

Rhondda Cynon Taf Better Life Consortium

A Better Life

Our Community Plan 2004 -14

A Programme of change to create a new future



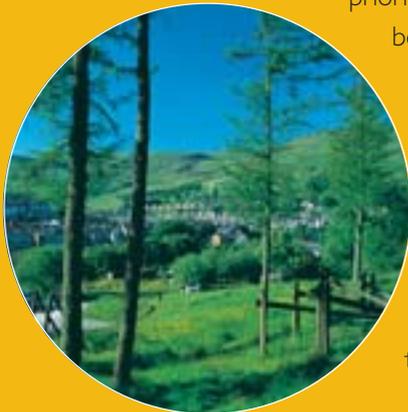
A Better Life for Everyone

“A Better Life” is the Community Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf. It sets out a framework for creating a brighter future for everyone who lives and works here, and has been developed by a range of local partners, through our Better Life Consortium, over the past 12 months.



In putting together the plan, we have consulted a wide range of groups and individuals across Rhondda Cynon Taf, through a specifically designed process called “Voices of the Valleys”. The result of this work, and the responses of public, private and voluntary agencies, to what local people identified as their

priorities for creating a better life, has been put together in this 10 year strategic plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf.



We will review our priorities for action over time, as our circumstances change and our partnership working strengthens. This plan is not the end of the process, rather it is the beginning.

Contents	Page
• Our shared vision for the future of Rhondda Cynon Taf.	3
• Where we are starting from in 2004:	
- the area	5
- the challenge	6
• The next ten years:	8
 - Safer Communities	11
 - Our Living Space	15
 - Our Health and Well Being	19
 - Boosting Our Local Economy	23
 - Learning for Growth	27
• How we will know if we are achieving our vision.	31
• How you can be involved in helping to achieve this vision.	32
• Our shared commitment	33

Our Shared Vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a community where everyone who lives, works in or visits the area will enjoy the benefits of a better quality of life, achieving their potential, while helping to develop and protect the area for the benefit of others.



“A day living in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014...”

Getting up refreshed at 7am, after an undisturbed eight hours sleep.

You needed it, because the evening before you had an hour work-out at the local gym, as prescribed by your Doctor, and had then gone on to a lively, well attended meeting at the community centre, about the benefits of the new renewable energy scheme being introduced to homes in your neighbourhood.

The children have already washed and got themselves ready, and you have a healthy breakfast together, before they pack up their laptop computers in their bags and go off to school on the new electric bus.

They had completed some lessons at home the previous evening, using the computer link with their school and the internet, and had already submitted their homework assignments electronically for marking. You had been able to help them with this, because of your recent IT training, and you work from home on your own computer, which gave you the time and informed interest to be able to join in.





At lunchtime, you meet some friends from the street at the local cyber cafe and talk about the local news screened on the RCTTV community channel last night. One of the topics discussed was the new car-sharing scheme being brought in locally for those who still choose to slog to work through traffic, rather than use their integrated bus and rail travelcard on the Council's new Citizen transit system.

On the way home, you notice that the bus shelter, which was broken yesterday, has already been repaired, and spot the recycling van is on its way up the street. You stop to chat with Mike and Jenny, two of your Community Support Officers, who tell you that local levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are at an all-time low.

When the children arrive home from school, they go off eagerly to the cyber cafe, after dropping off your empty bottles at the recycling centre. At the cafe, they meet friends and plan the forthcoming Youth Festival, supported by the local youth resource worker. They are excited about their trip tomorrow to the local Safety Zone (just like Technquest, only better) where they will learn basic personal safety techniques from a police approved specialist.

You spend your evening playing cards and board games electronically with Mary, your elderly disabled neighbour, who proudly shows you the recent adaptations made to her house to help her live at home, which she prefers. Before going to bed, you catch up on a Welsh lesson, on line, in preparation for next year's holiday - to Patagonia".



If this vision is to be made a reality for all of us by 2014, the actions proposed in this Plan needs everyone's support. As individuals and organisations, we can change for the better what we do everyday.



Where we are starting from in 2004?

The Area

Rhondda Cynon Taf lies to the north of Cardiff, at the heart of South Wales. Bounded by the Brecon Beacons and the M4 Motorway. It is the second largest local authority in Wales, covering 424 square kilometres and with a population of 231,946. It embraces an upland plateau and three valleys in the north, with rolling farmland and woods in the South.

Rhondda Cynon Taf offers an outstanding natural environment, attractive to a wide catchment area. Local people are particularly proud of this, and of the strength of their unique cultural heritage. They are renowned for their warm reception for visitors, their humour and resilience in the face of adversity, and their strong sense of community, founded on help for those in need and respect for the individual.

The County Borough is experiencing a period of major change, bringing fresh challenges and opportunities, but also creating uncertainty, and the need to overcome a recent legacy of severe economic and social deprivation.



