

Measuring and Building Community Resilience

Eleri Williams, Policy & Research Advisor, Building
Communities Trust



About BCT

Building Communities Trust is a charity, funded by a Lottery endowment to promote asset-based community development in some of Wales's poorest communities, providing both funding and support.

We run three separate programmes funding **13** place-based community development initiatives at a neighbourhood level, **11** community anchor organisations and **5** community networks over a long-term period.

We use learning derived from our programme work, as well as specific research findings to advocate for policy and practices which enhance and support community-led action throughout Wales.



Mapping Assets

We mapped community assets across Wales in 2019-20.

Whilst not exhaustive, it remains a robust measure of community owned assets in Wales.

438 assets were identified covering a wide range of functions.

Higher numbers of community owned assets were identified in Gwynedd, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Ceredigion.



Pioneering place-based research: two separate but linked indexes

Community Assets Index

This index brings together 3 brand new domains, incorporating nearly 30 different indicators, resulting in a holistic index of community infrastructure provision in every small geographic area in Wales.

Community Resilience Index

This index merges the Community Assets Index, with the well-known Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, resulting in a holistic index of community resilience for every small geographic area in Wales.

It also identifies 102 Less Resilient Areas in Wales.



Three Domains



Civic Assets

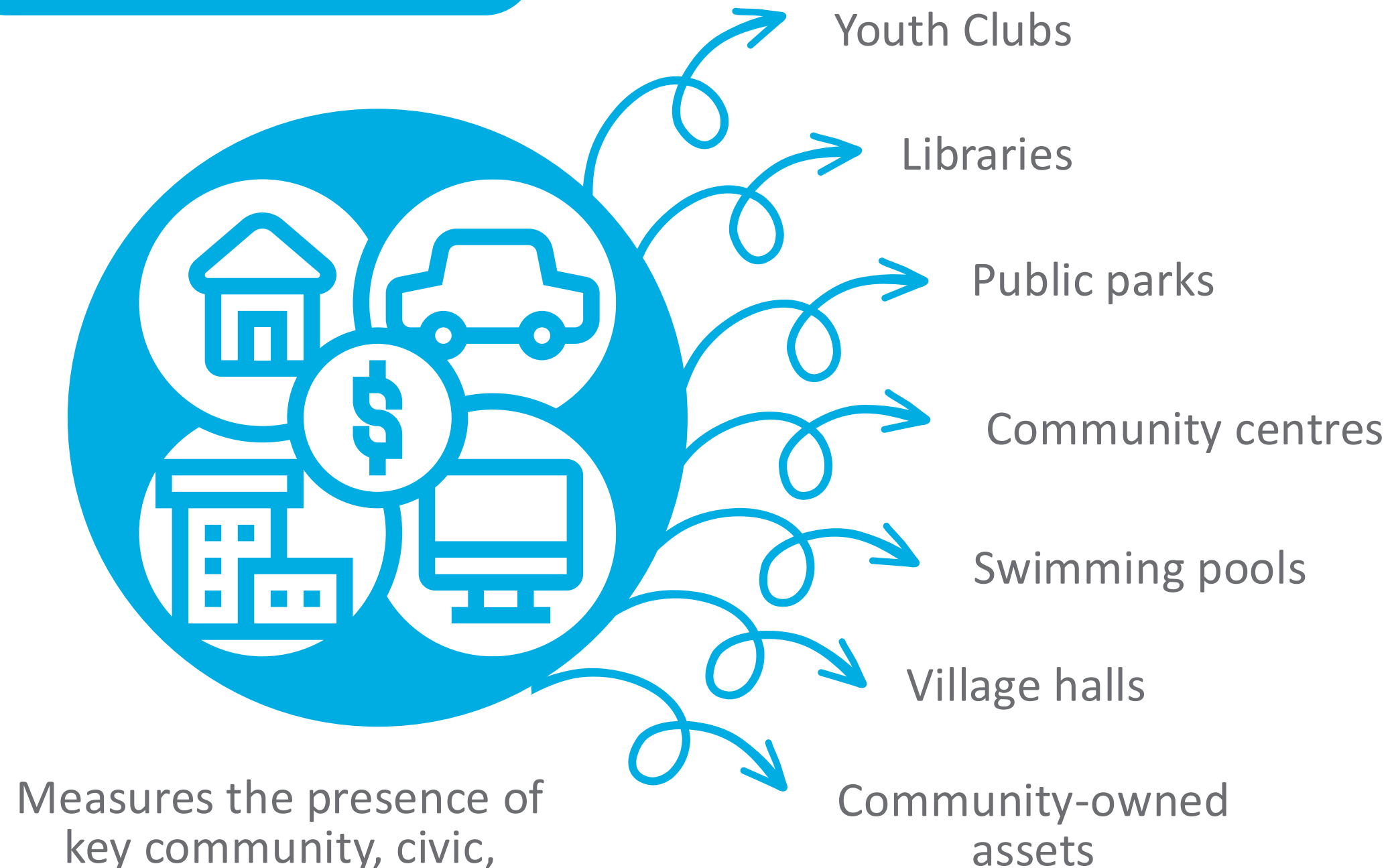


Connectedness



Active & Engaged
Community

Civic Assets



Facilities that provide things to do and spaces to meet often, at no or little cost (to the end user) which are important to how positive a community feels about its area.

Connectedness



Measures connectivity, both in physical terms and ease of access to key services.

Health services

Digital connectivity- upload and download speeds

Social connectivity

Rates of loneliness

Access to public transport

Access to private transport

Strength of the local jobs market

Is there access to key services, such as health services, within a reasonable travel distance? Are public transport and digital infrastructure good? How strong is the local job market?

Active and Engaged Community



Voter turnout rates

Rates of volunteering

Perceptions of social relationships

Number of charity trustees

Grant funding per head from major grant funders

Measures the levels of active participation in community and civic life.

Are charities active in the area, and do people appear to be engaged in the broader civic life of their community?

Community Resilience?

“Communities that possess or have access to a range of tangible and intangible assets which are used by people in the community to enhance individual and community wellbeing.

These assets can be accessed by people both to enable opportunities for social and recreational activities, as well as providing vital support in adverse situations- be they sudden and unexpected or long-term and chronic in nature.”

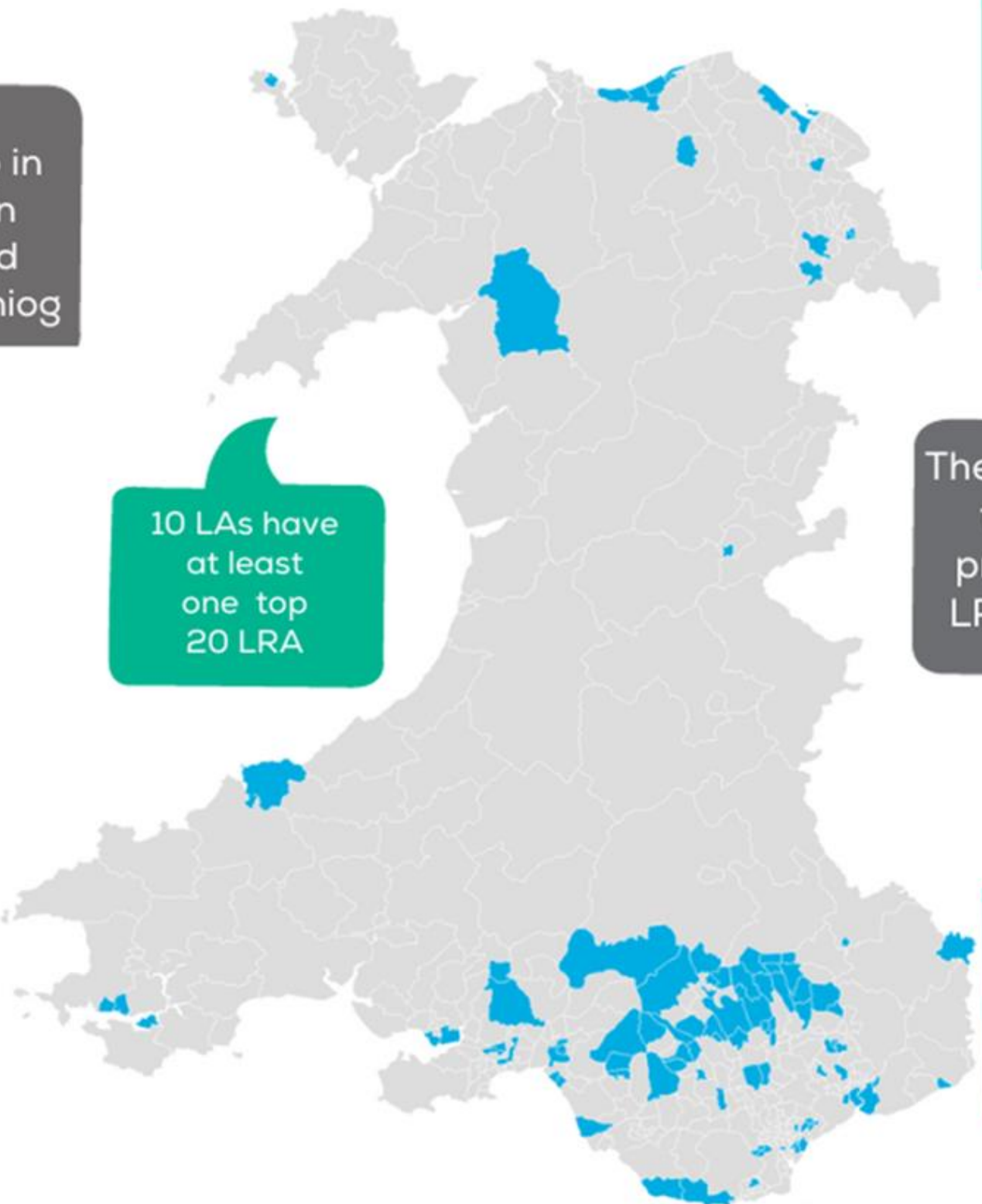
Access to/ownership of assets (physical and intangible) used to enhance wellbeing and provide vital support in times of crisis.



