



Argyll and Bute Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2024-34

Support Document



Produced by the
Argyll and Bute
Community Planning
Partnership



Argyll and Bute: Context

Argyll and Bute is a region characterised by small coastal towns, inhabited islands and a low population density, with three quarters of the population living in rural or remote areas¹. Moreover, the average gross weekly pay for full-time workers and the percentage of residents who are economically active are both below the Scottish average².

The initial data published from Scotland's Census 2022 shows that the population of Argyll and Bute continues to both decline and age.



Since the last Census in 2011, the population of the area has decreased by 2.4% to 86,000, with the proportion of those aged over 65 increasing within that period from 21.9% to 27.2%, the highest in Scotland.

Over the same period, the number of individual households in Argyll and Bute increased by 4.4%, indicative of older people being more likely to live alone or in smaller households³.

With the population of Argyll and Bute projected to decrease more rapidly over the ten-year period of this Outcomes Improvement Plan⁴, the implications for communities and community planning including provisioning of health and social care, housing and infrastructure are significant and wide-ranging.

Data from Scotland's Census 2022, together with new strategic plans and research from partners, will continue to be published throughout the delivery and implementation period of this plan. We will use these to provide updated contextual narrative on the work of the Community Planning Partnership in addressing the priority themes in the Outcomes Improvement Plan.

Identifying community priorities

Preparatory work for the new Outcomes Improvement Plan commenced in late 2022 with an extensive appraisal of key themes highlighted both in community planning partners' strategic plans and through recent community engagement exercises conducted during and immediately prior to the onset of the pandemic.

¹ [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020 - \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

² [Labour Market Profile – Nomis 2023 - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics - \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](http://nomisweb.co.uk)

³ [Scotland's Census 2022 - Rounded population estimates - \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](http://scotlandscensus.gov.uk)

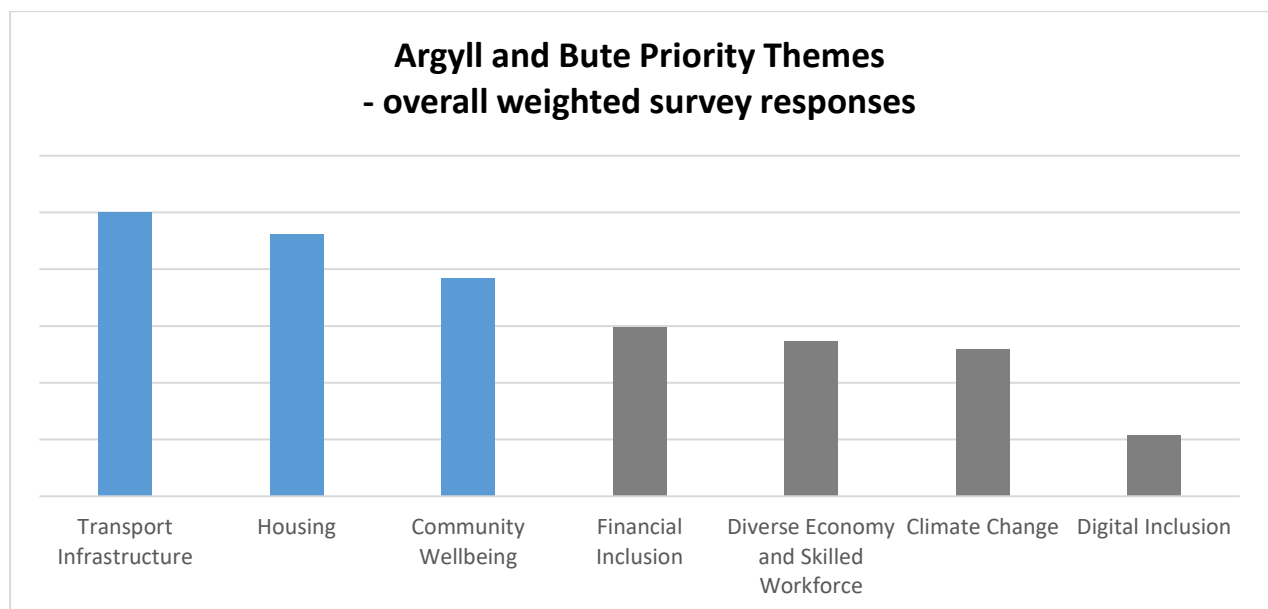
⁴ [Population projections for Scottish areas 2018-based - \(www.nrscotland.gov.uk\)](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk)

This work identified eight broad priority areas, two of which were combined following discussion with strategic community planning partners and these seven areas became the focus of the extensive community consultation exercise which ran from December 2022 to March 2023. These seven priority areas were:

Climate Change; Community Wellbeing; Digital Inclusion; Diverse Economy and Skilled Workforce; Financial Inclusion; Housing; Transport Infrastructure.