The Challenge

Alongside the area's many attractions, a range of new trends challenge our local communities, and those who provide services to them. These include:

- **The area's growing diversity.** Rhondda Cynon Taf is a series of small communities, rather than one single (homogenous) area. That diversity is a clear strength, but has implications for flexible, local service delivery, for effective communication links across the area, and for action to maintain town centres as vibrant public places for shopping, for work, for recreation, entertainment and cultural activities.
- **The changing local economy.** Rhondda Cynon Taf is successfully transforming itself from an economy based on heavy industry to one which has a more diverse range of job opportunities, which are attractive and accessible to the widest cross section of the population. These include the creation of new jobs in specialised growth areas, such as new media and tourism.
- **The changing social characteristics.** Reflecting local patterns of economic change, areas of growing affluence exist near the M4 corridor, while significant areas of disadvantage remain to be tackled – particularly in the northern valleys. The loss of traditional employment has contributed to a stubborn residue of social deprivation, leaving some communities feeling vulnerable and excluded. Promoting fairness and equality of opportunity in the development of all our communities is a key challenge.
- **The health of our communities.** Major and unacceptable disparities in the levels of health enjoyed by our communities require urgent mutual action to develop new, more effective forms of primary care and health promotion.



- **Prospects for young people.** Our children reflect the recent changes in the area. Many now move on to further/higher education, but others, notably in disadvantaged areas, are starved of prospects for the future. 30% of our young people's education is provided through the medium of Welsh, a distinct characteristic which enhances our prospects for the future.
- **Reconciling rapid social and economic change with protecting the most vulnerable.** Supporting everyone to play a full part in, and benefit fully from, the social and economic future of the area is a continuing need.
- **Understanding and promoting Rhondda Cynon Taf's place in the world.** Recognising the need to respond to new regional, national and global challenges, and to influence others positively to recognise the unique attributes we have to offer as a place to invest, work in, live in, and visit.

Making this Plan work will need active partnerships among the various local agencies with a strong stake in our future success, as well as between those agencies and the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Many have already played a central role by sharing thoughts and ideas through the consultation process. We thank everyone who has contributed time and energy; without your contribution, this Plan and its framework for action would be incomplete.

We can now move forward confidently to the implementation of our agreed priorities and actions to create a better life. We realise that this will be challenging and will require change from everyone. We look forward to working with all our partners, as we rise to the challenge with a real sense of new hope and confidence, that our future will be different from our recent past.



A Better Life - the next 10 years

“All we want is a *Better Life* for everyone, no matter who they are or where they live”. Delegate at Area Partnerships Launch – April 2002.

That's what 'A Better Life' is all about – capturing the needs, hopes and aspirations of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents, and turning them into action on the ground, to improve the quality of life for all of us, now and for generations to come.

Everyone must play their part

It's about all the agencies and organisations which provide services in the area, from the public, private and voluntary sectors, pulling together to make things happen visibly and in new ways. And it's about individuals in our communities, of all ages, becoming active, getting involved – doing their bit.

At the heart of the process are our local communities, and how well we all work together to protect and promote their economic, social, and environmental well-being.

You told us.....

Involvement is the key to the success of this Community Plan – it is the basis on which it will be developed and it will provide the measure of its success or failure. This document represents the result of unprecedented, widespread consultation over four months with over 2000 local people.



This involved:

- Young People
- Older People
- Community Organisations
- Businesses
- Public Sector Organisations
- Area Partnerships
- Communities First Partnerships

We listened.....

From the comments provided, five themes for action have emerged clearly as having widespread support as high priorities. This Plan is organised around these themes, and around the main groups in our communities who need to benefit most from the planned changes and improvements. The Plan also focuses on some common issues, which will underpin the success of these changes.

The five action themes are:

- Safer Communities
- Our Living Space
- Our Health and Well Being
- Boosting our Local Economy
- Learning for Growth



Those who need to benefit most, and the issues that matter to everyone.

Some groups of people and important issues must receive particular attention, and must get special mention in every action theme. We consider this approach to be essential, if we are to create inclusive communities, that protect the most vulnerable from the pressures of a rapidly changing world and extend the full benefits of our progress to them too. Those who need to benefit most from this plan are:

- Children and Young People
- Older People
- Families

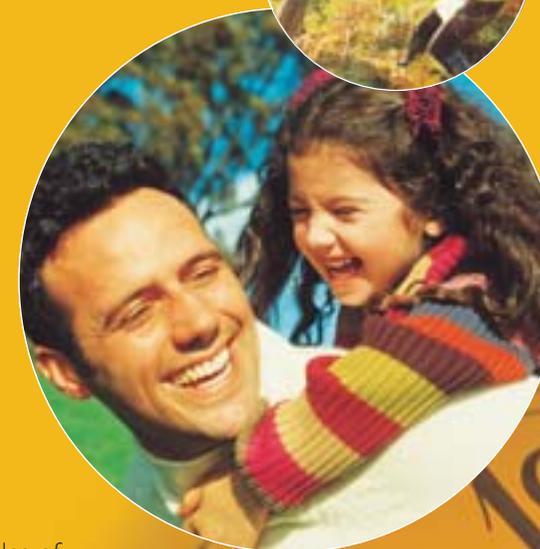
Continuing support for children and young people, and developing services to the elderly, will be the two main areas of focus for the first three years of the plan. We will also look at support for parents, in a family setting, who are often carers for both these generations.

- Social Inclusion and Equality
- Information, Involvement, and Empowerment
- Social and Cultural Identity
- Sustainable development

Implementing a comprehensive social inclusion and equality programme, and developing a new framework to encourage the active participation of local people in decisions which affect their future, will be the two main areas of focus for the first three years of the plan.

The action themes are set out in more detail in the following pages, using a common format. Each has a set of community outcomes, which describe the kind of better life the actions intend to deliver. Each of the outcomes is accompanied by a key measure of progress. Some of the main actions are listed, along with the partnership leading on delivering progress on these. (Detailed actions, responsibilities and timescales for delivery of, by each of our strategic partnerships, are contained in a separate Delivery Framework document).

