

AGW Study on Provision of local government services to rural communities



Defining Rural Wales

PRIMARILY RURAL

- 1 Carmarthenshire
- 2 Ceredigion
- 3 Conwy
- 4 Denbighshire
- 5 Gwynedd
- 6 Isle of Anglesey
- 7 Monmouthshire
- 8 Pembrokeshire
- 9 Powys



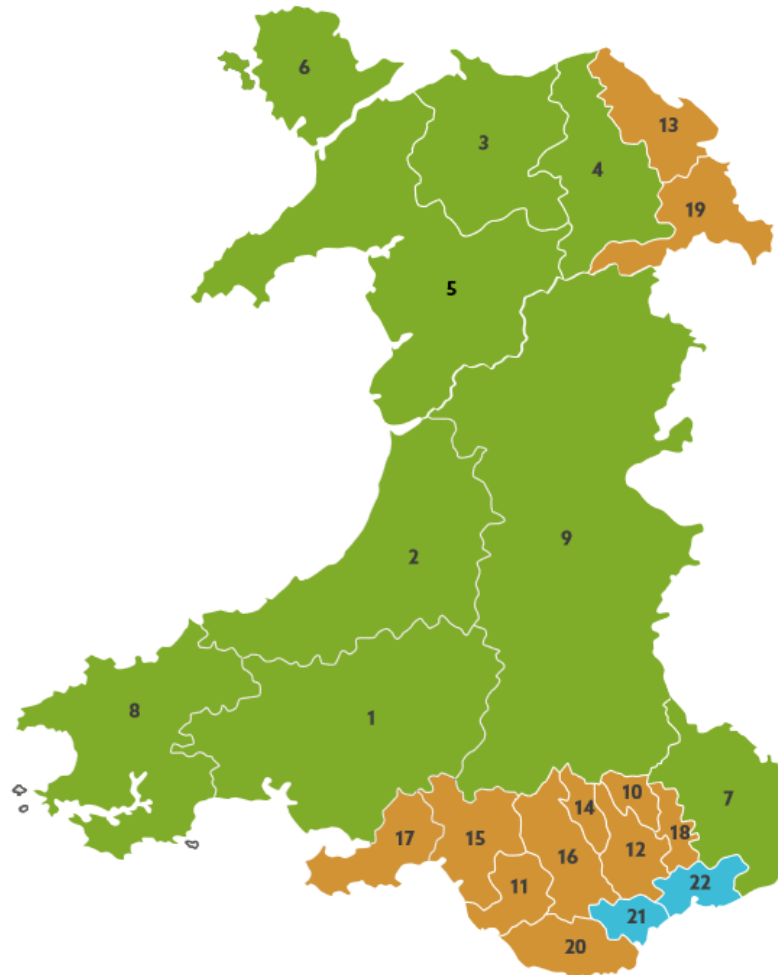
SEMI-RURAL/URBAN

- 10 Blaenau Gwent
- 11 Bridgend
- 12 Caerphilly
- 13 Flintshire
- 14 Merthyr Tydfil
- 15 Neath Port Talbot
- 16 Rhondda Cynon Taf
- 17 Swansea
- 18 Torfaen
- 19 Wrexham
- 20 Vale of Glamorgan



FULLY URBAN

- 21 Cardiff
- 22 Newport



Rural Wales faces some significant challenges

- **Demographic Change:**
 - New household formation at levels lower than the Welsh average
 - Proportion of older people increasing
 - Proportion of younger people decreasing
- **Economy:**
 - Unemployment falling and employment increasing
 - Private businesses and self employment more prevalent
 - Rural population is less dependent upon welfare benefits
 - Wages are generally lower and new business start ups are less prevalent in recent years

Rural Wales faces some significant challenges

- **Housing:**

- Rates of new housing development slowing or falling
- Concern about people being able to secure/afford accommodation – rented and purchased

- **Infrastructure:**

- Rural Wales has largest road network and the most roads in poor condition
- Accessible public transport a growing concern
- Broadband coverage is generally poorer in rural than other areas of Wales, and Wales has poorest coverage within the UK
- Post office closures increased in recent years – 3% fall since 2010
- 93 banks closed since 2015 but rural Wales experiencing the largest reduction – e.g. 11 in Powys



