

EIN LLAIS PROJECT

PLATFORM



FOREWORD

Why is community work so important? Platfform has had the privilege of working with the community of Ty Sign, alongside others across South Wales for many years. Over time, we began to suspect traditional ways of 'doing support' are failing people.

Securing this funding from The Moondance Foundation has been a significant step forward for us in our understanding of why. It's allowed us to challenge what we know doesn't work, to do more of what we know does work and to shape what we believe is a vital missing piece of the support our public and 'helping services' should and could be offering to communities.

A community approach to mental health

You will often hear calls for more investment in mental health services, reduced waiting lists and more access to talking therapies. At Platfform we believe that if we're truly going to turn the tide on generations of distress, we need healthy thriving communities.

Social problems such as poverty and inequality hinder our ability to live well. Not knowing where the money to pay the rent or put food on the table will come from, not feeling safe or knowing where to turn to for help is traumatic.

That is why the Ein Llais project matters and why it's different

Our work in Ty Sign uses psychological interventions and applies them in a community context. Helping individuals without considering the impact of their life experiences, relationships, how they grew up, or where they live only goes so far.

Local community organisations are often the first point of call for many crisis situations and are exposed to lots of distress. That's why they should be the foundation for our services. In Ty Sign we worked in partnership with local groups to support and advise on how to understand trauma and safely manage distress – reducing fear of how to support people traditionally seen as too complex or risky for community spaces. Not only does this mean healthy individuals, but plants the seeds for thriving psychosocial communities that have the tools, knowledge and resources to thrive.

> **Is this easy? No - this work can be messy, confusing and difficult to pin down in a model or diagram, but it's absolutely making a difference.**

But this vital work isn't funded by governments, local authorities or the NHS. And this needs to change. Only by making sure people have access to healthy and safe communities to live, grow and work will we address the underlying causes of mental ill health and break the cycle of intergenerational trauma. Ty Sign can be an example of what is possible when we change how we approach services, placing community and connection at the forefront. And this work has a legacy, through this project we've been successful in securing funding from the National Lottery Fund to grow this work in other areas of Wales, London and Scotland in the same way. The ripple effect is growing.

We're hugely grateful to The Moondance Foundation for their support and look forward to continuing to work together in the future again.

Ewan Hilton,
Platfform CEO

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About Ein Llais

Ein Llais was a three-year community development project delivered by Platfform and funded by The Moondance Foundation, working with community members in Ty Sign, Risca.

Bringing together psychology and community development, the project explored how trauma-informed, relationship-based and community-led approaches can improve mental health and support lasting change.

What we heard

Community members spoke about challenges including poverty, homelessness, substance use, isolation and barriers to accessing support. They also highlighted the community's strengths: resilience, local knowledge, strong relationships and a desire to create positive change.

Rather than arriving with solutions, Ein Llais focused on listening, building trust and understanding local priorities. This shaped how resources were used and what activities were developed.

What we did

We worked alongside community members to deliver a range of activities and interventions, including:

- Accessible, compassionate support in trusted community spaces
- Listening to community members and hearing their stories and experiences
- Offering small grants to meet individuals' immediate needs and develop longer-term community resources
- Developing responsive, community-led activities and interventions – from health advocacy and wellbeing walks to community breakfasts, local clean-ups, a football team and police community consultations
- Working alongside local organisations and services to build relationships and shared understanding
- Creating materials that amplify community voices and experiences
- Embedding and modelling trauma-informed and relational approaches

The project evolved over time, combining psychological knowledge with community development approaches to respond to emerging needs and opportunities.

What changed

Through practitioner observations, stories from residents and feedback gathered throughout the project, we found that Ein Llais contributed to positive change at individual, community and systems levels. Community members shared experiences of stronger social connections and increased confidence, while we observed greater involvement in local decision-making.

People were better able to access support, share knowledge and support one another. Local services also developed a deeper understanding of people's experiences, creating opportunities for more collaborative and trauma-informed working.

Key Learning

The project found that:

- Meaningful change takes time, trust and strong relationships.
- Understanding trauma and trauma-informed practice have an important role to play in communities, especially for people who have been marginalised.
- Community workers need support, care and compassionate leadership.
- Approaches from psychology can strengthen community development, particularly in areas experiencing significant distress.

Looking Forward

Ein Llais demonstrates what is possible when we bring together psychology and community development, and when this work is given the time, trust and resources to create change alongside communities. The project demonstrates how combining these approaches can improve wellbeing and address community-level trauma.



SECTION 2:
THE EIN LLAIS PROJECT

The Ein Llais project brought together psychology and community development. Over three years, from 2023-2026, we took a trauma-informed and healing-focused approach to community-building with residents in a block of flats in Ty Sign, Risca. These residents are the 'community' of the Ein Llais project.

The project's main aim was to support improved mental health and wellbeing for community members. To achieve this, we also aimed to strengthen community voice and connections between its members, shift existing harmful narratives about the area, and contribute to longer-term systemic change.

Ein Llais was funded by The Moondance Foundation and delivered by Platfform.

Community-Building in the Context of Trauma

The Ein Llais approach was based on the understanding that trauma and adverse experiences affect communities, as well as individuals, and that creating lasting change requires us to work collectively, not just at an individual level. Community and individual mental health are deeply connected.