Comments provided during the consultation process are listed for each theme, along with practical examples of existing actions and key achievements, to illustrate how much progress has already been made recently in this area.



What do we all want for the future?

Our Goals:

- Further reduce the level and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Make Rhondda Cynon Taf an even safer and more pleasant place to live, work and visit.

A Better Life in Safer Communities



We talked to local people about their experiences and built this vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014 from their responses.



People said they like:

“living in communities that are friendly by nature”

“feeling part of/belonging to a community”.

“the reassuring presence of the Police”.

But they would change:

“loutish behaviour at all times of day should be stopped”.

“more visible presence by the Police in communities”.

“make more impact on drug use”.

“stop selling alcohol to the young”

Progress so far:

- A community based, joined-up approach to tackling alcohol and drug misuse has been designed.
- A three year programme of street lighting improvements has been implemented
- Road deaths have been reduced through new Road Safety initiatives.
- Property crime rates have been cut and are now some of the lowest in the United Kingdom



Case Study

Alan, 15, was referred to the Youth Offending Team (Yot) after interfering with a car which belonged to his grandmother's neighbour. One of the aims of the Yot is to make young people understand the impact that their offences have had on their victims and on their communities, in terms of fear of crime. Alan worked with the Yot and undertook the following reparations for his actions:



- He apologised directly to the victim
- He made amends to the community, by carrying out gardening work at a local community facility
- He made amends to the victim, who asked that Alan undertake some work with a friend who was terminally ill. This included gardening, clearing rubbish and shopping.

His work at the community centre has reopened a support network for Alan and he now voluntarily continues to visit the victim's friend and help with shopping.

Most importantly, Alan has not reoffended.

Key Actions up to 2008

- Establish a new, integrated, multi-agency Community Safety Service.
- “Mainstream” community safety thinking amongst all partners and their frontline staff.
- Develop and implement a Substance Misuse Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Expand existing initiatives to address violent crime.
- Implement a sustained campaign of public reassurance, involving the local media.
- Pilot the introduction of new “Police community support officers” who will be focused particularly on dealing with nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- Revamp the Area Crime Watch Co-ordinators service, to promote greater community involvement.
- Extend the use of CCTV where need is identified and a measured contribution to safety is possible,

Lead Partnership - Community Safety

.....and links to other themes.

Boosting Our Local Economy -

Investment will only happen in areas that are safe.

Our Health and Well-Being -

Mental well-being is linked to a personal sense of safety and security.

Our Living Space -

Better street lighting and more frequent transport links contribute to safer communities.

Learning for Growth -

Achievement increases everyone's sense of self-worth and confidence, making it easier to be a good citizen and to avoid being drawn into crime.

Critical Sign of a Better Life

- **Increase the number of residents who feel safe-in their own home and walking in their area after dark by 10% by 2014**

In 2014, Rhondda Cynon Taf will be:

A Safe and Secure Community

To make Rhondda Cynon Taf an even safer place to live, by securing continued reductions in criminal and anti-social behaviour and reducing casualties on our roads. To ensure all parts of the community help each other to feel safe and valued.

To create a community where the growth in the rates of drug and alcohol misuse is stopped and, eventually, reversed.

Key measure of progress
number of repeated incidents of
violent crime.

A Protected Community

To protect the interests of the wider community in Rhondda Cynon Taf through the control of activities that cause disruption or serious nuisance and undermine people's quality of life.

To create vibrant, well used town centres, where people of all ages have “reclaimed the streets” for enjoyment by the whole community.

To develop effective local arson prevention initiatives.

Key measure of progress
number of residents concerned about noise levels in
their community.

Use this page to set out and monitor in the future how you will help contribute to delivering Safer Communities. Enter your commitments on the Safer Communities discussion board at www.rct-betterlife.org.uk

SAFER COMMUNITIES



Our Partnership will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Our Organisation ...