**And added to this
there's**

Wales Rural Observatory



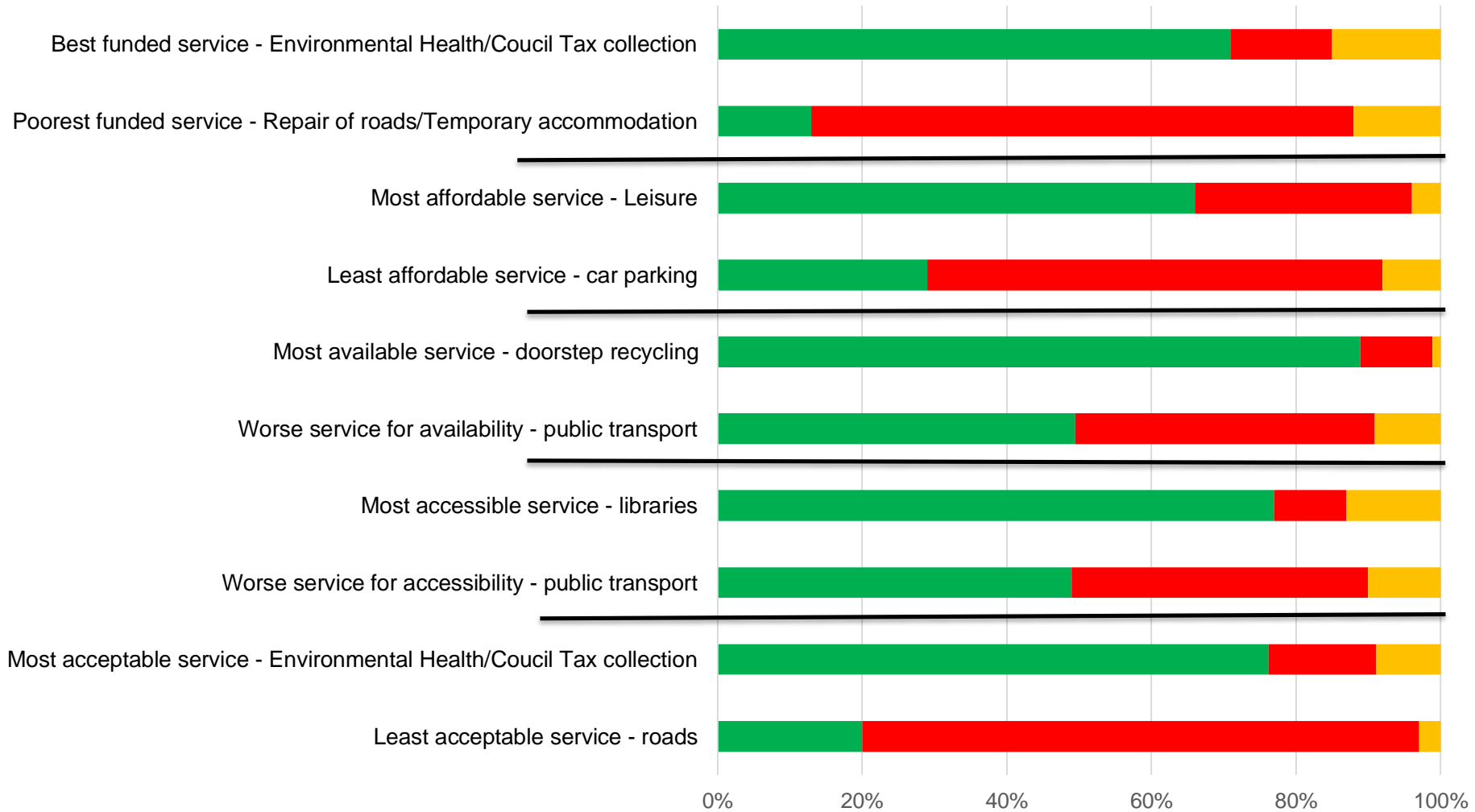
rsyllfa **Wledig** Cymr
iles **Rural** Observat

Citizens generally feel that key council services are not as available, affordable, accessible, adequate and acceptable as they used to be