The Ein Llais community sits within a history of industrial and economic change, decline and neglect. Through conversations, the community shared stories of the impact of these changes, including losing jobs and livelihoods, families moving away, changing demographics, and changes to housing and local services. They shared these stories alongside experiences of poverty, homelessness, substance use, disrupted relationships and other forms of adversity. They shared experiences of barriers to accessing and engaging with traditional services, including mental health support.

> **Community members also talked about how the area had been defined by long-standing harmful narratives, contributing to stigma, isolation and a reduced sense of pride in place.**

This context highlighted the need to work differently with communities to create lasting change for people's mental health and wellbeing, and the need to respond to the relationship between people's mental health and their social context. The experiences of the community and the difficulties people faced were shaped by both individual circumstances and wider social, economic and political decisions.

We believe that change and healing can begin within communities, and that sustainable change is more likely when people have a meaningful role in shaping it. However, trauma can present challenges to established community-building approaches, such as co-production and participatory budgeting, and in Ein Llais we explored who might be missing out and how to address these barriers.

Ein Llais: how we worked

In the Ein Llais project, our work was informed by psychology and an understanding of trauma, grounded in relationships and led by the community.

We took the time to build trusting relationships and understand what mattered to community members, working alongside them, local organisations and services to develop responses together.

> **Rather than starting with a list of solutions, our priorities and activities developed through relationships, conversations and ideas emerging from the community.**

Activities and interventions that enabled us to do this included:

- Accessible, compassionate support offered in trusted community spaces
- Investment in listening to the community and hearing people's stories and experiences
- Access to funding to meet immediate needs and to develop longer term, sustainable interventions in the community
- Developing interventions that respond to community members' needs – from health advocacy to wellbeing walks, from community breakfasts to clearing local spaces and litter picking, from establishing a football team to supporting police community consultations
- Working alongside existing community organisations and local services to build relationships and shared understanding between professionals and community members
- Creating materials that tell a different story about the community, working alongside residents
- Embedding trauma-informed and relational approaches and modelling these in the community.

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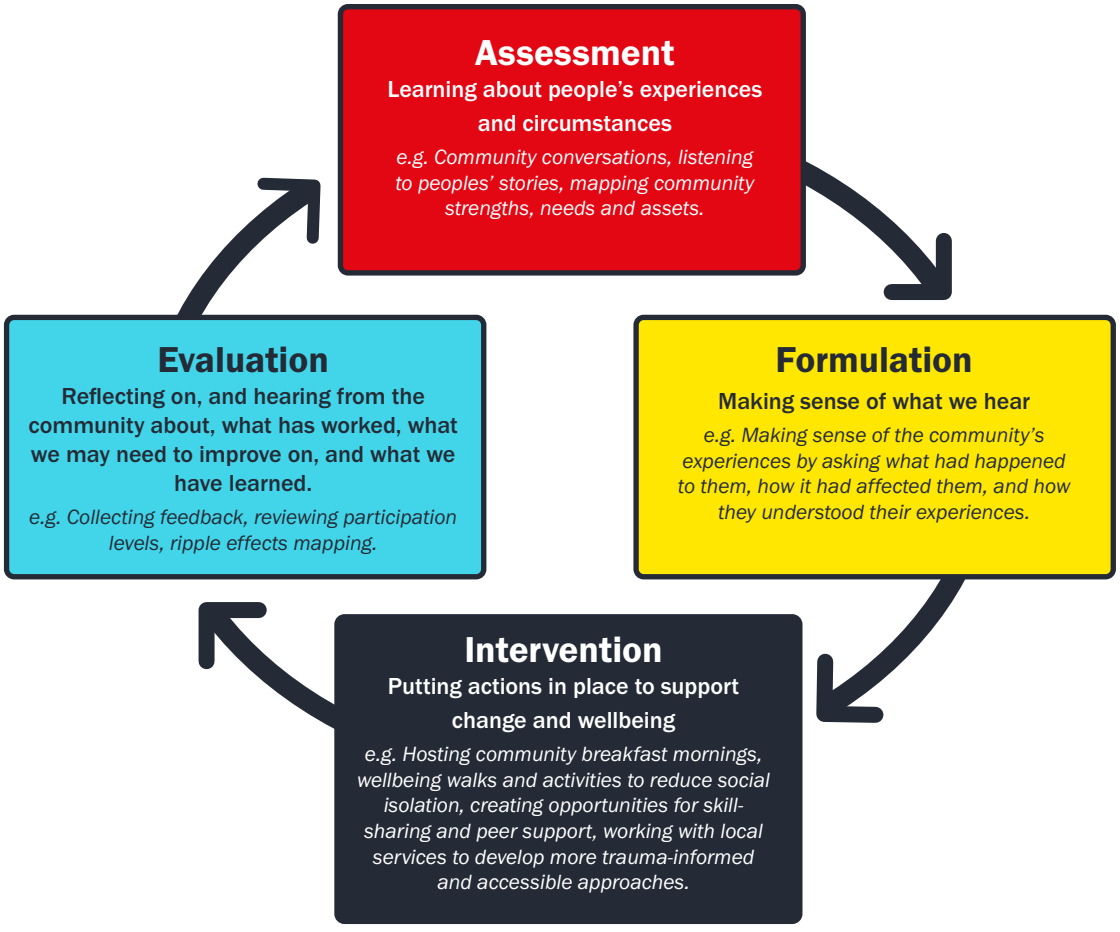
SECTION 3: OUR APPROACH

In the Ein Llais project, we took a developmental approach, learning as we worked and responding as our understanding of the community developed.