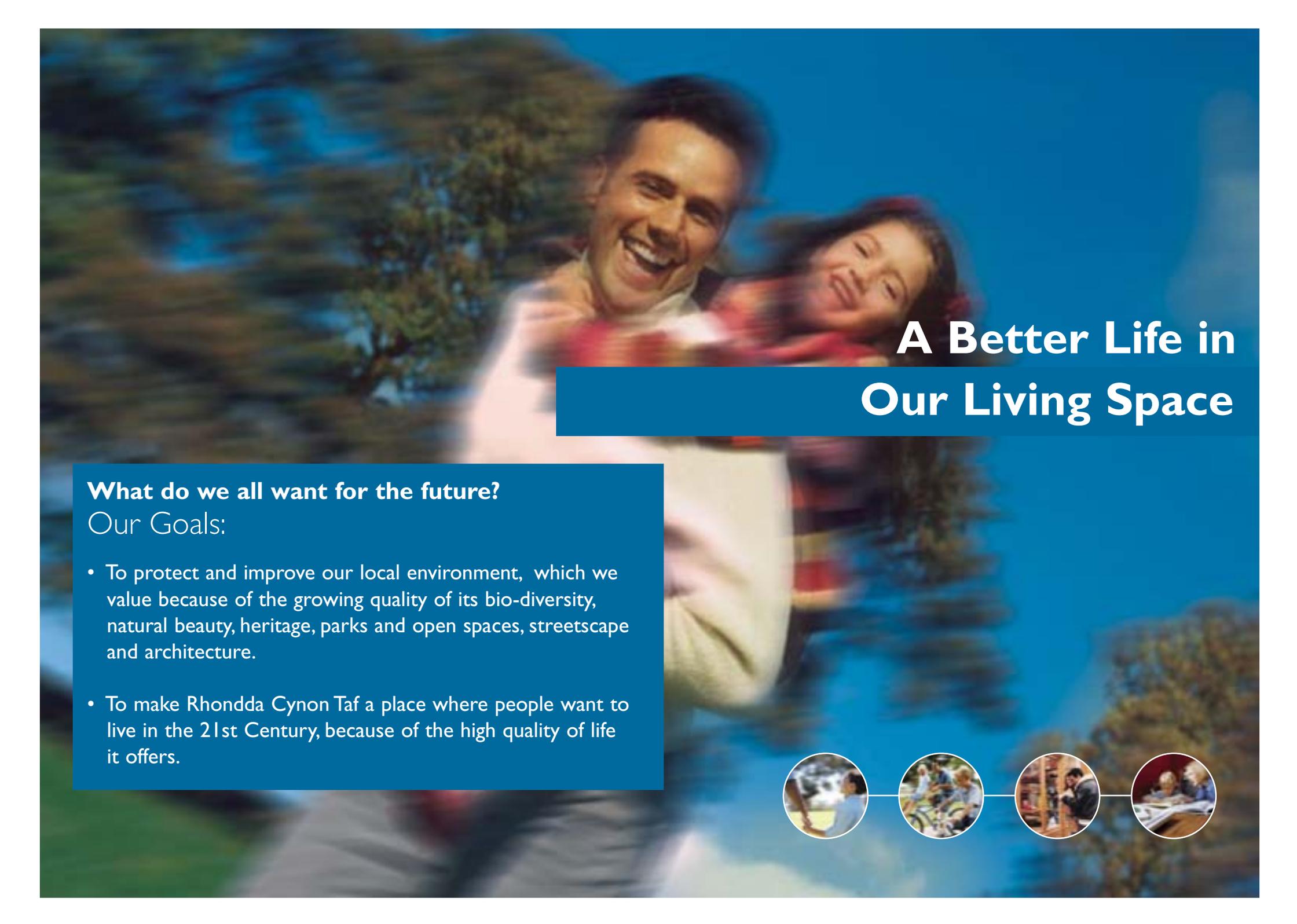
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



I will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



A smiling man in a white shirt is carrying a young girl with long dark hair on his shoulders. They are outdoors, with trees and a blue sky in the background. The man is looking towards the camera and smiling broadly. The girl is looking down and smiling.

A Better Life in Our Living Space

What do we all want for the future?

Our Goals:

- To protect and improve our local environment, which we value because of the growing quality of its bio-diversity, natural beauty, heritage, parks and open spaces, streetscape and architecture.
- To make Rhondda Cynon Taf a place where people want to live in the 21st Century, because of the high quality of life it offers.



We talked to local people about their experiences and built this vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014 from their responses.



People said they like:

“living in an area with a strong historic and cultural tradition”

“diverse natural environment”.

“natural beauty and historic heritage”.

But they would change:

“more frequent bus services”.

“sustainable housing developments with support services”.

“cleaner areas, free from fly-tipping”.

Progress so far:

- A major programme of recycling is underway which will be extended to all households by 2006.
- An £8 million investment in local roads, rail, and buses is being linked to new research into community transport schemes.
- Local residents and visitors alike increasingly acknowledge the uniqueness of our wildlife and natural environment as a valuable asset.
- Access to the Environment is being improved through Community Routeways, Safe Routes to Schools, Loops and Links and Public Rights of Way.



Case Study

The Community Waste Forum is a group of people representing a wide range of organisations, who were brought together to develop our Council's strategy for dealing with waste. Forum members represent the Council, statutory bodies, community groups, local businesses, and educational establishments. When it began, the Forum was a unique and innovative venture, that has since been adopted by other local authorities in Wales.



The work of the Forum started by examining the types and amounts of waste we all generate, and by exploring a range of options for dealing with this waste in a more sustainable way. Following lengthy debate and discussion, the Forum developed a practical, workable strategy and action plan. This consists of 12 actions to cover a variety of waste reduction, recycling and education initiatives, plus new forms of partnership working, and the encouragement of new 'green' businesses.

Groups also examined community issues such as a concerted anti-litter campaign and the remediation of the Council's municipal landfill site, which was closed recently as part of the wider waste strategy.

Key Actions up to 2008

- Establish a Community Transport service in every area.
- Provide access to recycling services and facilities for every resident and business.
- Organise annual campaigns to promote cleanliness and recycling.
- Implement the Local Bio-diversity Action Plan
- Improve streetscape in every area, including the provision of better lighting.
- Improve public transport services and limit growth in car use.

Lead Partnership - Living Space

.....and links to other themes.

Our Health and Well-Being –

An enhanced physical environment promotes healthy living.

Safer Communities –

Protection from the negative effects of pollution.

Boosting Our Local Economy –

Creating the transport and technology links needed to attract new jobs.

Learning for Growth –

Learning to live in a sustainable way is essential to protect our assets for future generations.

