obstructing access for wheelchairs, prams and mobility scooters
- Pavements obstructed by bins, street furniture and overgrown hedges
- Issues with cleanliness notably dog fouling and litter.

Neighbourhood safety

How safe are the streets within your community (police presence, the lighting and level of traffic)?

Neighbourhood safety

Bar chart showing Number of respondents (y-axis 0 to 450):
- Excellent 9-10 (green): approx 113
- Good 7-8 (yellow): approx 348
- Fair 4-6 (orange): approx 382
- Poor 0-3 (red): approx 178

- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 5.84
- Lowest local authority score: 4.46
- Highest local authority score: 7.29
- 45.2% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 17.4% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- It is good to see that cameras will return to Aberystwyth (Ceredigion)
- I would like to see more police in our area. Where are the support officers that we used to see and talk to? (Monmouthshire)
- No community police presence (Denbighshire)
- Anti-social behaviour and violent crime has increased in the area (Cardiff)
- Speeding traffic, no crossing (Conwy)
- Traffic too busy at roundabouts. Some people will not give you time to cross (Gwynedd)
- The three street lights in my immediate vicinity are not working and have not for over 18 months which renders my area totally dark at night (Flintshire)
- I only feel safe in the evening because I drive. If I did not have my own transport I would be housebound (Merthyr Tydfil)

Key issues raised

- Lack of police presence in communities
- Concerns over anti-social behaviour and crime
- Speeding traffic and lack of facilities to cross roads safely
- Lack of, or dimly-lit, street lighting.

Places to meet

How good are the places to meet, spend time, exercise and learn, such as a park, leisure centre, community centre or village hall?

Places to meet

Number of respondents (y-axis: 0 to 400)

Legend:
- Excellent 9-10
- Good 7-8
- Fair 4-6
- Poor 0-3
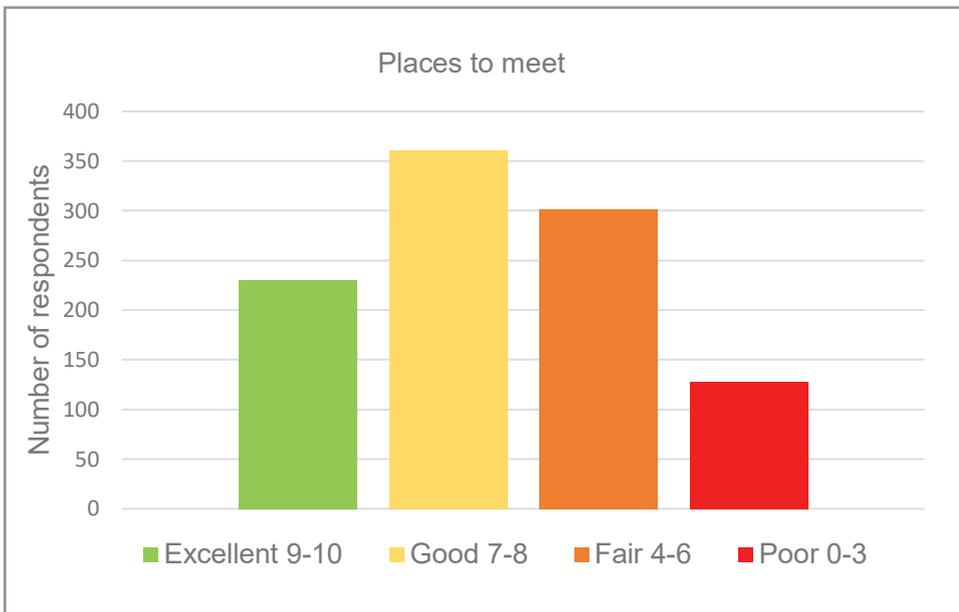
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 6.55
- Lowest local authority score: 5.15
- Highest local authority score: 7.34
- 57.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 12.5% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- We have a vibrant community with people using the village hall and playing fields and the Youth Club Centre for a range of activities (Caerwent, Monmouthshire)
- Age Concern Torfaen and 50+ forum are very active in the area in which I live (Cwmbran) (Torfaen)
- Tai Chi Penarth great 10/10 (Vale of Glamorgan)
- The existence of a recently started (2013) U3A has made a very big difference to the sociability of older people in the community (Conwy)