Less Resilient Areas

LRAs

This map demonstrates the 102 Less Resilient Areas (LRAs). These are MSOAs which experience the dual disadvantage of deprivation and community infrastructure challenges.



LRAs are also in Holyhead & in Newtown and Blaenau Ffestiniog

LRAs in North Wales are found around the North Coast, the mouth of the River Dee & Wrexham

The Valleys have the highest proportion of LRAs in Wales

Most of the Top20 LRAs are in South Wales (on the outskirts of Cardiff, Newport & Swansea).

10 LAs have at least one top 20 LRA

88% of all people in LRAs, live in cities and towns (68% national average)

LRAs are also along the coast at Milford Haven, Pembroke Dock & Cardigan



LRAs are places experiencing the dual disadvantage of socio-economic deprivation and weak provision of community infrastructure.

Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2021 • Created with Datawrapper

Key findings

People living in LRAs have significantly different (worse) socio-economic outcomes to those living in more resilient areas.

Health

Residents of LRAs can expect to live shorter, less healthy lives, than the average across Wales.

Life expectancy in LRAs is 76 years, with a healthy life expectancy of 64 years, compared with 78 and 68 years respectively across Wales.

More than one-in-four people in LRAs have a long-term illness, with mental health issues particularly prevalent.

Employment

People in LRAs are more likely to experience wider worklessness than other parts of Wales.

Many people who are out of work are not receiving benefits and many people are not working due to health issues or caring roles.

There are substantially fewer local jobs in LRAs, especially skilled jobs.

Community Services

LRAs have relatively high levels of community-based assets compared to Welsh average but fewer volunteers to run them.

LRAs have far fewer charities than other parts of Wales and secure far less charitable funding despite the presence of “cold spots” being identified by independent funders for over 15 years.

Why this matters

Many of the holes in social infrastructure in LRAs are being filled by community organisations – despite limited funding and support.

Policy makers, practitioners and those providing services focused on key social issues need to recognise the relative isolation and low levels of assets that many people they are trying to support experience.

The data contained in the indexes can be used to target specific initiatives at a hyper-local level.



A changing picture and the cost-of-living crisis

Community organisations have always provided vital informal support for people in need;

However, the cost-of-living crisis, twinned with cuts to public services has placed even greater demand on community organisations.