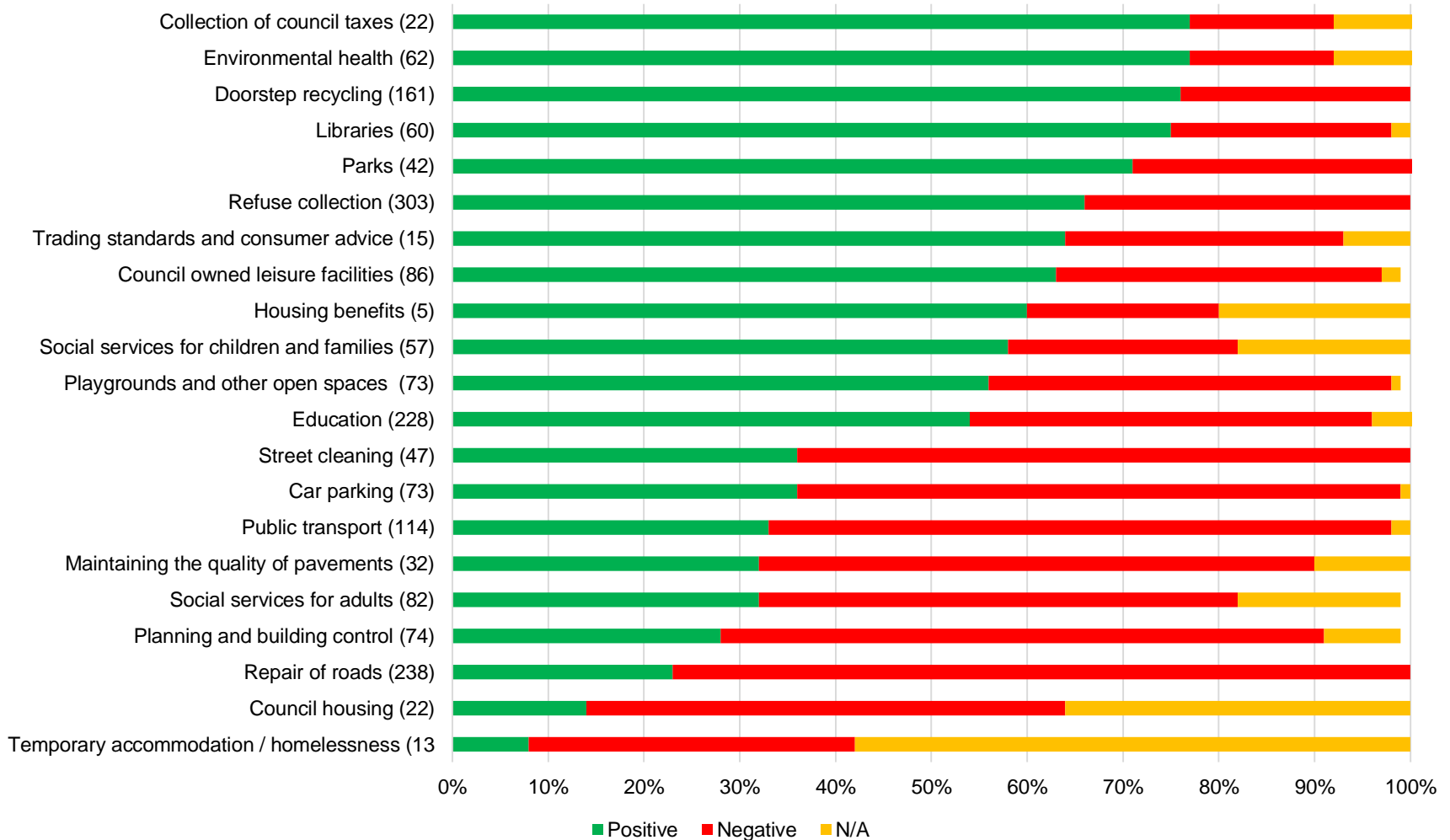
The **5As**

- **Acceptable**
- **Accessible**
- **Available**
- **Affordable**
- **Adequate**