- We have an OAP hall but it's in a bad repair and should this have to close we would have nothing in the village (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- Nothing in the area for old age any more. No OAP group etc. We are the forgotten generation (Carmarthenshire)
- The day centre was closed and the services cut and moved to a smaller building (Ceredigion)
- Elderly people should be informed of any help services such as mental health day centres (Gwynedd)
- Needs more publicity for events/clubs/classes for over 50s (Cardiff)

Key issues raised

- Importance of voluntary and community groups facilitating community activities
- Lack of places and facilities for older people to meet
- More publicity needed to advertise activities.

Information and advice

How easy is it to access information and advice in your community, for example from the council, library or voluntary organisation?

Information and advice

- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 6.20
- Lowest local authority score: 5.24
- Highest local authority score: 7.09
- 53.9% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 15.7% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- Get most information from forums or sometimes the scheme manager (Conwy)
- They are very kind in the library and help with information (Isle of Anglesey)
- We have an excellent [Councillor] who keeps us informed (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- Thanks to Age Cymru for helping my relative to access benefits (Gwynedd)

- No central noticeboard for community information (Vale of Glamorgan)
- Don't know where to go (Merthyr Tydfil)
- Very little to none in the way of information down to grass roots level (Flintshire)

Key issues raised

- Valuable modes of delivery of information and advice, including newsletters, community venues, libraries, forums and voluntary organisations
- People not knowing where to find information.

Health and social services

How good are the health and social services in your area?

Health and social services

- Excellent 9-10
- Good 7-8
- Fair 4-6
- Poor 0-3
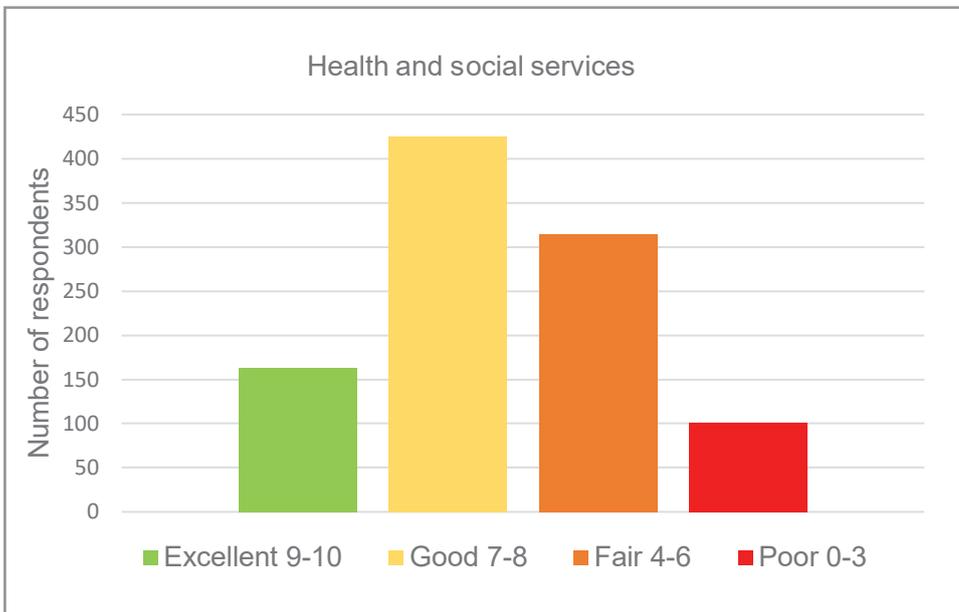
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 6.53
- Lowest local authority score: 5.29
- Highest local authority score: 7.67
- 58.6% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 10.1% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below

Selected comments

- As an 83 year old I feel well cared for (Gwynedd)
- I think the area is well serviced however it lacks on health and social services needs (Conwy)
- My doctor is great, social services leave a lot to be desired (Isle of Anglesey)
- Quite often have to wait three weeks for an appointment at the local GP surgery (Rhondda Cynon Taf)
- Availability of seeing a doctor at the local surgery is very limited (Neath Port Talbot)
- It takes a long time to get a GP appointment (Flintshire)

