



Three things the public sector can do

1. **Cymunedoli.**
2. **Direct financial acknowledgement of the work that communities and community organisations do.**
3. **Respect and recognition for the impact of that work.**

How

– examples in italics provided by partners

Cymunedoli

Currently Welsh Government economic development support is heavily weighted to supporting large private corporations and companies which largely extract income and wealth from our communities. In contrast, Welsh Government economic development support should be rebalanced to support community owned enterprises which retain and multiply income and wealth locally.

Welsh Government

1. Re-scope the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to include a people and communities focus as well as services, obliging public services to work with communities (both *geographical or communities of interest/need*) in planning, delivering and evaluating the impact of their services and facilities and those developed within the community itself. This is a necessary Monitor how this involvement operates and what long term, sustainable impact it has.
2. Provide guidance to public bodies on effective models for working with communities and community organisations based on existing experience (i.e. demonstrating what public bodies do best, what charities/third sector do best, what community organisations do best and what people do best themselves) and how these need to be resourced.
3. Introduce measures to monitor the funding and resources that local authorities and health boards provide to communities and community organisations and its long term, sustainable impact.

A barrier to building powerful communities is that funding will always be aimed to those who have least and the furthest journey to go to make sustainable change. In no other field would there be an investment strategy like this, penalising success, but in community work the most successful and effective groups are often excluded from funding programmes. Invest in models that are working, as you would in businesses that are successful, and then we can all learn from their impact.

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Developing a model for working with communities

***Listen** to understand priority neighbourhood and community outcomes, strengths, challenges*

***Support and invest** in local strengths, relationships and capabilities to co-produce neighbourhood / community based action.*

***Build** dynamic and relational cycles of listening, planning, doing and learning together at hyper local and community of interest level (this way both citizens and services will get progressively better at co-producing meaningful social outcomes and working together effectively with people and communities in the lead)*

Local Authorities

1. Work with local people to continually update on community led activities in the county and identify strengths and gaps. **Support the strengths** and build an effective relationship with those that have them, working with them to identify ways that the local authority could support communities to tackle the gaps.
2. Don't do things that communities are better placed to do themselves; and don't ask communities to do things that a local authority is better placed to do; clearly identify the difference between these things.
3. Invest in communities directly when feasible (i.e. not via an intermediary or a 'referral' mechanism) and promote sustainable local skills and experience for long term community development.

Amidst the Covid pandemic, the third sector proved to be incredibly agile in our efforts to reach and assist communities. Unfortunately, the lack of recognition hindered any significant change and I strongly believe that there should have been some positive changes post covid. In many cases within the third sector, community and charity entities are bridging the gaps left by statutory bodies. This has sadly become a norm, food banks being a prime example. When the benefits system and policies fail society, food banks step in to help, and we have come to accept this as normal instead of addressing the underlying problems with policies that should be supporting families and individuals. The problem is not that community and charity organisations are having to pick up the pieces, but rather that there is a feeling that their excellent work goes unrecognized and uncompensated and the statutory bodies are still failing to reach areas.

Collaboration doesn't cost a penny and ensures the resources available from all sectors have the maximum impact. But you cannot collaborate if the work you do is not recognised or valued.

Health Authorities

1. Evidence the ways in which you recognise the importance of community wellbeing and work in partnership with communities to embed strategies to ensure wellbeing is at the heart of all health promotion work.
2. Promote a realistic understanding amongst health services about what charities/ the third sector, community organisations and social/sports groups can offer and what resources they need to be able to offer this.
3. View referrals to charities/ community as ‘treatment’ : so always follow up when referring patients/ service users to third sector and community groups to identify
 - a) whether the referral happened, and if not why not;
 - b) what difference the referral made;
 - c) how health services could support communities to make the referral more effective.

Financial recognition

Review the approach to social prescribing and tracking the resources used for this. So many third sector schemes are running without any public money and yet there seems to be an expectation from the public sector that charities and others will play a central role in tackling underlying health issues. This is not an argument for a contractual dependency, which can strip away autonomy and local responsiveness, but for some direct financial acknowledgement of the costs of providing quality support in community settings.



Community organisations and charities

1. Consider when making staff appointments the value that local people bring – networks and contacts, commitment, understanding of context and sustainable impact and include that in the criteria for employment. Where possible invest the resource (wages etc..) in the community itself.
2. Do not make assumptions about communities and people who live in them but keep listening, even if you have worked in a community for decades. Bear in mind that delivering projects to a community is not the same as being part of it or listening to it.
3. Always look at short term funding in the context of long term impact. Even if work is only funded for a short time consider what change can be achieved that will outlast the funding.