



Sefydliad Ymchwil Cymdeithasol  
ac Economaidd a Data Cymru  
Wales Institute of Social and  
Economic Research and Data



# Working with Communities

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# Why work with communities?

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- Local community-based processes and experiences are important to social and environmental determinants of health and to the effective delivery of health and social care
  - Access to services and spaces for social interaction in communities
  - Transport links and mobility patterns
  - Access to green space
  - Resources in the community to grow and buy nutritious food
  - Age profile of the community and turnover of population
  - Digital infrastructure and digital literacy
  - Local environmental hazards, e.g. air pollution
  - Pressures on mental health from economic uncertainty, crime, social isolation etc
  - Informal networks of care in the community
- Health and social care are part of community development. Good health and wellbeing strengthens community resilience

# Communities under pressure

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- Challenges of healthcare provision & recruitment (e.g. GPs, dentists)
- Loss of public and commercial services (e.g. schools, libraries, banks, high street shops)
- Scaling back of public transport
- Housing affordability and availability
- Sale of green space
- Economic restructuring away from traditional industries
- Cost of living hitting community and social activities
- Youth out-migration and demographic ageing
- Weakening of community ties and growing risks of polarization in communities

# Every community is different

Research in and with communities is required to understand local circumstances and priorities

# Researching communities

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- **Research on communities:** research about communities designed from the outside and conducted by outside researchers, with community members solely as subjects
- **Collaboration:** research with the support of local partners, who may help with promoting and facilitating research, but not directly involved in design or delivery
- **Co-design and co-production:** working with local organisations and people to design research that responds to their interests and priorities, and which involves local people in carrying out the research alongside outside researchers
- **Community-led research / community science:** supporting communities to design their own research in response to local needs and priorities and to carry out data collection and analysis
- **Living labs:** longer-term frameworks for co-production between communities and outside researchers, focused on locally-defined problems and usually involving innovation and feedback loops for evaluation and adjustment

# Researching communities

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These approaches can use a range of different methods:

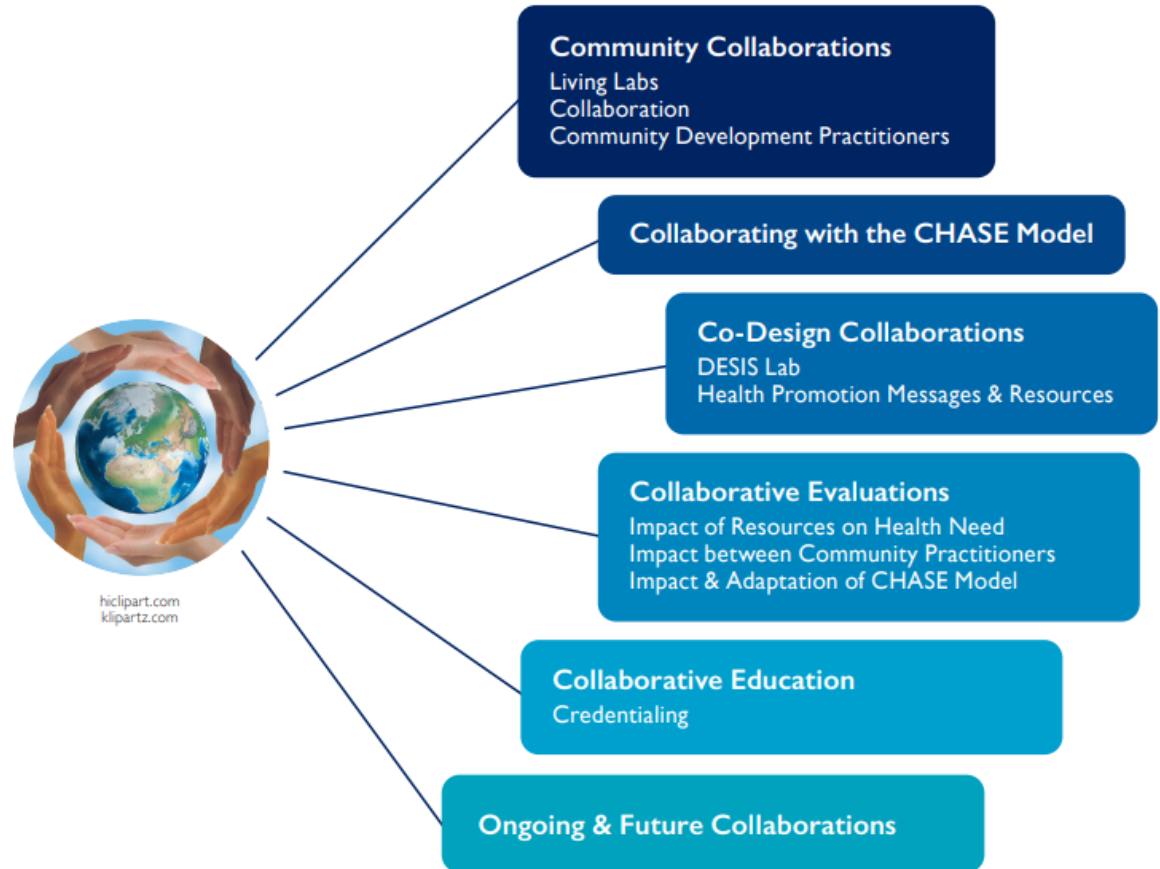
- Surveys (online, street, door-to-door)
- Interviews (including peer-to-peer interviews by residents)
- Focus groups
- Facilitated workshops
- Participatory GIS
- Stakeholder mapping
- Storyboarding
- Automated monitoring (e.g air quality)
- Work with archives and local history resources
- Participatory video and photography