- Access to doctor/healthcare a great worry and things seem to be getting worse (Carmarthenshire)
- Hospital wards closed, A&E gone from local hospital (Denbighshire)
- There is no integrated NHS and social services in Machynlleth (Powys)
- Looked after mum-in-law with Alzheimers, who was 94. Found it difficult to get any help from local council or services. Did get carers but very limited help, no other support groups, my husband and myself were mainly her only help (Newport)

Key issues raised

- Difficulties accessing GP appointments and healthcare services
- More support needed for carers
- Issues over the quality of some social services.

Your voice

How well do you think your opinion is taken on board in community decisions and plans?

Your voice

Chart showing "Number of respondents" (y-axis, 0 to 400):
- Excellent 9-10 (green): ~53
- Good 7-8 (yellow): ~210
- Fair 4-6 (orange): ~375
- Poor 0-3 (red): ~330
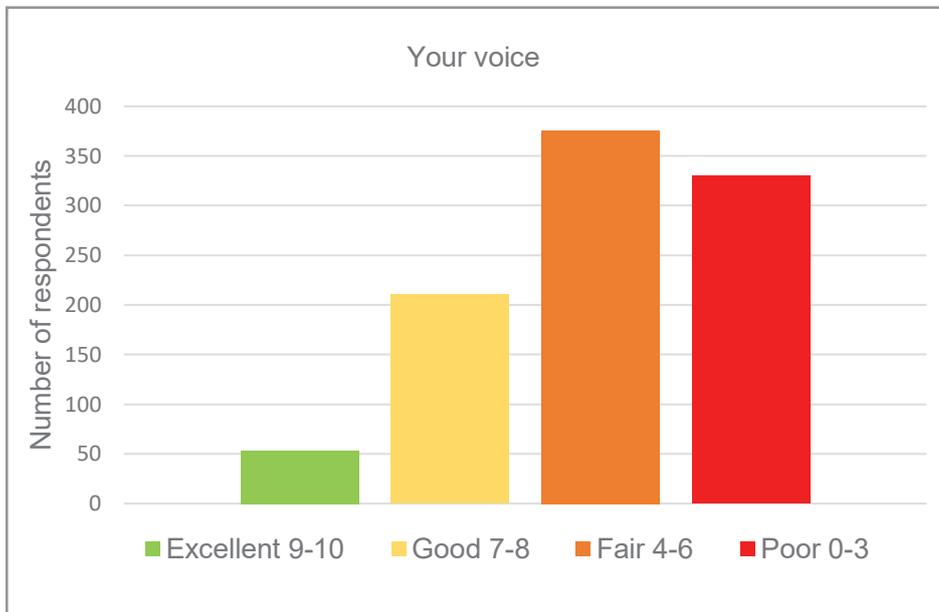
- Average score out of 10 across Wales: 4.54
- Lowest local authority score: 3.36
- Highest local authority score: 6.36
- 27.2% of respondents gave their area a rating of seven or above
- 34.0% of respondents gave their area a rating of three or below.

Selected comments

- Opinions are asked for but rarely acted upon (Monmouthshire)
- We are trying to help ourselves, the community council don't encourage us to attend meetings and councillors NEVER ask our opinion (Carmarthenshire)
- There are many older people who do not use social media and therefore are more likely to be excluded from being made aware and having their ability to have their voices heard (Cardiff)
- Meetings are being held but many of the people in the village do not have access to the internet and therefore have no means of finding out what, if anything is going on in [the village] (Powys)
- I will attend the Forum, where people voice their opinions (Isle of Anglesey)
- Used to have Forum meetings – no longer (Denbighshire)

Key issues raised

- Issues over communication and meaningful engagement between local authorities and individuals
- Local authorities and public bodies often using online communications and social media which many older people cannot access
- Some respondents felt that older people's forums were important to voice views.

Discussion and calls for action

Wales should aspire to be an age friendly nation, in which all older people have the same respect, rights and access to services as the rest of the population. This is vital at a time when the number of older people is growing and we are, on average, expected to live longer.