This was supported by flexible funding, which enabled us to review, reflect and adapt our plans as we learnt more about the community's needs and priorities. A dedicated Community Fund also gave the project resources to direct towards goals community members identified.

The core delivery team included two Assistant Psychologists who worked with the community - supported by a Clinical Psychologist and Platfform's Head of Communities - through clinical supervision, project management, and programme and intervention design expertise.

Having psychological expertise embedded within the project provided space for reflection, allowing the team to step back from immediate issues, think about what we were seeing, consider the impact of our work and identify what might need to change or where there were opportunities for preventative work. We also drew on the clinical cycle used in psychology:





We also drew on a range of other models and approaches, including Human Learning Systems, Assets-Based Community Development, Trauma-Informed Community Building and the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience model.

SECTION 4: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY: STORIES AND SENSEMAKING

We worked to build a fuller picture of the community, its strengths, challenges and where support was needed through conversations with community members and storytelling activities alongside statistical data, research and local stakeholders' knowledge.

What the data tells us, and what it misses

Most publicly available data for the area is reported at a geography that covers a much larger and more diverse population than the hyper-local community we work with (e.g. Risca or Caerphilly as a whole). As a result, the significant deprivation experienced within our community can be masked by the characteristics and outcomes of surrounding areas.

We commissioned a bespoke analysis using the smallest geographical area for which robust data is available from Local Insight (**localinsight.org**). This provides a more detailed and locally relevant picture of the community and helps to identify levels of need that are not visible in wider-area datasets.

1 The area experiences significant socioeconomic disadvantage.

30.2% of people affected by income deprivation and over a third of working-age adults claiming out-of-work benefits.

2 Health needs, especially mental health needs, are considerably higher than average.

Mental health conditions are recorded at much higher rates (40%) compared with the Welsh average (25.1%), and 23% of PIP claims relate to mental health. Over a quarter of people report a disability that limits daily activities, and premature mortality rates exceed local and national averages.

3 People face multiple challenges linked to social exclusion and limited access to resources.

These include high levels of food insecurity, population decline, 25% of households not having a car, and above average crime rates.

An important note: although this analysis used the smallest geographical area available, it still includes surrounding streets and households, covering a population around three times the size of the community with whom we worked. It therefore provides the best available picture of local need, but not a precise representation of residents' experiences. This matters because data informs service planning, investment and

involvement opportunities. When the needs of small communities are hidden within larger datasets, they can be underestimated. We need to use data alongside listening to people's experiences and stories to build a fuller picture.

Ein Llais Storytelling Project

In addition to opportunities for informal conversations, and to hearing residents' experience as part of the Wellbeing Fund activity, the Storytelling Project invited community members to share their life experiences and reflections on the community. For many, this was the first time they had spoken about their lives in such depth, which was a powerful intervention in itself.

The stories also gave us a better understanding of the challenges people had faced, what had brought them to the community, and the people, places and support that mattered most to them. They helped build a clearer picture of the community and the lives of the people who live there.

Five key themes emerged from these stories:

1 Early experiences shape later life.

'I was always cwtching my brother to sleep while they argued and smashed the house up.'

Many community members described childhood instability, family conflict, violence, separation and caring responsibilities. These experiences often influenced their sense of safety, belonging and later life opportunities.

2 Adversity accumulated over time.

'I haven't had enough money to even pay a penny off so I'm going to be stuck in this position.'

Early difficulties were frequently followed by challenges in adulthood, including unstable relationships, homelessness, poor health, addiction, bereavement and financial hardship. Community members described feeling trapped by these overlapping pressures.

3 This area was experienced as both unsafe and stigmatised.

'It's always been people on the outside looking in and have this portrayal of what it's like here.'

Community members spoke about poor housing, drug use, intimidation, isolation and barriers to support. They also described the impact of negative perceptions from outside the community.

4 Community relationships provide vital support.

'They have all helped me through up here; if it wasn't for these, I don't know where I'd be.'

Despite challenges, community members described neighbours, friends, pets and local organisations as important sources of connection, care and practical help.

5 Community members continue to show hope and resilience.

'I got my flat on [area in Ty Sign] and began to rebuild my life.'

Many community members described rebuilding their lives, coping in different ways, improving relationships and working towards future goals. For some, the flats represented a fresh start.

*All quotes are from community member unless otherwise stated

Making sense of what we heard

Through learning we developed a shared understanding – or formulation – of the issues affecting the community. To guide our sensemaking, we used the Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) which explores how people's experiences are shaped by their circumstances and how they respond to them.

What has happened to this community? (Power)

The closure of local industries, combined with austerity measures and reductions in public services, contributed to growing deprivation and reduced investment in the area. Over time, the area became a common placement location for people experiencing homelessness, trauma, substance use difficulties, and social exclusion, many of whom were moved from outside the area with little support to establish local connections.

POWER THREAT MEANING FRAMEWORK

What is the story that links this all together?

THREAT

How has this affected people?

Community members face multiple and ongoing threats, including poverty, isolation, stigma, poor physical and mental health, substance use, violence, exploitation, insecure housing, and a deteriorating physical environment. Many have experienced significant trauma both before and during living here.



MEANING

What sense do people make of these experiences?

Many community members feel forgotten, powerless and judged, with negative perceptions of the area contributing to shame, mistrust, and hopelessness.



THREAT RESPONSE

What have people had to do to survive?

Community members have shown resourcefulness by relying on informal support, adapting to difficult circumstances, and finding ways to cope (e.g. self-medication). While these responses can provide short-term relief, they may also increase vulnerability to harm, exploitation, and exclusion.