A total of 1,978 responses were received through the online consultation and from dedicated face to face community engagement sessions, with ongoing data analysis and contextualised input from Community Planning partners providing insights to under-represented groups and communities requiring specific targeting.

The three highest priority themes identified through the consultation and engagement work across Argyll and Bute were **Transport Infrastructure, Housing and Community Wellbeing.**



The next step was to seek input from the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Management Committee. Community planning partners are experts in providing services to the communities of Argyll and Bute. As such, they have vital knowledge and experience arising from the ongoing work of their organisations and observations of the communities that they work with. We wanted to understand partners' views on where partnership working is most needed. We also wanted to understand where partners were seeing the greatest inequalities relating to the community's top three priority themes of Transport Infrastructure, Housing and Community Wellbeing.

To explore these issues, CPP Management Committee members came together at a Development Day in May 2023 giving partners the opportunity to have interesting and useful discussions about each of the community's top three priority themes, identifying the areas of greatest opportunity to add value through partnership actions.

Transport Infrastructure

Background

The results of the extensive community consultation told us that Transport Infrastructure is the top priority for improvement in Argyll and Bute. This priority was particularly evident from the responses received from the Helensburgh & Lomond and Bute & Cowal areas. Transport Infrastructure was second to the theme of Housing in the Oban, Lorn and the Isles (OLI) and Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (MAKI) areas.

To allow us to focus on the elements of transport infrastructure where it could have most impact on addressing community inequality, we looked at those elements of greatest concern to communities and how these were being addressed locally and nationally.

What needs to be improved?

The aspects of transport infrastructure in need of improvement, as indicated by our Improving Lives in Argyll and Bute Survey participants, and evidenced by our Community Planning Partners are:



Affordability – The cost of using public transport particularly for those on low incomes and/or in island or rural mainland communities can be prohibitive, new low carbon transport solutions are unaffordable in areas where private transport is the only option for getting around.



Access – Limited range and frequency of public transport options for people accessing work, services and medical appointments within and outwith Argyll and Bute, a lack of parking provision and EV charging infrastructure, active travel routes are unavailable or insufficient.



Ability – Transport options and facilities for people with disabilities can be limited, lack of provision for older people such as on-demand bus services and conveniently located bus stops for timetabled services.



Integration – Public transport services and timetables are not sufficiently integrated across providers to allow effective onward travel, active travel infrastructure can be bitty or disjointed, there is a lack of opportunity for sharing journeys by private transport.



Impacts – Lack of effective mitigation against effects of climate change creates reliability issues for the road infrastructure particularly on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful and vulnerability issues for communities which use those affected routes, the poor condition of road surfaces has an impact on communities and private transport users, the vulnerability of coastal and island communities to the impacts of climate change, the effect on island communities caused by ferry reliability issues, the lack of non-road options for commercial haulage.



Safety – Lack of traffic calming measures and signage in communities affected by speeding motorists, no separation in places between active travel and road infrastructure, those communities experiencing congestion and pollution caused by queuing traffic.

Which communities are most in need?

To improve our strategic work, we will explore the value of a study to better understand inequalities relating to Transport experienced by communities within Argyll and Bute, including:

- Communities not served or under-served by public transport
- Communities with an over-reliance on cars
- Communities most affected by climate impacts
- Communities impacted adversely by a lack of public transport availability and timetable integration

What work is already being done?

National context:

- [Scotland's National Transport Strategy](#) was published in 2020, setting out a 20-year vision to 'have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, visitors and businesses'. The vision is supported by four areas of specific focus around reducing inequalities, inclusive economic growth, climate action, and health and wellbeing, setting the framework for future transport-related investments. These national areas of focus and the outcomes which underpin them, link closely with what people in Argyll and Bute told us were the most important aspects of transport to be improved, and will demonstrate that the work to deliver and implement the transport infrastructure elements of the Outcomes Improvement Plan is relevant in a wider context.
- The [Islands Connectivity Plan](#) is currently being developed and will include elements on air, ferry and fixed link connections to and from Scotland's islands, connecting onward travel provision, a fares policy and low carbon plan. Given the range and number of transport connections to island communities in Argyll and Bute, we will ensure that our work continues both to inform and be informed by island transport connectivity at a local and national level.