Critical Sign of a Better Life

- **Increase the number of residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live by 10% by 2014**

In 2014, Rhondda Cynon Taf will be:

A Clean and Environmentally Friendly Community

An attractive and healthy environment, with all local residents and businesses playing their part in keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and tidy, by recycling more and creating less waste. A community which takes care of its natural resources, as a benefit held in trust for future generations

Key measure of progress

- number of waste recycled.
- number of streets that have high standards of cleanliness.
- Number of Community GreenCare groups.

An Accessible Community

With a transport and communication infrastructure that meets the needs of the whole population. Services which are accessible to all, so that nobody is disadvantaged or excluded because of who they are or where they live.

Key measure of progress

number of respondents finding it easy to access job opportunities and key local services.

A Community proud of its living space

A community which protects and improves its natural heritage, local bio-diversity, parks and open spaces, houses and streetscape.

Key measure of progress

Area of land designated as an SSSI which is in a favourable condition.

Use this page to set out and monitor in the future how you will help contribute to delivering a better Living Space. Enter your commitments on the Living Space discussion board at: www.rct-betterlife.org.uk

Our Partnership will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Our Organisation ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



I will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....





A Better Life through Our Health and Well Being

What do we all want for the future?

Our Goals:

- Local people whose health and access to high quality health services is equal to the best in Britain.
- Local communities where we have revived our tradition of taking action to protect and care for those who are vulnerable.
- Services in the health, social care and voluntary sectors that support individual needs for independence and personal choice.



We talked to local people about their experiences and built this vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014 from their responses.



People said they like:

“walking and cycling in the hills and countryside”

“using the leisure facilities for social as well as health reasons”.

But they would change:

“more local initiatives to take exercise and promote healthy lifestyles”.

“more advice and information to help make decisions for the future”

Progress so far:

- Many local communities now benefit from new and improved health facilities.
- More people live independent lives than ever before
- Eating out locally is safer than it has ever been
- Subsidised Fitness sessions in local leisure centres are prescribed by GPs for those whose health would benefit, as part of their treatment.



Case Study

The Heart Attack project was developed to reduce the burden of ill health that results from high levels of heart disease in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The project is a partnership between the Local Health Board, the Council, Local NHS Trusts and communities. The main causes of heart disease are smoking, lack of regular physical activity and poor diet. To combat these problems, the project is working with Community Leisure Services and the Countryside Team to create further opportunities for residents to become more active. It also involves helping local Community Groups work more effectively with local Food Retailers and Catering Outlets to improve access to healthy, affordable foods.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a number of poorly developed Primary Healthcare Services. This project is helping to strengthen services in some areas, by supporting GP Practices to identify patients that may be at high risk. These patients are invited by their GP to attend a local screening clinic for a health check and develop a plan for reducing their risk. Patients that are committed to changing their lifestyle are then enrolled on local programmes, such as the Stop Smoking Service, Heart Health Programme, Prescription for Active Living Scheme or Walking the Way to Health.

The Heart Attack Project is currently working in Communities First areas, where levels of heart disease are greatest. So far, uptake of the project has been excellent and the project has been well supported by both health professionals and local residents.

Key Actions up to 2008

- Establish a Health, Social Care and Well-Being Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf that addresses identified needs in:
 - tackling economic inactivity,
 - improving mental health,
 - support for children,
 - better access to services,
 - maintaining independence and,
 - increasing healthy environments.
- Establish community and area based approaches to tackling ill-health
- Map formal and informal support for “Well Being”

Lead Partnership - Health, Social Care and Well-Being

.....and links to other themes

Safer Communities -

Reducing anti-social behaviour improves personal well-being.

Our Living Space -

A healthy environment supports personal physical and mental health, and easy access to health services is vital.

Boosting Our Local Economy -

Healthy communities are essential to prosperity.

Learning for Growth -

Skills for life support personal development, and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Critical Sign of a Better Life

- **Increase life expectancy to match the Wales average by 2014**

In 2014, Rhondda Cynon Taf will be:

A Healthy, Active Community

To protect and improve the health of the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf, to reduce the burden of avoidable ill health and early death. To reduce the barrier of ill health to active participation in education and training, employment and community life. To develop healthy schools, healthy workplaces and a healthy environment.

To promote healthy lifestyles and opportunities for active involvement in community life.

Key measure of progress

Overall improvement in people's health when compared to other areas.

A Caring Community

We want to provide care and support for those who need additional help, either through ill health, disability or other personal circumstances, whether they are young or old, to lead independent lives.

A key objective for the life span of this strategy is to see increased co-ordination between caring organisations, to provide better social care services which are accessible, visible and are “joined up” at the community and individual level.

Key measure of progress

The level of conceptions amongst girls aged under 18.

A Better Life for everyone – Life Balance

We want to achieve fairness and equity of health and social care provision that meets the needs of the different communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. We want to help everyone in Rhondda Cynon Taf to feel in control of their lives and to feel confident in making the important choices that affect them, as well as to know where to access help when things aren't going well.

Good health throughout life and a sense of personal control are important for everyone, and will be key features of ensuring well being for all in the future.

Key measure of progress

People's overall sense of happiness and well being.

Use this page to set out and monitor in the future how you will help contribute to Our Health and Well-Being. Enter your commitments on the Health and Well Being discussion board at: www.rct-betterlife.org.uk

Our Partnership will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Our Organisation ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



I will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What do we all want for the future?