POWER RESOURCES

What strengths exist?

Despite significant challenges, the community shows strong resilience. Community members support one another, share skills, and have demonstrated their ability to strengthen connections and create positive change when given the opportunity.



How is/was power operating in your life?

(Johnstone & Boyle, 2018)



SECTION 5:
FROM LEARNING TO DOING

Activities like formulation are important for drawing together learning, but the key thing is that they become a springboard for action that can create change.

The community's priorities for change

We asked what mattered most to people in the community and what they would like to see change or develop.

Many people faced urgent day-to-day challenges that needed addressing before they could focus on longer-term goals. To reflect this, priorities were grouped into short-term and longer-term asks, helping us consider both immediate needs and lasting change.

We grouped the community's longer-term priorities based on People, Place, and Equitable Opportunity to highlight key areas for community improvement. This drew on the approach set out in the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework (ACER).

The table below gives examples of community members' views on what they would like to see change or develop within the community.

Place	People	Equitable Opportunities
We want communal areas to feel clean and safe	We want people to see the good and the bad, people are so negative about us	We want opportunities to access good healthcare
We want the rates of crime to go down	We don't get many opportunities to get to know each other	There is no work up here
We want to feel proud of where we live when family come to visit	Services don't understand us, and they are overstretched	We don't have access to basic resources
We want the things that are broken or damaged to be repaired	I feel lonely and isolated living here	Without access to transport, we can't easily get to appointments

These priorities shaped how we used the **Community Fund** and, in turn, how we developed activities alongside the community.

The Community Fund was split into two strands:

- the **Wellbeing Fund**, which provided flexible, individual support of up to £60 per person, up to three times per quarter, to respond to day-to-day needs
- the **Sustainable Fund**, which used learning from these requests, alongside wider conversations and engagement, to invest in longer-term resources, activities and community assets.

These funds shaped how we turned learning into action. The sections below show what this looked like in practice and the difference it made.

Meeting immediate needs and creating pathways to support

The community told us that...	We responded by...	This looked like...
Day-to-day practical challenges could make it harder to focus on longer-term goals.	Creating flexible ways to respond to what people needed, while using these interactions to build relationships and connect people with wider support.	**Using the Wellbeing Fund to respond to practical barriers, including purchasing mobile phones, clothing, food, ID cards and transport to essential services.** **Where financial support was not what someone needed, we helped them identify and connect with the service best placed to support them.**

What made this different: we did not assume that immediate practical needs could be separated from wider wellbeing. The Wellbeing Fund was not treated simply as financial assistance. As we were regularly present in local community spaces and had an open-access approach, people could bring whatever they were experiencing without needing a referral. We used Wellbeing Fund conversations as an opportunity to understand each person's circumstances, build a relationship, and provide emotional support. This helped us identify the factors that had led to their situation and explore longer-term, more sustainable solutions alongside meeting their immediate needs.

This meant we could address immediate practical needs while also helping people navigate complex systems and access wider support. By reducing day-to-day pressures and taking time to understand their circumstances, we created opportunities for more meaningful conversations about wellbeing, underlying challenges, and longer-term solutions.

How the community responded:

> **"I don't feel comfortable with a lot of people, I never open up like this... knew you were genuine when we met, felt non-judgemental and like a conversation. Thank you so much for helping me get back on track."**

Creating opportunities for connection and belonging

The community told us that...	We responded by...	This looked like...
Opportunities to connect with others were limited, and people felt isolated within the community. They also highlighted concerns about the condition of shared spaces in the flats, including areas that did not always feel safe, clean or cared for.	Creating regular, accessible opportunities for people to spend time together, build relationships and connect with the wider community, and to improve and take ownership of shared spaces.	Regular activities, delivered jointly with local stakeholders, included: **Weekly Breakfast Mornings** **Nature wellbeing walks, which will continue beyond the project** **Woodworking workshops** **Community clean-up events** **Festive events, including Christmas parties**

What made this different: our activities offered a different approach to both traditional support services. Rather than expecting people to access support through formal appointments, we chose to meet people where they were. Creating space to build deeper relationships and a sense of safety in welcoming community spaces, over food and conversation, was as important to us as the activities themselves. This informal setting enabled us to provide practical and emotional support while applying psychological principles in ways that felt accessible and responsive to everyday needs. The activities were shaped around residents' interests, providing consistent opportunities for people to spend time together and allowing connections to develop at their own pace.

This meant we could create space for new relationships to form and existing ones to deepen, contributing over time to stronger networks of connection and support, belonging and community.

How the community responded:

> "These breakfasts are great. It's like a real community now... It's nice to sit and just have a chat."



Challenging the negative narrative about the community

The community told us that...	We responded by...	This looked like...
They were often viewed negatively. These perceptions did not reflect the full range of people, experiences and strengths within the community.	Centring residents' voices and stories, and creating opportunities to broaden how the community was represented and understood.	**Bringing community members together with people from the wider Risca community through activities such as woodworking workshops.** **Supporting residents to share their experiences through the Storytelling Project and making a community video.**

What made this different: we brought openness and curiosity to understanding what was beneath people's responses, rather than treating difficult experiences as evidence of what the community was like. We modelled this way of understanding through opportunities for people to meet as individuals and experience one another differently. Rather than simply presenting a different narrative, this gave people the opportunity to question their own assumptions through these interactions. Throughout, we took a co-productive approach where possible, ensuring residents were in control of how their experiences and stories were shared, and supporting them to shape the narrative of their own community.