Argyll and Bute context:

- In Argyll and Bute there are two Regional Transport Partnerships, statutory Community Planning partners that work with CPPs to deliver local and national outcomes through their regional transport strategies⁵ ⁶. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) covers Helensburgh & Lomond, and Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) covers all other parts of Argyll and Bute.
- Many of the issues raised through our consultation process for the new Outcomes Improvement Plan are not new, having been raised through [research on transport and the economy conducted by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Argyll and Bute Council in 2016](#). While some of the data may be a few years old, much of it is still relevant and there are several salient points which link to consultation responses around resilience, timetabling, public transport and specifically the A83 trunk road.
- The CPP will also consider a range of existing and new strategies and plans which may impact on the delivery and implementation of the transport elements of the new Outcomes Improvement Plan, including the Argyll and Bute Active Travel Strategy and Argyll and Bute Economic Strategy which are both expected in 2024, the CMAL Corporate Plan and the [Argyll and Bute Visitor Economy Recovery and Growth Strategy](#).

Related research and studies

[A Perfect Storm - Fuel Poverty in Rural Scotland.pdf \(changeworks.org.uk\)](#) [2023]

[Islands & Rural Insights Report from SRUC \(nisrie.scot\)](#) [2023]

[Poverty in Rural Scotland: A Review of Evidence \(www.gov.scot\)](#) [2021]

[Rural Scotland Key Facts \(www.gov.scot\)](#) [2021]

[Living Well Locally \(hitrans.org.uk\) \(sustrans.org.uk\)](#) [2022]

[More Than a Minibus \(ctauk.org\)](#) [2022]

[Specific research on transport-related exclusion \(transportforthenorth.com\)](#) [2022]

[Future of Transport \(www.gov.uk\)](#) [2023]

Outcomes

The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership can improve transport infrastructure by:

- **Working with partners and communities to create a reliable, accessible, affordable and integrated public transport system for Argyll and Bute**
- **Working with partners and communities to ensure a resilient, well-maintained and safe road and active travel network across Argyll and Bute**
- **Working with partners to enhance provision of bespoke transport services for those experiencing the greatest inequality in ease of movement**
- **Contributing to local and national strategic transport plans to ensure the needs of communities experiencing inequalities in transport infrastructure are acknowledged and addressed**
- **Co-producing partners' plans for elements relating specifically to tackling inequalities in transport infrastructure**

⁵ [HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy](#)

⁶ [SPT Regional Transport Strategy](#)

Housing

Background

Argyll and Bute communities have told us that improvements to housing should be a top priority for the Community Planning Partnership to focus on during 2024-2034. We needed to understand which aspects of housing were most in need of improvement, for which communities, and what work was already being done to address those needs. This would allow us to identify where the Community Planning Partnership could be most effective at making a difference for communities facing the greatest inequalities.

What needs to be improved?

The following section describes the aspects of housing in need of improvement as indicated by our Improving Lives in Argyll and Bute Survey participants, along with an overview of what other existing information tells us about each of these issues.



Availability – there are not enough homes available to buy or rent, either privately or through a registered social landlord. There are not enough homes available of the right size, in the right location for the people who need them. Our survey indicated that, in particular, there are not enough homes available that are suitable for families, with three or more bedrooms and a garden. Waiting lists for social housing suggest that there are around 3 applicants for every one home that becomes available. This figure varies widely and is far higher in certain places, with the highest unmet need being for one-bedroom and four- or five-bedroom homes. Even so, it is likely that social housing waiting lists do not represent the full extent of the need for affordable housing in Argyll and Bute.



Affordability – incomes have not grown in line with increases in housing costs. Average incomes in Argyll and Bute are lower than the Scottish average, with many people reliant on lower paid, less secure and seasonal jobs and a higher than average rate of self-employment. Average house prices in Argyll and Bute rose by 23.1% between 2020 and 2022⁷. Homes are not affordable enough for many local people to buy or rent, and running costs, such as heating, are too high. Transport costs are also a consideration and can make it unaffordable to live in certain locations. Communities are concerned that high housing costs are a particular barrier to younger people who may find it unaffordable to stay in or move to Argyll and Bute.