The features that make a place desirable to live in can change as people get older. It's essential that the built environment around us is designed and suitable for all ages and that essential services are accessible.

The results of the Community Calculator have provided a snapshot evaluation of how age friendly communities are across Wales. Examples of good practice have been highlighted, but also the barriers faced by older people that can prevent them from being involved in their communities, and the impact that poor neighbourhood design or a lack of services can have on older people's lives.

The following calls for action are based upon these first-hand accounts of what older people have told us. The changes we identify need to be sustainable and supported by government at all levels.

Local services

Being able to take part in community life, with good access to local services and facilities, is a lifeline for many older people. It's essential that older people can access money, health care and food shops within a reasonable distance of their home.

63.4%. of respondents rated local services in their community a score of seven or above, and respondents highlighted examples of well serviced areas and vibrant communities, with good access to essential services and community facilities.

For others, however, access to money was a concern, notably the loss of banks and post offices, along with the closure of GP surgeries, libraries and shops. The loss of local services is exacerbated by cuts to bus services, especially in rural areas, increasing the need for people to use personal or private transport to access services. A lack of car parking spaces, including blue badge parking, was raised as an issue in communities in some areas.

Age Cymru is calling for:
• local authorities to ensure that essential services are accessible by public transport.

Public transport

Public and community transport are vitally important in helping older people to maintain independence and wellbeing. Such transport networks can ensure communities are well connected and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to older people. Without these, there is an increased risk that isolation and loneliness will impact upon people's wellbeing.

Issues that older people raised relating to public transport included problems with physical accessibility to public transport. Walking distances to bus stops was a barrier for people with limited mobility, and the absence of shelter and seating at some bus stops was also raised. Difficulty of access at a railway station was also raised. Cuts to bus services and a lack of public transport in rural areas was a key issue. There were also concerns over the frequency and reliability of bus services, and the lack of public and community transport in the evenings, which was a barrier for people that wanted to take part in social activities.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- Welsh Government to work with local authorities and community and public transport providers to support a sustainable, integrated and accessible transport network across Wales, to ensure that older people remain connected to communities and services
- local authorities to consult with older people in the preparation of their transport plans, and in decisions about the location and destinations of bus services
- Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards to develop co-ordinated transport links to enable older people to access vital health services
- local authorities to provide adequate seating, shelter and accessible information at bus stops.

Public seating and places to rest

Without adequate seating and places to rest, accessing community areas and facilities can present a substantial challenge for older people. For some older people, public seating can be the difference between living a full life and feeling cut-off and isolated. Public seating is an essential feature for any area that seeks to be age friendly.

22.9% of respondents rated public seating and places to rest a score of three or less, with a general lack of public seating in communities being the main issue. Going shopping, waiting at the bus stop or taking a walk in the park can become impossible for older people if there is nowhere to sit down.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- local authorities to ensure that older people's needs are taken into account in providing adequate seating in communities, including shopping centres, parks, bus stops and other public places
- local authorities to ensure that public seating is well maintained and promptly repaired when reported as being damaged or vandalised.

Public toilets

Public toilets are essential to making communities age friendly and a lack of these facilities can have a debilitating effect on older people, preventing them from being involved in communities, and increasing loneliness and isolation. Sufficient public toilet provision in communities is vital to enable older people to maintain their dignity and participate in community life.

Public toilets were found to be the worst scoring element in local communities. More than half of the respondents scored their community three or less. The average score across all local authorities in Wales was 3.30, with the lowest local authority average score of 1.33 out of 10. A lack of public toilet facilities was the key factor. There were also issues over the cleanliness and accessibility of facilities, and also limited opening hours, especially in the evenings, and a lack of signage in some areas.

Age Cymru is calling for:
- a statutory duty on local authorities in Wales to provide sufficient numbers of accessible public toilets across Wales
- the implementation of local authorities' local toilet strategies to be robustly monitored and evaluated to ensure the sufficient provision of accessible toilets in communities
- Welsh Government to monitor levels of public funding allocated to community toilet schemes to ensure stability of provision and maintenance of these important services
- the community toilet scheme to be better publicised and promoted if it's to form part of a co-ordinated sustainable solution to toilet provision.