Our Goals:

- More “quality” jobs and increased employment opportunities in a strong, prosperous, self reliant local economy.
- Towns, villages, streets and homes that have been improved and revitalised, through new development which is sympathetic to our environment.
- Vibrant communities with a viable long term future.

A Better Life by Boosting Our Local Economy



We talked to local people about their experiences and built this vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014 from their responses.

People said they like:

“town centres which are within easy reach”.

“open air events which bring the community together”

But they would change:

“local people to have more say”

“more facilities for young people”.

“bustling town centres with no empty premises”

“more local amenities in villages”

Progress so far:

- Communities have helped themselves to bring about visible improvements at local level, with over 500 Council grants supporting everything from childcare facilities to pensioners clubs.
- Nearly £40 million of European funding has been invested in the local economy.
- More new jobs have been secured for Rhondda Cynon Taf since April 2000 than were created in the previous 20 years.
- Investment in improving public and private housing continues to be made.

Case Study

The Pop Factory is based in the former derelict Corona soft drinks factory in Porth. It now makes pop of a different kind, producing a variety of music and entertainment television programming and events that have attracted international acclaim. The 39 thousand square foot site hosts four unique studio areas, six digital edit suites, two forty eight digital sound recording facilities, a vision gallery and new media arm .



Activities include television production, event management facilities and conferences. Development of the project is helping the wider regeneration of Porth town centre, and is an example of the new types of modern employment that are being attracted to Rhondda Cynon Taf. New training facilities for local people are also planned, providing further redevelopment of derelict buildings



Key Actions up to 2008

- Research and address the causes of economic inactivity.
- Establish and implement community and area action plans that support the objectives of "A Better Life" at local level.
- Promote the success of local business.
- Enable higher and further education to play a direct role in supporting local prosperity
- Examine ways to ensure our joint procurement of goods and services supports the growth of local companies and the local economy

Lead Partnership - Economic Regeneration

..... and links to other themes

Safer Communities -

Are good for investment and business growth.

Our Living Space -

Capitalising on our environment as a regeneration asset will create new jobs.

Our Health and Well Being -

A healthy workforce will attract new employers and create more job opportunities, whilst reducing the burden of care costs on the local economy.

Learning for Growth -

Skills supply must meet changing economic demand and new types of work.

Critical Sign of a Better Life

- **Reduce the proportion of our population that live in most deprived 10% of wards in Wales by 2014**

In 2014, Rhondda Cynon Taf will be:

A Prosperous Community

We want to promote the economic growth and prosperity of all parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf, encouraging investment, creating new jobs, and demonstrating to employers that Rhondda Cynon Taf is a profitable place to do business.

We want to ensure that the continuing improvements in prosperity reach all those in communities most affected by deprivation. Enhancing the role of the social economy and maximising the benefits of local purchasing will be important aspects of this new wealth creation.

Key measure of progress

number of population claiming key benefits

number of working age population in employment

An Involved Community

Regeneration is about enabling people to make decisions about the issues that are important to them, and providing the tools to make this happen. The development of the Communities First programme in the areas of greatest need provides access to fresh resources to tackle these issues. Area Partnerships, covering the whole of the County Borough, will also actively promote opportunities for greater involvement in decision making about the future in all our communities.

Key measure of progress

number of adults surveyed who feel they can influence decisions affecting their neighbourhood

A Vibrant Community

We want more vibrant local communities. Shops that really cater for people's needs, at the same time as providing a good "shopping experience". Entertainment, recreational and cultural activities for all ages. Town and village centres which have a busy feel about them. Community buildings which are well used by all kinds of groups and organisations, and are seen as "hubs" of their communities. Regular public events which give the community a sense of identity and bring people together, building on our environmental, linguistic and cultural heritage, as economic assets to attract more visitors to the area.

Key measure of progress

Numbers of visitors to local attractions.

A Properly Housed Community

We are committed to recognising the right of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents to be properly housed in accommodation suitable to their needs, and to safeguarding the quality of both private and public sector housing. Increased investment in housing stock is needed through mechanisms that will also support the broader regeneration of local communities.

Key measure of progress

Number of unfit homes per 1000 dwellings

Use this page to set out and monitor in the future how you will help contribute to Boosting our Local Economy. Enter your commitments on the Boosting our Local Economy discussion board at: www.rct-betterlife.org.uk

Our Partnership will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Our Organisation ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



I will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

What do we all want for the future?

Our Goals:

- Enable everyone to fulfil their personal potential, from their earliest days to their retirement years.
- High standards of education for all learners, with levels of attainment above the average for Wales and England.
- A local workforce equipped with all the skills they need to take advantage of new employment opportunities, new ways of working, and changing technologies in the workplace.

A Better Life by Learning for Growth



We talked to local people about their experiences and built this vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014 from their responses.



People said they like:

“libraries as places to get information”

“schools as centres of community life”

But they would change:

“more apprenticeships for young people”

“more things for young people to do”

“qualifications or training that leads directly to a job”

Progress so far:

- A 7 year, £60 million programme of school refurbishment and construction is underway.
- Our best results ever in examinations and assessment tests were achieved in 2003.
- The number of people speaking Welsh has increased by 3% since 1991, indicating a historic reverse in the decline of the language.
- Expulsions from school are almost unheard of.
- Most of our young people leave school with some level of attainment.



Case Study

The Genesis Project has been developed with the aid of European Funding and provides free childcare to adults in Rhondda Cynon Taf wishing to access adult learning opportunities.