This meant we could support residents to define how their community was understood, helping a more balanced and authentic picture emerge that reflected both its challenges and its strengths.

How the community responded:

> **Wider Risca community members who joined the woodworking workshops described people from the community as "lovely" and "no different from anyone else", challenging some of the assumptions they had previously held about the community.**

Building sustainable resources within the community

The community told us that...	We responded by...	This looked like...
Some challenges were ongoing and could not be addressed through one-off support alone, creating a need for resources and opportunities that could benefit the community over time.	Using what we learned from individual requests and wider conversations to develop longer-term resources with local organisations and community partners.	Developing longer-term resources and initiatives, including: **Good call – free phone booth to contact essential services** **Fresh Start — free laundry service** **Perfect Fit — free clothing service** **Pantri — subsidised food support**

What made this different: we treated sustainability as part of the work from the outset, rather than creating activities that depended on the project team to continue delivering them. We continually asked what could remain after Ein Llais ended and who would be best placed to carry it forward. We developed interventions with community partners who would be able to sustain them after the project ended, using our Sustainable Fund to invest in local assets and strengthen partners' capacity to continue supporting residents.

This meant we could turn recurring needs into practical support that benefited not just the community we worked with, but people across Ty Sign and Risca, creating foundations for activity and support beyond Ein Llais.

How the community responded:

> **"I love having Perfect Fit on the doorstep. Charity shops are great but having this there, that you can access privately, trying everything on first, and at short notice has been wonderful for me."**

Strengthening relationships between the community and services

The community told us that...	We responded by...	This looked like...
They found services difficult to navigate and felt let down as they came and went over time. They did not always feel heard and wanted their experiences and priorities to be understood and reflected in what happened next.	Strengthening relationships between community members and services, while creating opportunities for community voices to inform conversations and decisions about issues affecting them.	**Working alongside people to navigate housing, health and other services.** **Building relationships with local community centres through activities such as Breakfast Mornings.** **Bringing community members together with the police, PCSOs and housing teams through Increased Safety Meetings.** **Advocating for the community and bringing wider organisations and decision-makers into the work.** **Sharing learning through the Priorities for Change document, reports and events**

What made this difference was: we worked alongside people rather than simply signposting them on to services. Where appropriate, we stayed involved, made connections and supported communication between community members and services, helping to create more joined-up support. We also created a shared record of community priorities through the Priorities for Change document to help services and stakeholders continue to build on what we had heard from community members during the project.

This meant we could help community members become more confident in knowing where to go and who to turn to for support, while strengthening their voice in conversations about issues affecting them. It also supported services and stakeholders to continue to deepen their understanding of community priorities.

How the community responded:

> **"Thank you for the help. Before you two, it felt like I was taking one step forward and two steps back."**

> **"The changes are incremental but visible. The collaboration demonstrates how consistent, asset-based practice can begin to transform entrenched systems of crisis response into preventative, dignified support."**
>
> Stakeholder

SECTION 6: THE DIFFERENCE EIN LLAIS MADE

Through the Ein Llais project, we saw change both within the community and in how local organisations worked alongside community members.

These changes were closely connected, with stronger relationships, greater trust and increased collaboration creating opportunities for lasting impact.

Changes were identified through conversations with community members and people working in the community, informal feedback, storytelling sessions and Ripple Effects Mapping.

Changes in the Community

Through the project, community members reported feeling more connected, supported and engaged in the development of their community.

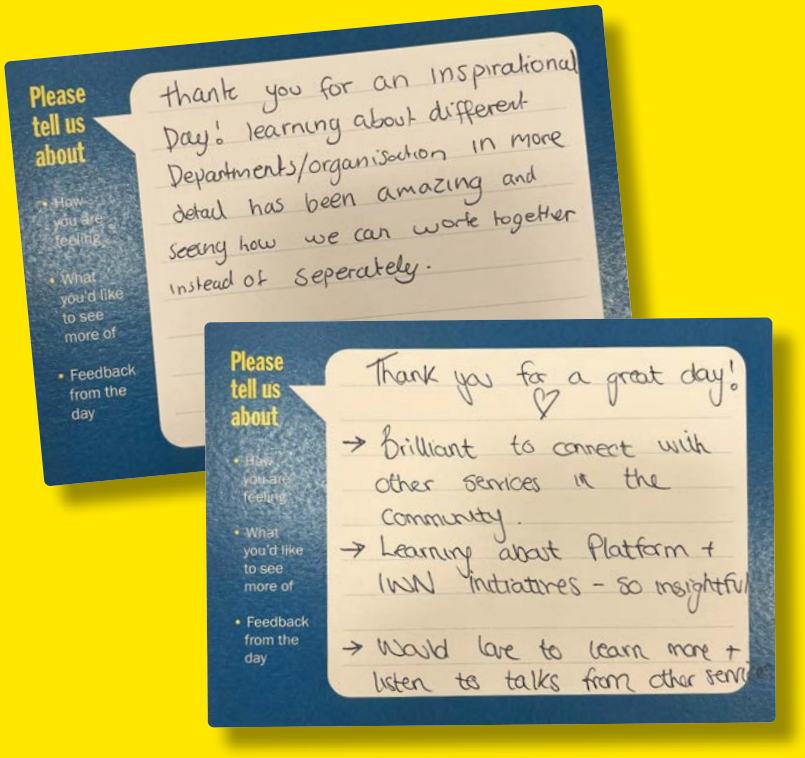
We noticed:

People felt heard.	People felt more confident to advocate for themselves and each other.	People developed stronger connections.	People felt more confident accessing support.
Community members shared ideas and helped shape activities. They felt their views were listened to and valued.	Community members were better able to challenge barriers and seek support when needed. People developed a better understanding of what they could reasonably expect from services and professionals. They felt more confident asking questions, raising concerns and advocating for the support they were entitled to receive.	New friendships and support networks formed. People shared information, encouragement and practical help. Loneliness and isolation were reduced.	Residents had a better understanding of available services. People felt more able to ask for help when needed.