Pavements

A lack of safe pavements can place serious restrictions on the freedom of movement and mobility of older people. Pavements that are in a state of disrepair or are obstructed can compromise the safety and independence of older people and increase the risk of falls.

More than a third of respondents scored the pavements in their community three or less out of 10. Respondents raised concerns over the poor condition of pavements such as unevenness and loose slabs, and told us that pavements paved with bricks are very slippery in wet weather and in the winter.

Concerns were also raised about obstructions on pavements, especially parked cars, and also bins, street furniture and overgrown hedges, which can restrict access for people with walkers, wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Issues over the lack of cleanliness of pavements, notably dog fouling and litter, were also highlighted.

Age Cymru is calling for:
- local authorities to ensure that all pavements are well maintained and promptly repaired
- key stakeholders, including local authorities and traffic wardens, to increase their efforts to ensure that pavements are free of obstruction.

Neighbourhood safety

Fear of crime can lead to older people becoming isolated and afraid to leave their home, particularly after dark. A number of respondents indicated that they do not feel safe in their communities, with 17.4% of respondents scoring their community a rating of three or below in terms of neighbourhood safety. Concerns were raised over a lack of police presence in communities, and fears of anti-social behaviour and crime. Speeding traffic and a lack of safe facilities for pedestrians to cross roads were also highlighted, along with poor street lighting.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- local authorities to provide good lighting and well-kept clean streets to help people feel more confident about getting out and about
- local authorities to ensure that streets are safe and accessible, with increased use of 20mph zones and traffic calming measures in residential areas. Pedestrian crossings must be sufficient in number and allow people enough time to cross safely.

Places to meet

Increasing opportunities for older people to take part locally can do much to boost independence, combat social isolation and loneliness and promote health and wellbeing. Loneliness and isolation are a daily reality for many older people, and a vital aspect of creating an age friendly Wales is to enable older people to play an active role in society.

Access to meeting places and social activities is important for older people. Examples of good practice were highlighted in terms of organisations and community facilities hosting social activities and clubs. In many areas, however, places to meet and socialise are increasingly at risk and many have already closed. We believe a flexible approach is required to provide places to meet in communities, by building partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors, and innovative multi-uses of existing council facilities.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- local authorities to provide support to voluntary and community groups to enable older people to facilitate social, educational and health-related activities in communities. Local authorities to consider innovative ways to support such activities by encouraging the use of council facilities.

Information and advice

Good quality information and advice is essential to help older people make informed decisions, plan ahead, access services and entitlements and contribute to society.

Respondents told us about valuable means of accessing information and advice, including newsletters, forums, libraries, community venues and voluntary organisations. Some people raised concerns about not knowing where to find information, and being unable to access online information.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- Welsh Government, local authorities and the NHS to work together with voluntary service providers to raise awareness of available services and develop opportunities to deliver information and advice in locations where older people live their daily lives

- service providers to ensure that information is accessible and provided in a range of formats and through a range of channels, including both online and offline

- local authorities to ensure the adequate provision of public library services, including their vital role in supporting older people to acquire digital skills.

Health and social services

Older people are the main adult users of most health and care services, and should have access to services that maintain and promote their physical, spiritual and mental health, treat illness and support those living with chronic conditions. Older people should have access to social care services to help those who have support needs to live well and remain independent for as long as possible.

The main issues raised by respondents in terms of health and social services were the difficulties in accessing GP appointments and healthcare services. Issues were also raised over the quality of some social services, and that more support was needed for carers.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- NHS Wales to ensure that all patients have timely access to a GP when needed. GP surgeries should look to simplify their appointments booking systems where possible

- surgeries to be accessible and cater for everyone, including those with sensory impairments

- local authorities to ensure that individuals and carers who appear to have a need for care to be quickly, properly and accurately assessed, in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Your voice

In order for communities to adequately serve older people their views and experiences must be considered in the design and delivery of facilities and services.

It's essential that older people feel empowered to speak up about their views through meaningful consultation and engagement.