⁷ SRUC. (2022, November 1). Scotland House Prices [Fact sheet]. Rural Exchange. <https://www.ruralexchange.scot/scotland-house-prices.php>



Second Homes and short-term holiday lets – there is a high number of second homes and short-term holiday lets in Argyll and Bute, impacting on the availability and therefore price of homes for sale and private rent for year-round residents. At the same time, tourism is a key industry for Argyll and Bute, contributing to the local economy and generating income for residents. It has been argued that at least a proportion of properties currently in use as second homes and holiday lets would not meet the needs of permanent residents due to their size, location, condition and/or energy performance levels. There is also a tradition of people owning “family homes” in places where they feel a generational, community connection to but do not live in full time.



Quality, energy efficiency and fuel poverty – many of the properties in Argyll and Bute are old buildings and a significant proportion have withstood many decades of exposure to harsh coastal conditions. Improvements are needed so that many of the existing homes are brought in to a good state of repair. On average, homes in Argyll and Bute are less energy efficient than in the rest of Scotland and many are not connected to the national gas grid and therefore reliant on more expensive electric or oil fuelled heating. An estimated 32% of people living in Argyll and Bute are in fuel poverty⁸. These levels are higher than the Scottish average of 24%, with some areas, such as islands, experiencing significantly higher levels of fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty. There are also concerns that there are growing numbers of older people living alone in what has been their family home, who may be finding them difficult to heat and maintain.



Sustainability of communities - the lack of available, affordable housing is a threat to the sustainability of communities across Argyll and Bute. There is increased concern around the impact of lack of housing availability on employers’ abilities to retain and attract workers, including those who are needed to provide vital services for communities. Where communities do not have sufficient year-round residents due to a lack of available, affordable housing, it becomes less and less viable to sustain local services and amenities. Social support networks are also at risk of being weakened, exacerbating isolation, exclusion and vulnerability for remaining community members.

Which communities are most in need?

Most people across Argyll and Bute are likely to see a need for some aspect of housing to be improved in their communities of place or interest. However, certain groups face particular inequalities and therefore greater risk of negative outcomes. These include:

- Those who are homeless
- Younger people
- Older people
- People leaving domestic abuse situations

⁸ [Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017-2019 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2020/04/Scottish_House_Condition_Survey_Local_Authority_Analysis_2017-2019.pdf)

- People on low incomes and increasingly middle income groups
- Single parent families
- People living alone
- Seasonal and temporary workers
- Those who wishing to relocate to and within Argyll and Bute for work, particularly for key worker positions
- Care experienced people
- Gypsy Traveller communities
- People with experience of mental ill health and addictions
- The island communities of Coll, Tiree, Islay, Jura, Colonsay, Mull and Iona are facing acute shortages of available, affordable housing and higher than average levels of fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty
- There are also particularly high levels of need for affordable housing in Oban and Lorn, and Helensburgh and Lomond.

What work is already being done?

National context:

In March 2021, the Scottish Government published [Housing to 2040](#), setting out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. It aims to deliver the ambition for everyone to have a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be.

The Route Map presents the following opportunities for communities:

- communities can actively shape their neighbourhoods through **local place plans**
- communities can get involved in designing their places by using a **Design Version of the Place Standard** tool
- communities can share their experiences and access professional expertise, building local community capacity for local place planning, through a **Knowledge Exchange Network**
- **community wealth building** will be embedded in the approach and practices of social housing providers as well as in the approach to energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation across Scotland

In October 2023, the Scottish Government published a [Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan](#), including a range of commitments which will be taken forward by public and private sector partners, working with local communities, to deliver more homes where they are needed and help drive sustainable economic growth. The plan sets out a range of actions that will lead to **rural and island communities** having access to high-quality, affordable and market housing which has been planned alongside the economic and physical infrastructure that helps people to live, work and thrive – and will help to stem rural depopulation. Actions include:

- taking steps to regulate short-term lets
- giving all local authorities powers to manage the numbers of second homes
- establishing a new fund for local authorities to apply to in order to bring empty homes and potential empty homes back into residential use⁹
- implementing new Permitted Development Rights for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential and commercial uses
- working with Community Land Scotland and others to bring forward land for housing in rural areas
- identifying how planning policies can help to sustain and grow crofting communities

⁹ [Bringing empty homes back into use: audit of privately owned empty homes in Scotland 2023 - \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

- considering how the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods could apply in rural and island communities
- improving the condition and quality of existing properties through the new Housing Standard
- ensuring a place-based approach is taken, reflecting a sound understanding of the aspirations of rural communities.