# Example: CHASE

## Community Health Assessment Sustainability Education model



Designed by Jean Ross  
in the School of  
Nursing at Otago  
Polytechnic, New  
Zealand



[Jean Ross, Samuel Mann & Keith Whiddon \(2020\) Collaboration enhances community wellbeing: a community development research framework, \*Scope \(Health and Wellbeing\)\*, volume 5, pages 60-64.](#)

### Collaborating with the CHASE model – the second element of the framework

The CHASE model is the research method engaged with to generate primary and secondary data that applies community development values with the aim to empower communities and their local organisations to sustain and improve health care and comprises six phases. This model comprises six phases. Engaging with the CHASE model (Ross, et al., 2017) provides community development practitioners, in this case study the student nurse learners, a method to profile the community, apply a needs assessment, identify health needs and develop resources (as a co-design collaborative team) with the purpose to improve sustainable health care and reduce health disparities. This model guides community development practitioners to view health from a sustainable and population-based approach to build effective and empowering relationships and consider the unique aspects and attributes of a community.

1

Scoping community with primary and secondary data to identify the 'core of the community'

2

Reporting back themes & issues identified in Phase 1. Selection of specific needs for investigation by sub-groups

3

Literature review to position community & needs in context

4

Collecting data and developing evidence-based resources to match identified health needs in community

5

Integration of results from sub-groups. Presentation to community partners

6

Evaluation of impact





## CHASE case study in Bishop's Castle, Shropshire

Research conducted by student nurses from New Zealand working with community partners to identify health-related community development needs

### TRANSPORT

Lack of public transport has an impact on access to healthcare, work and social mobility. High reliance on personal transport.

Outcomes:

- Campaign to improve awareness of disabled parking
- Report to council on encouraging public transport use

### MENTAL HEALTH

Concern by community that mental health and suicide are hidden problems in the town

Outcomes:

- Recommendation for specialist mental health nurse in local GP surgery
- Poster & stress ball to promote wellbeing

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

Concern in community about obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise & drug misuse

Outcomes:

- Suggestion to create a community garden
- Promotion of gardening & healthy eating (poster, pamphlet, coaster & fridge magnet)

[Poppy Restieaux et al \(2020\) Sustainable rural futures: a health perspective on Bishop's Castle, \*Scope \(Health & Wellbeing\)\* volume 5, pages 194-204](#)

# Working with academics

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- Capacity for community-focused research is strengthened when health agencies and practitioners, communities, and academic researchers work together
- Extending beyond usual academic collaborators – to geographers, sociologists, psychologists, planners, economists, environmental scientists
- Blending methodological skills (including qualitative research) and expertise
  
- Opportunities to access research funding (e.g. UKRI)
- Increasing emphasis in academic research funding on collaboration and coproduction
- But: Highly competitive and focused on funding original/innovative research
  
- How to fund community-focused research on a larger scale across Wales?
- What frameworks are required to support an inclusive, integrated approach?