Many older people felt that their voices were not being heard locally, with more than a third of respondents scoring their community three or less regarding 'your voice' when asked 'How well do you think your opinion is taken on board in community decisions and plans?'. Concerns were raised regarding the 'over-reliance' of social media and electronic services as means of communication, which many older people are unable to access. As more information and consultations are made available mainly or exclusively online, there are real risks of excluding many older people. Some respondents highlighted the importance of older people's forums as a means of enabling older people's voices to be heard.

Age Cymru is calling for:

- local authorities to build on the best practice of 50+ forums to support and engage with older people through local consultation
- public service providers to ensure that consultations are available in various formats, and that the provision of online information is not to the detriment of the provision of information in other formats. Online services need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible.

Comparison of results with Age Cymru's Community Calculator survey in 2010

When we compare the results of the current Community Calculator survey with those of Age Cymru's previous Community Calculator survey in 2010, it would seem that little has changed; public toilets, 'your voice', pavements and public seating/places to rest still remain the four lowest performing elements in communities across Wales.

Results of Age Cymru's Community Calculator surveys in 2018/19 and 2010.

Element of an age friendly community	Average score in Wales (2018/19) (out of 10)	Average score in Wales (2010) (out of 10)
Public toilets	3.30	3.32
Your voice	4.54	4.59
Pavements	4.60	4.89
Public seating and places to rest	5.52	4.66
Neighbourhood safety	5.84	5.51
Information and advice	6.20	6.33
Health and social services	6.53	N/A
Places to meet	6.55	6.34
Public transport	6.62	6.87
Local services/amenities	6.88	7.09

The ongoing lack of public toilets and public seating/places to rest, and hazardous pavements in our communities, as highlighted in both surveys, all constitute physical barriers in the built environment in our communities. There are already high levels of loneliness and social isolation amongst older people in Wales and an inaccessible built environment that deters people from taking part in community life can contribute to this.

With local authorities undergoing budget cutbacks, many of the essential services and facilities that older people rely on are under threat. The cumulative effect of cuts to essential facilities and amenities can incrementally erode the infrastructure of the built environment and take the heart out of our communities.

Conclusion

Respondents to the Community Calculator have identified the strengths and weaknesses of communities across Wales, and provide a snapshot of the current status of communities and how prepared areas are to respond to current and future demographic changes.

This report gives voice to older people's concerns that there are still significant problems that need to be addressed across all 10 elements of the Community Calculator. Improvements are needed to community design and service provision to ensure that all our communities are suitable for people of all ages, and to enable everyone within them to enjoy health, wellbeing and a good quality of life.

We acknowledge the significant financial challenges facing local authorities and public bodies in Wales. However, we believe that maintaining facilities to provide an inclusive age friendly built environment, and protecting essential amenities and services to enable the participation of older people in communities, could bring savings in terms of limiting demands and reliance on health and social care budgets, and could help to alleviate loneliness and isolation among older people.

The Community Calculator highlights areas of good practice, for example: the valuable modes of delivery for information and advice including newsletters, community venues, libraries, forums and voluntary organisations; the important role of voluntary and community groups in facilitating community activities; and the value some older people place on forums to have their voices heard.

There have been advances in provision for older people in Wales. Local authorities in Wales have signed up to the Dublin Declaration, showing commitment at local levels to creating communities that are inclusive and supportive for all,[1] and have produced local Ageing Well plans.[2] The Welsh Government's new Strategy for an Ageing Society, building on Phase 3 of the Strategy for Older People, is currently being developed.

Within each Community Calculator element there are a number of agencies with responsibility and influence over improving the design of services within communities. These include local authorities, transport providers, Welsh Government, Local Health Boards, police and community safety partnerships, and community councils.

We hope this report will encourage various agencies to share good practice and find new ways to support people through collaboration so that older people in Wales can live fulfilled lives.

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[1] Ageing Well in Wales. Age-Friendly Communities. http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/themes/age-friendly-communities [Accessed 4/12/2019].

[2] Ageing Well in Wales. Local Ageing Well Plans. https://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/localplans [Accessed 23/1/2020].