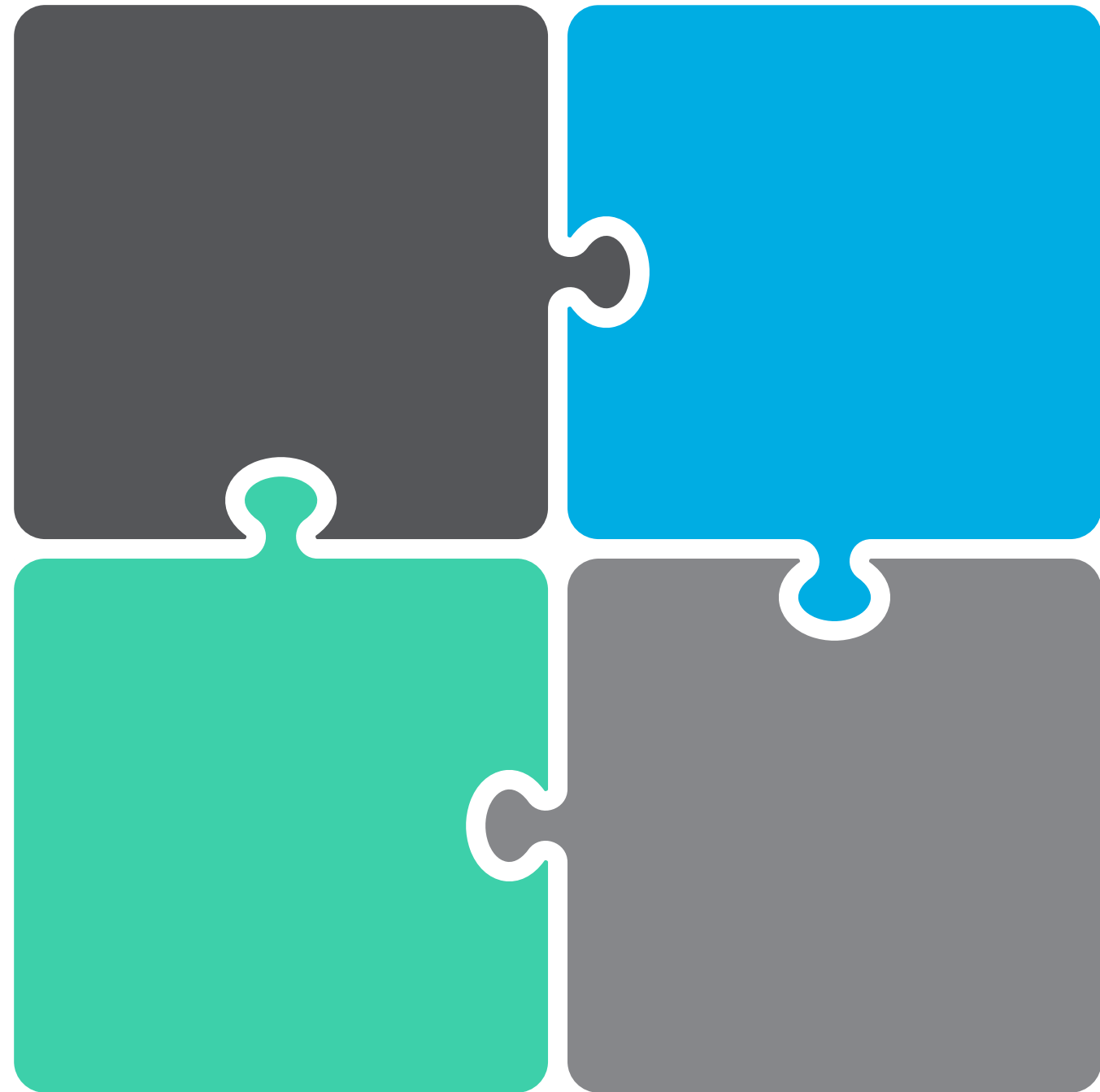
Groups which were originally developed to build relationships and offer recreational opportunities in their communities now find themselves providing urgent assistance to help people meet their basic needs.

Major challenges include:

- Increasing costs & decreasing income
- Volunteer and staff recruitment/retention
- Rising demand for services as public sector capacity reduces
- Short-term need risks displacing long-term aspirations



Key enablers for resilient community action



Access to community-owned or community-
led space/ facilities

Good levels of social capital; quality of
relationships, trust

Enough skilled volunteers – flexibility and
ability to evolve

Connections and ability to leverage
resources (people, things, cash)



Diolch yn fawr

To find out more about
our work please visit:

www.bct.wales