• The aim of the project is to improve the economic activity of women in Rhondda Cynon Taf and to raise their Gross Domestic Product, as a contribution to our economic recovery.

- The project works with individual women and groups of women to help raise confidence, self esteem and basic skills, whilst helping them plot a route out of poverty and disadvantage.
- Genesis does not provide training as such, but works in partnership with all local training providers to ensure that training needs are met.
- The project develops and delivers a flexible range of community based childcare provision, to meet the needs of adult learners with childcare responsibilities.
- Top quality childcare provision will have the added value of enabling many more young children to access stimulating early years activities.
- The project also helps to make Rhondda Cynon Taf even more attractive to potential employers.
- The project is the first of its kind in Wales.



Key Actions up to 2008

- Higher proportion of pupils and adults with a minimum of Level 2 attainment in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
- The development of all schools as important centres for their communities and as key players in the delivery of the Community Plan.
- Increased investment in early years and parent education programmes.
- Encourage, through Bro Dysg, all local employers to invest in the development of their staff.

Lead Partnership - Bro-Dysg

..... and links to other themes

Safer Communities –

Learning facilities that encourage citizenship and positive engagement with local communities, by young people in particular, will reduce crime levels.

Our Living Space –

Learning to live in environmental friendly way will be essential for everyone.

Our Health and Well-Being –

Changing skills are needed for new life challenges.

Boosting Our Local Economy –

A Broader role for local schools as community resources will increase our skills levels.

Critical Sign of a Better Life

- **reduce the number of people without qualifications in 2004 by 10% by 2011.**

In 2014, Rhondda Cynon Taf will be:

A Well Educated Community

- There will be access to high quality educational experiences for all age-groups throughout the County Borough.
- Everyone will recognise learning as a lifelong process, and our community will exceed the Welsh and UK averages for attainment, as well as continuing our success in developing a bi-lingual community.
- Schools, colleges and the adult education service, will be key centres of lifelong learning and there will be stronger recognition of the value of “informal” learning.
- Local businesses and their employees will work with learning providers to meet their skills needs.
- The range of youth services will be the best in Wales. Consultation has identified this as a high priority for local people.
- The educational attainment of Looked After Children will be a key priority.

Key measure of progress

number of pupils achieving A* - G at GCSE

A community with a positive attitude to learning

- People of all ages will enjoy living in Rhondda Cynon Taf because of the breadth and quality of cultural and artistic activities open to them.
- Play in all its forms is a central part of learning and personal development. Play creates jobs, improves the environment and stimulates community development. Meeting with other's to play and enjoy each others company is an essential part of life in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Key measure of progress

- Participation levels in key cultural and recreational activities
- Numbers of clubs and societies reporting an increase in membership

A Well Informed Community

- All partners involved with this Community Plan will keep residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf informed - through their language of choice.
- The opportunity provided by new information technology to deliver services in exciting new ways will help us to inform local people and to make our services easier to access.

Key measure of progress

All partners achieving Information Standard Quality mark for information services

Use this page to set out and monitor in the future how you will help contribute to Learning for Growth. Enter your commitments on the Learning for Growth discussion board at: www.rct-betterlife.org.uk

Our Partnership will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



Our Organisation ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



I will ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



How will we know if we are achieving our vision?

In Wales, a national framework has been developed for measuring and understanding the impact of community planning on local communities. In creating this Plan, we asked everyone involved which of these measures they considered to be most important markers of our future progress. We have based our separate Delivery Framework for "A Better Life" on these. As our wider arrangements for Community Planning develop over the next few years, along with the creation of local Community and Area Action Plans, we will add more locally agreed indicators.

The Delivery Framework for "A Better Life" is concerned with indicators which tell us about the impact of the Community Plan on the Quality of Life – economic, social and environmental – of the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

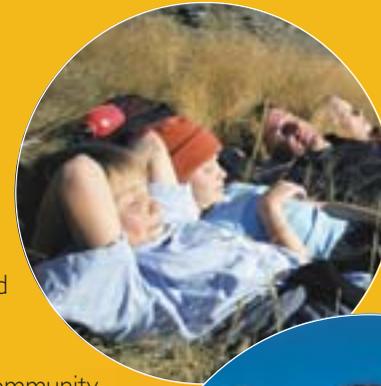
We want the indicators we use to measure what is important in terms of visible outcomes for local people, to be easily understandable, and to provide us all with the basis for being sure that we are making the progress and improvement we want to see. The main purposes of the indicators we have used in this Plan are to:

- Enable the Better Life Consortium to track our long term progress towards the achievement of the vision within the Community Plan, and the impact it is having on improving Quality of Life for everyone in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Provide local people with regular evidence of the achievements we are making under each of the five vision themes.
- Help tackle any inequalities between different parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf, as well as to promote our growing strengths as a good place to live, do business in, and visit.
- Motivate local organisations and individuals to join us in meeting the challenges facing Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to share in the pride of our success in creating a Better Life for everyone.

Our current, more detailed strategies and service plans, which all contribute to this delivery of the Community Plan, contain a full set of improvement targets and performance indicators. We have not repeated these in the Community Plan, but have provided contacts and references to where they can be found.

Each year, we will look back at the achievements of all the partners in the Better Life Consortium and will publish an Annual Review. It will measure our progress against both the targets for improvement set out in the supporting Delivery Framework, and in the Action Plans for each of our five action themes. As part of this annual review, we will also ask local people to let us know the things they think are working well, or perhaps not so well, so that we can focus our efforts on improving things more effectively.