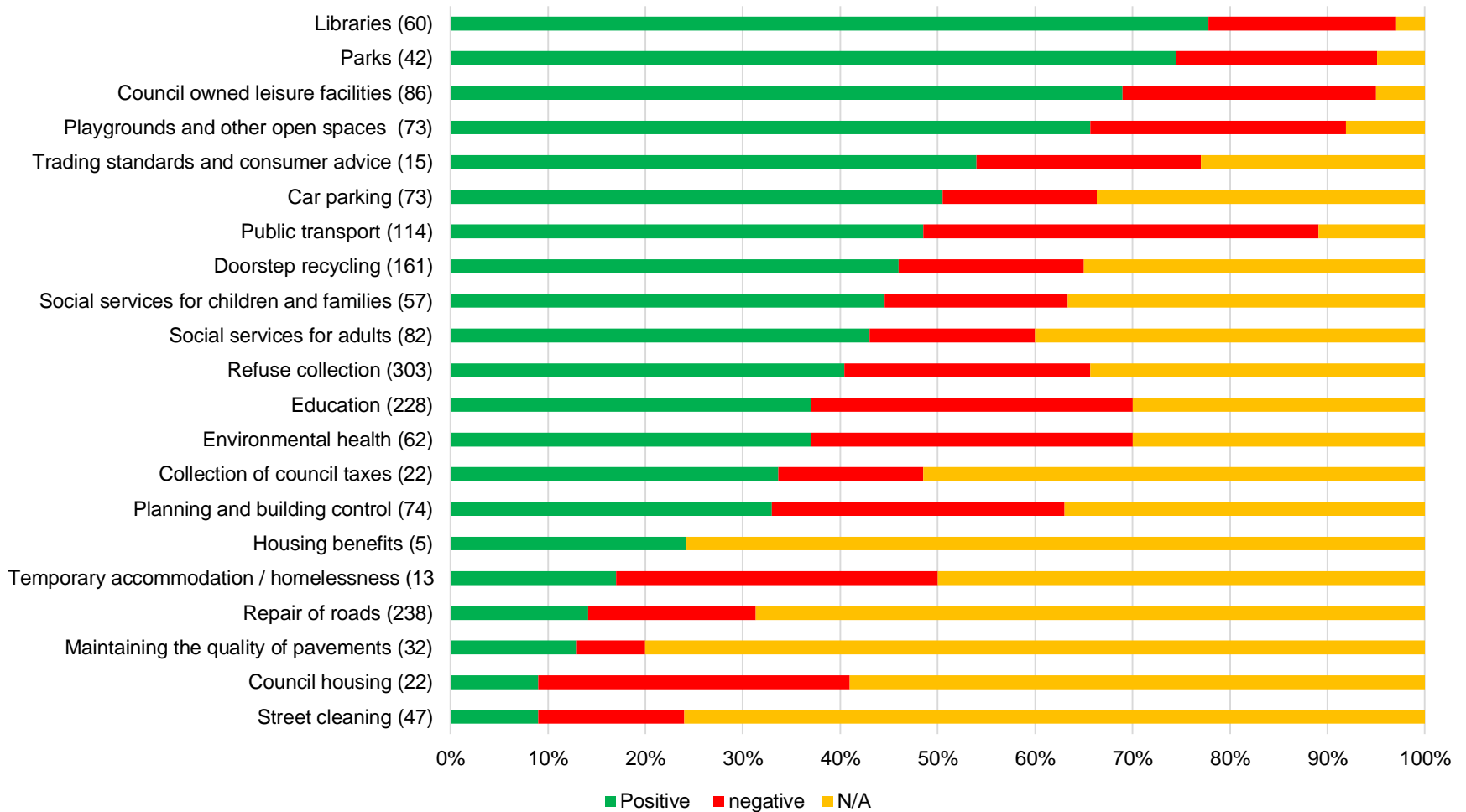
Comparison of the best and worse services based on citizen responses to the 5A's.....