Community voices:

> ‘I’m happy with the socialising, we have the TLC, we have town and all the charity shops. I think there’s enough. We have got it all.’

> ‘If you said to me you can walk away from here. I would say no, this is home... I’ve only ever had positives. You could move somewhere else and it could be really bad. But at the end of the day, I’m happy.’



Feedback cards from the Stakeholder Wellbeing Day hosted in collaboration with ABUHB’s Integrated Wellbeing Network

Changes in Local Systems and Services

The project also influenced how organisations and professionals worked alongside the community. This included people working in public services and community organisations (‘professionals’).

We noticed:

Professionals built stronger relationships with community members.	More connections and relationships were built between services.	Professionals developed more trauma-informed approaches.	Community insight informed services.
Trust increased between professionals such as PCSOs or local authority and community members. Professionals gained a deeper understanding of local experiences. Community members gained a better understanding of the experiences of professionals working in the area.	Organisations were better able to coordinate support. We saw more collaboration and communication between services.	Professionals reflected on how support was experienced. Professionals showed more compassion and flexibility in interactions with community members.	The experiences of community members influenced discussions and decisions. Organisations had a deeper understanding of local needs.

Stakeholder voices:

> ‘Ein Llais has complemented our work by providing a structured way to capture and represent the voices of the communities we support… This has been particularly valuable in shaping projects at the Sycamore Centre, ensuring they reflect what people actually want and need. It also supports our position as a community anchor organisation, bridging the gap between residents and statutory services.’

CVW (Community Volunteers Wales)

> ‘It has been a pleasure to work alongside Platfform over the past 6 months as it has enabled me to better understand people’s situations and views and helped build relationships with contract holders and the community.’

Housing officer

> ‘I feel the meetings with Platfform, Councillors, the Housing Office and myself have been really good in helping building relationships with the residents… I have formed relationships with many of the residents and often see them at either the TLC Cafe or Snug and they will approach me to talk to, whereas before they wouldn’t have approached someone in a Police uniform… they see me more as someone they can speak to for help and support rather than a threat.’

PCSO



Understanding Impact Through Ripple Effects Mapping

Ripple Effects Mapping helped us understand how small actions and conversations created wider change over time.

> **It showed how relationship-based approaches helped strengthen both community connections and local systems.**

The following story illustrates how a simple weekly activity created impacts that extended far beyond its original purpose.

Story of Change: Breakfast Mornings

What began as a weekly breakfast morning became a catalyst for wider community change. Every Wednesday, we provided free breakfasts in a local community venue.

> **'Breakfast was lovely - it cheered my day.'**

The breakfasts offered more than a hot meal. They gave people a regular opportunity to connect with others, build friendships and feel part of their community.

> **'You don't see anyone and then Wednesday we all turn up at breakfast... so we're not staring at four walls all day, every day losing our marbles.'**

The key difference in our approach was that practical and emotional support was delivered through trusted relationships and informal engagement – chats over a hot breakfast – rather than formal appointments or targeted interventions. Community members could get to know Ein Llais staff, housing officers and other local professionals in a relaxed environment.

> **'I know the difference between life and death sometimes is a conversation, just talking to someone for 10 minutes, 20 minutes of your time. And that can make a big difference.'**

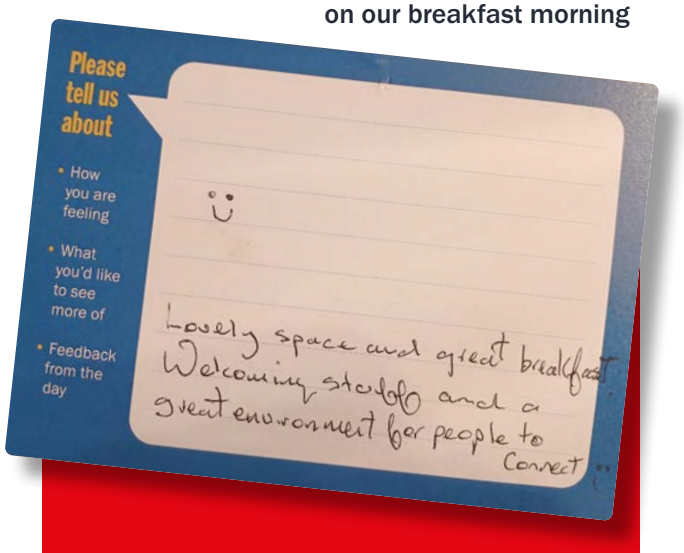
As trust grew, residents were more likely to ask for help with practical issues, such as ordering ID cards, supporting them with applications or connecting them to local services. We were also able to advocate on their behalf with housing officers and other teams, helping them access support they might not otherwise have received.