Appendix 1

Table of average scores for all local authorities

Table of the average local authority scores for all 10 elements of the Community Calculator. The lowest performing elements identified as areas in need of immediate action are shown, together with the best performing elements.

Local authority area	Average score for all 10 elements	Areas identified for immediate action	Best performing elements
Blaenau Gwent	57.08	Pavements, Your voice, Neighbourhood safety	Public transport, Health and social services, Local services
Bridgend	58.34	Public toilets, Pavements, Your voice	Health and social services, Neighbourhood safety, Public transport / Information and advice
Caerphilly	56.16	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Local services, Public transport, Health and social services
Cardiff	61.37	Public toilets, Pavements, Your voice	Local services, Public transport, Health and social services
Carmarthenshire	57.61	Public toilets, Pavements, Public seating	Local services, Health and social services / Your voice
Ceredigion	57.99	Public toilets, Your voice, Public seating	Neighbourhood safety, Local services / Places to meet
Conwy	53.81	Public toilets, Pavements, Your voice	Local services, Places to meet, Information and advice / Health and social services
Denbighshire	59.23*	Your voice, Pavements, Public toilets	Places to meet, Health and social services, Public transport
Flintshire	46.62	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Places to meet, Information and advice, Local services
Gwynedd	58.41	Public toilets, Pavements, Your voice	Places to meet, Health and social services, Local services
Isle of Anglesey	53.30	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Health and social services, Places to meet, Local services
Merthyr Tydfil	51.66	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Local services, Public transport, Places to meet

Local authority area	Average score for all 10 elements	Areas identified for immediate action	Best performing elements
Monmouthshire	60.66	Pavements, Your voice, Public toilets	Local services, Places to meet, Health and social services
Neath Port Talbot	50.74	Your voice, Public toilets, Pavements	Local services, Places to meet, Health and social services
Newport	61.21	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Public transport, Local services, Health and social services
Pembrokeshire	56.34*	Public toilets, Pavements, Public seating	Neighbourhood safety, Places to meet, Information and advice
Powys	42.48*	Public transport, Public toilets, Your voice	Places to meet, Health and social services, Neighbourhood safety / Information and advice
Rhondda Cynon Taf	53.04	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Public transport, Local services, Health and social services
Swansea	60.33	Public toilets, Pavements, Your voice	Local services, Public transport, Places to meet
Torfaen	59.45	Your voice, Public toilets, Neighbourhood safety / Information and advice	Local services / Public transport, Health and social services
Vale of Glamorgan	61.64	Public toilets, Pavements, Your voice	Local services, Places to meet, Health and social services
Wrexham	55.62	Public toilets, Your voice, Pavements	Local services, Places to meet, Information and advice

Key

* These indexed scores indicate areas of low response rates, namely less than 15 respondents.

The Community Calculator questionnaire

The Community Calculator

Give your community a rating out of 10 for each factor listed below. One being the worst possible score and 10 being the best.

1. **Local Services**
   How easy is it to access local amenities or services e.g. shops, post office, banks and libraries within a reasonable distance of your home?

   /10

2. **Public Transport**
   How good is public transport, including community transport in your area?

   /10

3. **Public seating and places to rest**
   How good is the availability and quality of public seating in your community, especially the main centre, bus stops and parks?

   /10

4. **Public toilets**
   How good is the access to public toilets in your local areas?

   /10

5. **Pavements**
   How well kept are the pavements in your community? Are they free from potholes and barriers? Do they enable wheelchairs and mobility scooters to move freely?

   /10

6. **Neighbourhood safety**
   How safe are the streets within your community (police presence, the lighting and level of traffic)?

   /10

7. **Place to meet**
   How good are the place to meet, spend time, exercise and learn, such as a park, leisure centre, community centre or village hall?

   /10

8. **Information and advice**
   How easy is it to access information and advice in your community, for example from the council, library or voluntary organisation?

   /10

9. **Health and social services**
   How good are the health and social services in your area?

   /10

10. **Your voice**
    How well do you think your options is taken on board in community decisions and plans?

    /10

Do you have any further comments you'd like to make?