Opportunities for the Community Planning Partnership to contribute:

- Introduction of homelessness prevention legislation to ensure public bodies across Scotland have responsibilities for preventing homelessness.
- Public sector employers, e.g. Forestry and Land Scotland, Crown Estate Scotland, HIR, Health Boards and others, have an essential role to play and should consider how they can contribute to supporting the provision of homes for key workers and others through the better use of resources, property and land. Where public sector organisations have land or housing they plan to divest themselves of, they are expected to consider the role it may serve in meeting broader housing ambitions and to engage with Local Authorities or other relevant housing partners, in the first instance to discuss.

Partnership working:

- Empty Homes Partnership
- Housing sub-group of Regional Economic Partnership, facilitated by HIE. Representatives include LA, Scot Gov, SFHA, Scottish Futures Trust, Community Land Scotland and others. Purpose, to consider economic linkages, opportunities and pressures relating to: existing housing supply; delivery of new homes; broader investment; skills and capacity requirements.

Argyll and Bute context:

- The Argyll and Bute Strategic Housing Forum is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation and monitoring of the Local Housing Strategy and ancillary plans and strategies. Membership includes representation from the key strategic planners, enablers, funders and providers currently active in Argyll & Bute. The Head of Development and Economic Growth, in his capacity as Lead Service Officer for the Forum, reports to the Community Planning Partnership Management Committee.
- The Community Housing Network Group was established to improve communication and partnership working between Argyll and Bute Council and community groups that have a role in delivering affordable housing. The group provides a forum for discussion and shared problem solving, guidance on policy and practice, along with access to relevant expertise.
- Argyll and Bute Council coordinates a range of Housing support, information and advice, including topics such as financial support, homelessness, energy efficiency, and how to find suitable housing: [Housing | Argyll and Bute Council \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/housing)
- The [Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy 2022-2027](#) sets out the joint approach the Council and its partners will take to delivering high quality housing and housing-related services across Argyll and Bute. The overarching vision is that “Everyone in Argyll & Bute has access to a suitable, high quality home which is affordable and located within a vibrant, sustainable and connected community.” This is informed by the [Argyll and Bute Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2021](#).
- A ‘repopulation zones’ pilot research project focusing on the areas of the Rosneath Peninsula, Kintyre (Tarbert to Southend), Tiree and Coll and the Isle of Bute was carried out during 2022-23. The project employed a Community Settlement Officer, jointly funded by Argyll and Bute Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and had housing as a key focus. The research examined the availability and quality of housing along with factors such as cost, legislative barriers, land supply, and infrastructure.

- Island Skills and Repopulation Pilot – Bute, Coll, Tiree. In partnership with the Convention of the Highlands and Islands Population Working Group. Will be reviewed 2023-24. May address skills and capacity issues in construction supply chains.
- Legislation was introduced in October 2022, requiring short-term-let operators to apply for a license and empowering local authorities to designate control areas to manage high concentrations by requiring planning permission for change of use of a dwelling house. Argyll and Bute Council has not yet designated any short-term let control areas.
- Argyll and Bute Council declared a housing emergency in June 2023 and hosted a Housing Summit in November 2023 with key stakeholders to identify solutions and interventions to mitigate the housing emergency. An action plan is now under development.
- Two Housing Emergency surveys were launched seeking feedback from both residents and employers to inform Argyll and Bute Council on how to tackle the housing emergency.
- [Community Housing Assessment Toolkit \(CHAT\)](#) provides local communities with an effective framework for carrying out housing need and demand assessments of small and very small geographic areas across Argyll and Bute. Community engagement is planned with island communities to better understand needs and aspirations with regards to private market housing provision.

Outcomes

The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership can improve housing by:

- **Working in effective partnerships to ensure that everyone living and working in Argyll and Bute has access to affordable, warm homes of the right size, in the right place with access to the services, amenities and economic opportunities that communities need to thrive**
- **Ensuring that plans and policies are informed by communities' needs and aspirations, especially those facing the greatest inequalities in housing related outcomes**
- **Working with partners and communities to ensure that everyone has the ability to have a say in shaping what housing looks like for their place**
- **Reviewing partners' land and property assets to ensure resources are used effectively to support the provision of housing for key workers and others**
- **Working together to identify opportunities for the prevention of homelessness through early intervention**

Community Wellbeing

Background

Community Wellbeing can have a wide meaning. It is important that we are clear, as a Community Planning Partnership, what we mean when we say this.