> **'It's due to you lot too, because you have helped me loads. Come down here and have some food. You are the only ones who support me.'**

The impact extended beyond those attending the breakfasts. Stronger connections developed between residents, community organisations and statutory services, improving communication and collaboration.

> **'It has enabled me to better understand people's situations and views and helped build relationships with contract holders and the community.'**
>
> Housing officer

Feedback card from a community member on our breakfast morning



By understanding the ripple effects of our breakfast morning events, we learned that they acted as a gateway to wider support and demonstrated how investing in relationships and informal community spaces can create impacts that reach far beyond the original activity.

SECTION 7: OUR LEARNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Meaningful change takes time

Meaningful change in communities takes time, relationships and a willingness to work differently. In the Ein Llais project, bringing psychological knowledge into the community, keeping community members at the heart of the work and drawing on trauma-informed practice created opportunities to truly respond to people's circumstances. Change did not happen through a single intervention or activity, but through consistent presence, genuine collaboration and creating space for people's voices to shape what happens in the community. This way of working involved uncertainty and periods of trial and error.

> **Having the time and organisational support to reflect, adapt and learn meant these became part of the process and a reason for our success, rather than barriers to it.**

We recommend **further investment in flexible, community-based approaches drawing on psychological principles**, allowing relationships to develop over time and responses to evolve alongside community needs.

Bring trauma-informed approaches into communities

We learned that trauma-informed practice requires more than recognising that people have experienced trauma. It includes recognising the role that trauma can play in communities. It means being willing to adapt how we work, introduce flexibility, and consider what is needed to make support genuinely accessible. We found that trauma can present challenges to engagement with traditional community-building approaches, particularly where these rely on sustained participation and collaboration. Our work prompted us to ask who we may be missing during these approaches, community conversations and activities, why we have not been able to reach them, and what we can do differently to support their involvement.

We recommend that continued development of trauma-informed ways of working to include not only how we understand and respond to people's experiences, but also **how services and projects can respond to trauma to make participation and support fully accessible**. This includes **tailored support for community organisations to take on trauma-informed approaches**.

Care for those who care for our communities

We had the opportunity to witness the commitment of people working across local services and organisations, often within systems under significant pressure, who themselves are members of the communities they serve. This reinforced the importance of recognising and caring for those who care for our communities, particularly given the demands of this work. We also saw the value of collaboration across existing services and organisations, enabling better use of the resources, knowledge and relationships already present within communities.

We recommend **support and investment that focuses on creating care for those doing the work of building communities and community mental health**, ensuring this is readily available and responsive to people's needs. This includes **placing relationships at the heart of how people are supported** and asking what staff need to work well, as well as **compassionate leadership**. It could also include **working across services to create communities of support and practice**.

Bring psychology alongside community development

The Ein Llais project demonstrates that **psychological support has a key role to play in making lasting change in communities**, especially when we are working with groups of people facing high levels of distress, and when other community-building approaches hit barriers or face blocks. The relational and trauma-informed approaches outlined in this report can sit alongside assets-based and participatory approaches to deepen their impact.

> **We recommend support, investment and further exploration of how approaches from psychology can complement established community development approaches to make deeper changes for communities in Wales.**



SECTION 8:
THE EIN LLAIS LEGACY

As Ein Llais comes to an end, its legacy will be reflected in the relationships, resources and learning that remain within and around the community.

Over the past three years, residents have built new and deeper relationships with neighbours they had lived alongside for years, shared knowledge and experiences with each other, and developed greater confidence in knowing that their voices matter and deserve to be heard. The project created space for people to recognise their own strengths, share their stories, and see how they can create change when people work together.

> **These relationships have extended beyond the community itself. Connections developed between residents and local organisations, including the local authority, Police Community Support Officers, Community Volunteers Wales (CVW) and TLC Café, provide an important foundation for residents to remain connected to local support, resources and assets.**

A particularly significant development is the new Community Anchor role in Ty Sign, which emerged through learning from Ein Llais and existing community support and is funded by The Moondance Foundation.

The role is now in place at The Sycamore Centre (run by CVW), providing a consistent local presence, supporting community trust and partnership working, and ensuring that lived experience continues to inform local decision-making. It also provides an opportunity to build on the infrastructure and partnerships established through Ein Llais and at The Sycamore Centre, including initiatives such as Good Call and Perfect Fit. We look forward to seeing how this develops and what further opportunities it creates for the community.

Some of the materials created during the project – such as the community video and this report - will remain as resources that can carry residents' priorities beyond Ein Llais, continuing to inform future work and advocacy.

Learning from Ein Llais has informed Hope and Healing, a five-year Platfform project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, exploring new ways of putting community and relationships at the heart of mental health support. Working with grassroots groups, community organisations and public services, the project creates opportunities to continue exploring how community-led, relational approaches can contribute to wider change for mental health and social justice.

SECTION 9: THANK YOU

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to Ein Llais, most importantly the community members who shared their experiences, knowledge and gave their time to work alongside us. Their openness and willingness to share their stories and ideas, and their involvement throughout the project, made this work possible and shaped what the project became.

We are also grateful to the local organisations and services, including Community Volunteer Wales, TLC Café, the local authority, PCSOs and the Integrated Wellbeing Network at ABUHB, who worked alongside us with great enthusiasm, commitment and generosity; and to our colleagues across Platfform who supported the project team throughout the last three years.

We would also like to thank our funder, The Moondance Foundation, whose support enabled us to take a different approach to community-based work, providing the flexibility, time and space to make this work possible.

THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING US TO BE PART OF THIS COMMUNITY AND FOR HELPING US LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD CHANGE TOGETHER. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING WHAT COMES NEXT.

SECTION 10: REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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SECTION 11: ABOUT PLATFFORM

Platfform is the charity working to change the story around mental health, transform the systems there to help, and create the conditions for people, communities and organisations to thrive.

Platfform has run mental health and community services for over 35 years. Today we work with 19,000 people through 150 projects and services, with support spanning mental health hospitals and residential settings, social care, housing and homelessness, schools and youth services, community projects and businesses.

Platfform campaigns to expand people's understanding of mental health through a social justice lens, to improve our public service systems and influence government policy – making the case for change accessible to the public and decision-makers.

PLATFFORM

SECTION 12: GLOSSARY

ABCD / Asset-Based Community Development: An approach to community development that starts with the strengths, skills, relationships and resources already present in a community, rather than focusing only on problems or deficits.

ABUHB: Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the NHS health board covering Caerphilly and surrounding areas.

ACER: Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience; a framework for understanding how trauma can affect whole communities and how communities can build resilience and strength.

CCBC: Caerphilly County Borough Council, the local government authority for Caerphilly.

Community Anchor: A locally based role or organisation that provides a consistent presence, helps build trust, connects people with support and carries community learning forward.

Community Fund: The dedicated resource within Ein Llais used to respond to community priorities through the Wellbeing Fund and Sustainable Fund.

Co-production: An approach where people with lived experience, communities and professionals work together to design, deliver and improve services or activities.

CVW: Community Volunteers Wales, a local organisation connected with the Sycamore Centre and community activity in Ty Sign.

Ein Llais: Welsh for “Our Voice”; the name of the project described in this report.

Formulation: A process used in psychology to make sense of people’s (or a community’s) experiences, circumstances, strengths and responses, helping guide what support or action may be useful.

Good Call: A community initiative developed through the project to provide free phone access so people could contact essential services.

Human Learning Systems: An approach to public service work that focuses on relationships, learning and adaptation in complex systems, rather than fixed targets alone.

Integrated Wellbeing Network: A local network connected with health and wellbeing support, referenced in the report as part of wider partnership working.

PCSO: Police Community Support Officer; a uniformed member of police staff who works with communities to support safety, reassurance and local engagement.

Perfect Fit: A community initiative originally developed by Platfform’s Gwent OOWS (Out Of Work Service) team in Bargoed to provide free clothing in a private, accessible and dignified way, which was then replicated at The Sycamore Centre.

Power Threat Meaning Framework: A psychological framework that explores how people’s distress can be understood through what has happened to them, how this has affected them, the meaning they make of it and how they have responded.

Ripple Effects Mapping: A participatory evaluation approach used to explore the wider and longer-term effects of a project or activity, including changes that may not be captured through traditional measures.

Sustainable Fund: The strand of the Community Fund used to invest in longer-term resources, activities and community assets that could continue beyond the project.

Trauma-informed: An approach that recognises the impact of trauma and adversity and seeks to create safety, choice, trust, collaboration and empowerment in the way support is offered.

Wellbeing Fund: The strand of the Community Fund that provided flexible individual support to respond to immediate practical needs and reduce barriers to wellbeing.



Woodworking workshops we hosted in collaboration with Salvaged Creations Wales and TLC Cafe



A pop up we hosted to discuss priorities for the project with the community members



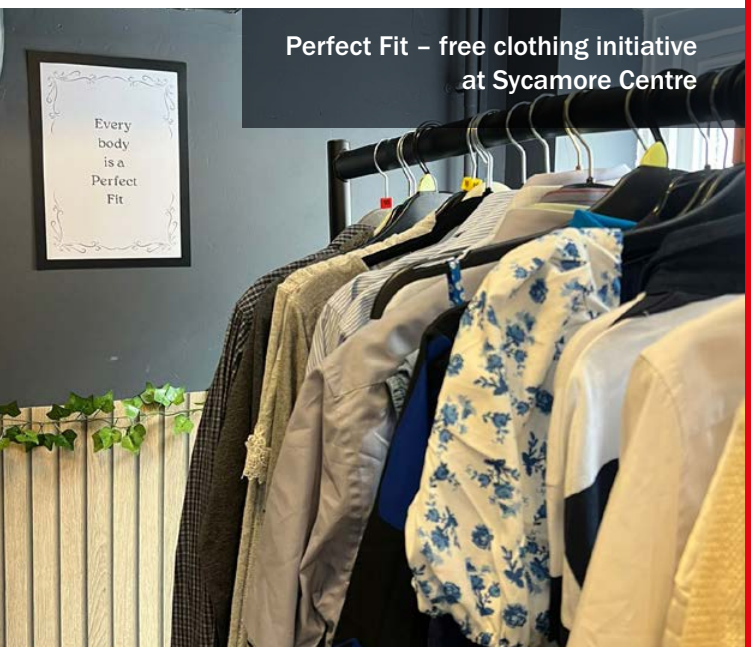
Oral Health Improvement pop-up we hosted in collaboration with ABUHB's Community Dental Service and TLC Cafe



Wellbeing Walk hosted in collaboration with ABUHB's Nature Wellbeing Coordinator



Perfect Fit – free clothing initiative at Sycamore Centre



Perfect Fit – free clothing initiative at Sycamore Centre



Woodworking workshops we hosted in collaboration with Salvaged Creations Wales and TLC Cafe

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EIN LLAIS PROJECT

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