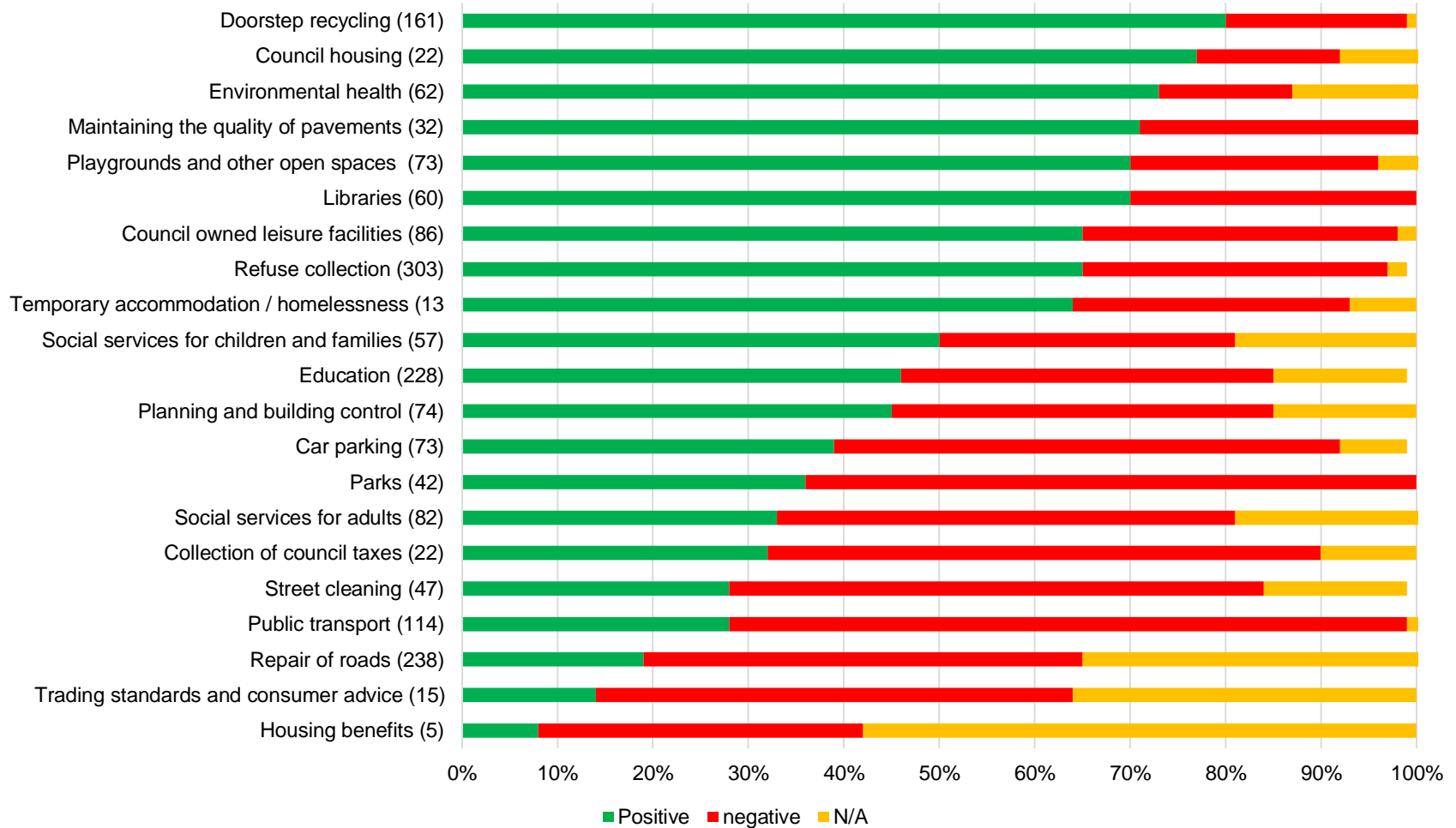
Citizen survey and engagement findings - Council services meet my needs and are Acceptable