What Community Wellbeing is, is summed up nicely by an organisation called What Works Scotland: **“Community wellbeing is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential.”**

It’s about people accessing formal and informal support and places providing opportunities for: emotional and cultural attachment; leisure and work; skills development and travel; shops and facilities. It is also about the power that people have to participate in having a say in what happens in their community.

What needs to be improved?

In our consultation, when people chose Community Wellbeing as one of their top three priorities, they mentioned things such as improving:



Care



Activities



Community Facilities



Support to people in communities



Community Wealth Building



Gaelic Language and Culture



Community Empowerment (having a say in what happens)



Aesthetics of a community – like derelict buildings



Community Safety

Which communities are most in need?

A recent study by [Carnegie UK \(Life in UK: Scotland\)](#) found that certain groups face greater risk of lower levels of wellbeing. These include:

- People with a disability
- People on lower incomes
- Those living in social housing or private rented accommodation
- Younger people

What work is already being done?

When we looked across Scotland at 'Community Wellbeing' we found legislation, pilot projects, tools and approaches that all mentioned community wellbeing. We also found that in Argyll and Bute people have been involved in talking about what wellbeing means to them through surveys run by community groups and organisations working in the area.

National context:

- Community Empowerment Act
- Local Governance Review and Democracy Matters
- National Outcomes
- Wellbeing Economy
- Shaping Places for Wellbeing
- Place Standard Tool
- Community Wealth Building

Argyll and Bute context:

- Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Argyll and Bute engagement 2022
- Health and Wellbeing in Argyll and Bute survey 2023
- Community-led wellbeing research
- Consultations such as Active Travel, Economy, Tourism
- Shaping Places for Wellbeing – pilot project, Dunoon
- The Living Well Strategy 2019 – 2024 is Argyll and Bute's showcase strategy to support people to live well with long term health conditions - [Living Well Strategy – Living Well \(ablivingwell.org\)](#).
The strategy also recognises that it is possible to prevent ill-health, for example, strong and vibrant communities enable people to live good lives and to have better health and wellbeing outcomes. The Living Well Strategy was developed following extensive engagement and consultation with communities in Argyll and Bute. This included multiple focus groups, online Facebook discussions and questionnaires for members of the public, third sector organisations and Argyll and Bute HSCP staff. This engagement resulted in a Living Well Implementation Plan which was aligned to Argyll and Bute HSCP strategic intentions under four themes:
 - **People** – People living in Argyll and Bute have the tools and support they need to support them to Live Well
 - **Community** – There are a wide range of local services to support people to Live Well
 - **Workforce** - Staff are able and motivated to support the people they see to Live Well
 - **Leadership** – Effective Leadership is in place to support the delivery of the Living Well Strategy

There are a wide range of actions included under each of the four themes and the full strategy, engagement report, implementation plan and mid-strategy review can be accessed on the [Living Well website](#).

Over 2022 to 2023, the Living Well Strategy group merged with the Prevention Programme Board and is now known as the **Living Well Programme Board**. This refresh has enabled a refocus on activity at two levels:

1. Community rehabilitation and wellbeing programme.
2. Person centred social support to connect people to community-based activities. This action includes developing and sustaining community-based support, for example using community development and co-production approaches.

Related research and studies

- [Age Scotland – Big Survey](#) [2021]
- [Being Well Together: Individual Subjective and Community Wellbeing](#) [2019]
- [Carnegie Trust - Life in the UK: Scotland report](#) [2023]
- [Carnegie Trust – Wellbeing round-table](#) [2023]
- [Systematic review of community infrastructure \(place and space\) to boost social relations and community wellbeing: Five year refresh](#) [2023]
- [The Zubairi Report - The Lived Experience of Loneliness and Social Isolation in Scotland](#) [2018]

Outcomes

The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership can improve Community Wellbeing by:

- **Broadening equality of access to Community Leadership opportunities**
- **Furthering equality of access to services, facilities and community assets**
- **Working with partners to maximise sustainability of community facilities and services**
- **Enabling a voice in collective decision making**
- **Enhancing communication within communities**
- **Better understanding how communities achieve a sense of connection and belonging**

We will do this by working with the HSCP Living Well Programme Board (Third Tier of approach) and by addressing *place* within the Area Community Planning Groups.