



Un Llais Cymru One Voice Wales

Preventing Crisis Through Community Action: How Local Councils Are Supporting Health and Wellbeing in Wales

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The cost-of-living crisis has deepened existing health inequalities across Wales. People are struggling to stay warm, eat well, and stay connected, basic needs that are fundamental to good health. Community and town councils, as the most local tier of government, are responding in ways that are often low-cost but high impact. At One Voice Wales, we support councils through information, guidance, webinars and peer learning. What we've seen, especially since Covid-19, is a powerful shift toward local, practical action that prevents crisis and supports wellbeing. These efforts may not always be labelled public health, but they're delivering real public health outcomes.

One Voice Wales supports over 730 community and town councils across Wales. In the face of the cost-of-living crisis, we've seen councils act with speed and compassion, putting local knowledge to use to support residents before problems escalate.

Many warm hubs have evolved into year-round wellbeing spaces, offering hot meals, advice clinics, digital skills sessions and social connection. Others have created or partnered with food projects, such as community pantries, free meal initiatives and community kitchens, that reduce stigma and support dignity around food access.

Several councils are providing home maintenance and gardening support to older or disabled residents, helping people stay safe and independent, while also building trusted relationships that lead to wider referrals. Some have introduced micro-grant schemes to help cover urgent costs like travel to hospital appointments or children's essentials, small interventions with big impacts. These actions reflect a clear understanding of prevention at a community level. While councils may not see themselves as public health providers, their work actively addresses the social determinants of health, tackling isolation, supporting food security and improving access to services. It's local, relationship based and built on trust - and it's helping to protect health and wellbeing when it matters most. Across Wales, we're seeing local councils make a real difference.

In Cwmbran, a decorating and gardening service is helping older residents maintain safe homes and identify further support needs. In Blaenavon, a council-supported befriending cinema club has delivered 35 film sessions to 1,700 residents—reducing social isolation and improving wellbeing. Caia Park Community Council's benefits advice service has secured £1.5 million for clients, including £1.4 million in ongoing financial

benefits and £150,000 in backdated lump sums.

These initiatives may be small in scale, but they're large in impact, providing practical support that helps people stay well.

Prevention doesn't always look like a health campaign.

Sometimes it's a warm room, a shared meal, or someone who takes the time to listen.

Community and town councils are already delivering this kind of local, everyday prevention quietly, creatively, and with deep local knowledge. If we want to reduce health inequalities and improve population wellbeing, we must recognise this work and invest in it. Public health professionals should engage with their local councils, explore partnerships, and build on what's already working. The solutions are often already there, embedded in the heart of our communities.

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