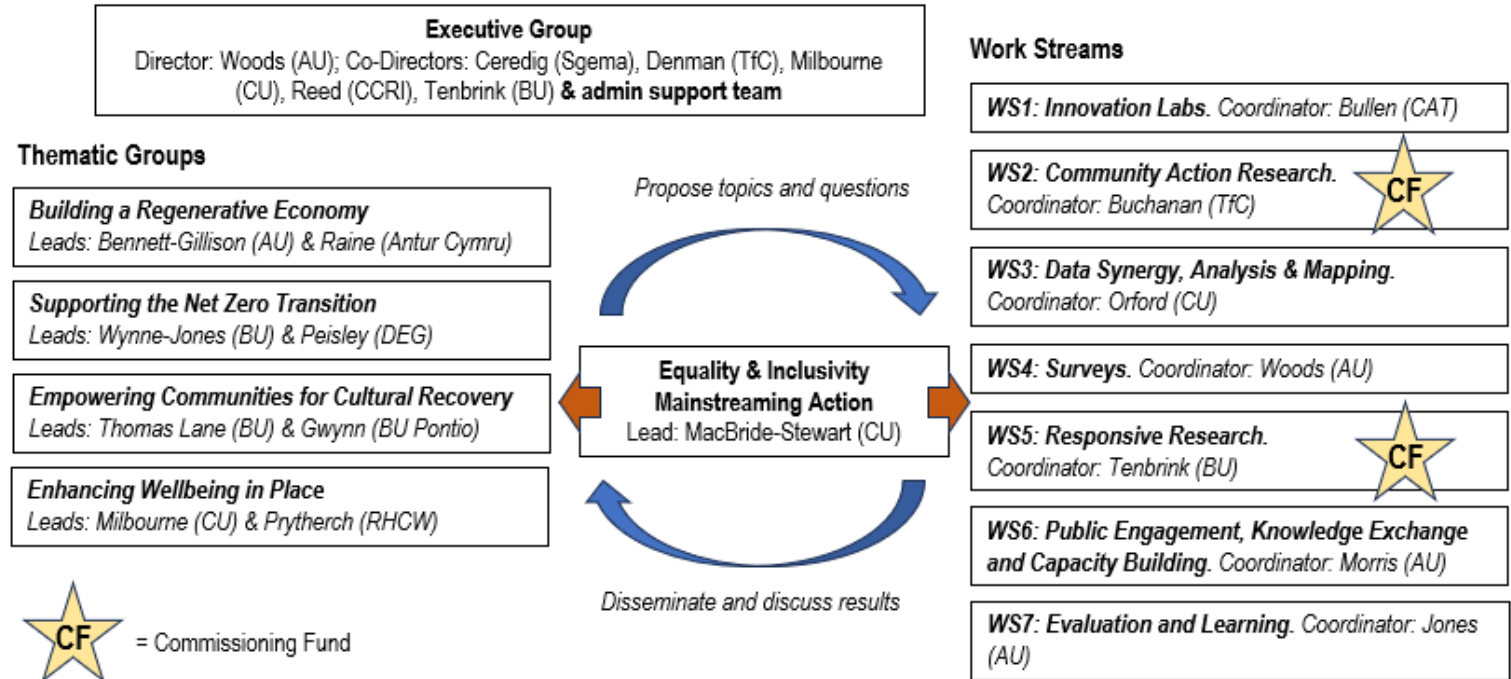
# Proposed Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership

Proposal submitted to UKRI in September 2023

Awaiting outcome on funding application – expected late November

If funded, the LPIP will run for 3 years from December 2023

Partnership of Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff & Gloucestershire universities and 7 non-university partners including RHCW and Together for Change



# Proposed Rural Wales LPIP

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**If funded**, the Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership will:

- Provide a framework for connecting policy-makers, practitioners and researchers in Rural Wales and facilitating knowledge exchange – including Rural Health & Care Wales and Together for Change as core partners
- Address issues concerning wellbeing in rural communities as part of a wider programme focused on inclusive, sustainable development
- Involve a wide range of researchers, practitioners and community representatives through thematic groups, including the Enhancing Wellbeing in Place group
- Generate and analyse new data at varying scales to support policy and practice
- Run Innovation Labs to address obstacles to change and effective policy delivery
- Support community-led research on locally-identified topics (led by TfC)
  - Initial focus on five pilot communities
  - Ten further projects funded through an open competition

# Concluding Thoughts

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- We need to pay more attention to **intersection between health & care and community development**
- Importance of **social research** as well as clinical research in health & care research
- Community-focused research needed to understanding the challenges and needs of specific communities in different parts of Wales
- This is best achieved through **co-design and co-production with communities**, including enabling communities to undertake research themselves
- Capacity is enhanced when health agencies and practitioners, communities, and academic researchers work together, blending knowledge, skills and expertise
- **Wales can be a world-leader in this approach**
- A framework needs to be developed to support and facilitate community-focused research in health and care, including strategies for funding
- **Requires buy-in from Welsh Government, health authorities, universities and the community sector**