The first Annual Review will be published in March 2005.



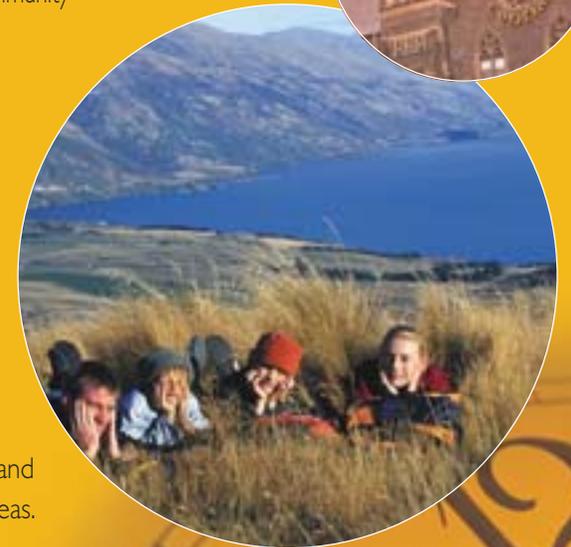


How you can be involved in helping to achieve this vision?

We started developing this Community Plan by asking local people, including those already involved in planning and delivering services, how they feel about Rhondda Cynon Taf, and what they would like to see in the future. The special process we used for this was called "Voices of the Valleys" and we built the vision of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2014 from the things local people said to us.

The Better Life Consortium is committed to involving everyone in improving the services that affect them and their community. We will, over the next 12 months, put in place a range of different methods for involving local people in the things that matter most to them, so that they can influence the decisions made about how we will change things for the better.

- You can give us your opinions, through the questionnaires, opinion polls and focus groups, we will use to ask local people what they think.
- You could become a member of our Citizens' Panel, or get involved with a community or area partnership covering your neighbourhood.
- You can work with other members of the local club or voluntary group you are part of, to gather information on their needs and aspirations, (using techniques such as 'Planning for Real' or undertaking a village appraisal, developing a town design statement or creating an area map), and to seek funding and other support to run a small-scale community improvement project.
- If you are already involved in providing a local service, you can suggest improvements and take the initiative in looking at how you can do more for people by working more closely with other local services.



Why be involved?

- Because you have a stake in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and its future prosperity and well-being.
- Your opinions, needs and aspirations are important influences on improving the many things that affect your quality of life, and those of your friends and community.
- The Better life Consortium can put you in touch with the partnership groups that plan and co-ordinate improvements for the different local services. We need your support and ideas.
- You can make a real difference in helping to create a Better life for everyone.

You may enjoy it; it should be fun!

Our shared commitment

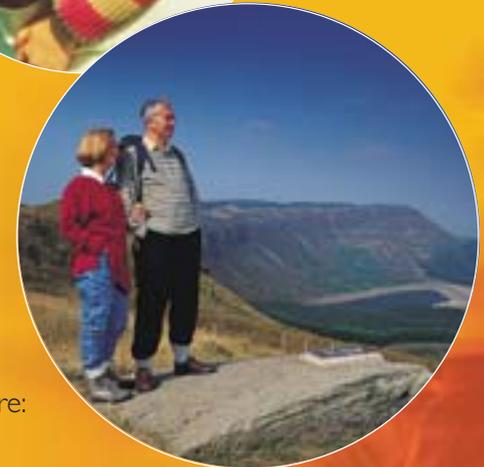
We, the Members of the Better Life Consortium, are committed to putting in place all the actions that are identified in this Plan as the essential components of a Better life, as well as to regularly measuring and reporting to local people on our progress in meeting the ambitious targets for improvement in this document.

We intend that all those who have a stake in the future prosperity and well-being of our local communities – those who live here, work here and visit the area – should see real and lasting improvements over the life of this Plan. We are aiming for:

- better service delivery from the public agencies working together effectively – the right services to meet identified local needs and preferences, of high quality, when and where people want them;
- better collaboration between the public agencies and the community, voluntary and private sectors – with everyone contributing to our progress, by working together on our agreed goals and priorities;
- greater consultation with, and active participation by, local people on the issues and decisions which most affect their lives;
- genuine and sustainable change for all our communities, A Better Life for everyone who lives in them.

The organisations that make up the Better Life Consortium and who are committed to making this plan a reality are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| • Arts Factory | • L'Oreal |
| • Amersham | • Menter Iaith |
| • Business in Focus | • Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council |
| • Buy as you view | • Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Health Board |
| • Centre for Independent Living | • Rhondda Housing Association |
| • Chamber of Commerce | • South Wales Police |
| • ELWA | • TEDS |
| • Environment Agency | • Too Good to Waste |
| • Groundwork | • United Polymers |
| • Interlink | • Venture Wales |
| • Job Centre Plus | • WDA |





*Full details, including contact addresses, about all the ways of becoming more involved are available on request or from our website: **www.rct-betterlife.org.uk**.*

*For further information on any of the contents of A Better Life,
Contact: Chris Ashman, Head of Corporate Policy,
Corporate Policy Team, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council,
The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale CF40 2XX.
Tel: (01443) 424064.*

*This plan is available in a range of formats for access by anyone with any sensory disability.
Please contact the number or website above for further details.*