Citizen survey and engagement findings - Council services are Accessible



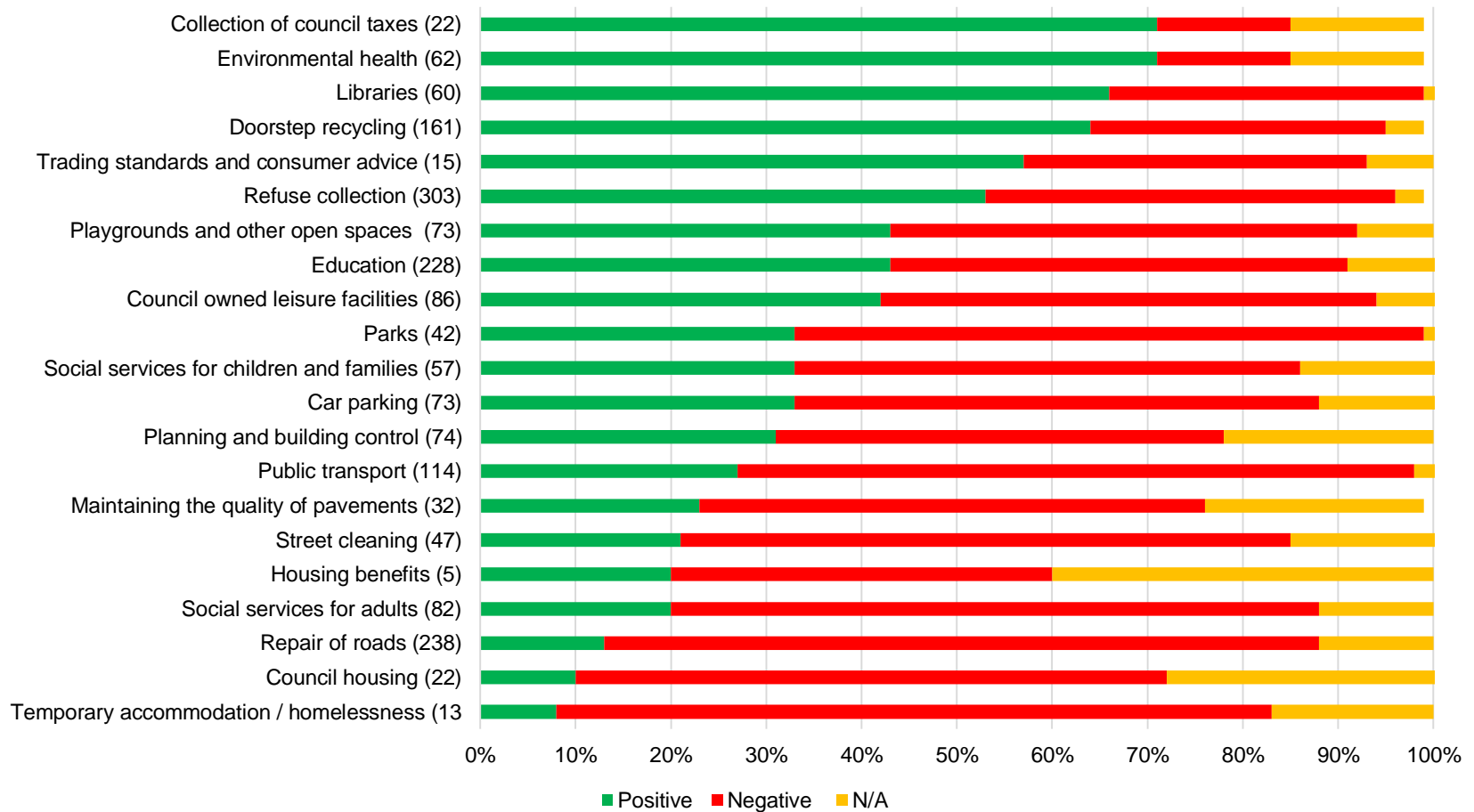
Citizen survey and engagement findings - Council services are Available when I need them



Citizen survey and engagement findings - Council services are Affordable



Citizen survey and engagement findings - Council services have enough resources to meet my needs and are Adequate



Key council services are not as available, affordable, accessible, adequate and acceptable as they used to be

Comments from Citizens on changes to public services

'Really poor internet, mobile connection.'

'I just think that they have been cut to the bone and it is not sustainable.'

'Bus service is bad, can't get to many places with them so has only used it once.'

'Seems to be closing down a lot of places - live on the edge of the county and don't get much services/ quality of service than the rest of the county.'

'Well if I was a person on low income it must be a frightening position to be in, there's nothing available for them. Too many potholes, bridge to get to house in desperate need of repair. Nothing seems to come of going to citizens' advice.'

'For schools parents have to pay extra money such as for extracurricular activities, hard if they got more than one kid. Roads and pavements (especially pavements) a lot need resurfacing, not taken care of, and therefore they are unsafe.'

'More job prospects unemployment is terrible, needs an injection of employment in the area.'

'Broadband for businesses is our biggest problem; the council should work on providing better broadband connections.'



Key council services are not as available, affordable, accessible, adequate and acceptable as they used to be

Comments from Town and Community Councils on changes to public services.

'Low percentage of people are internet users and there is limited public transport.'

'Elderly people and young people are disadvantaged by lack of locally available facilities and the reliability of public transport, which is both inefficient and infrequent.'

'Closing of library services has made it more difficult for people to pay council tax and council house rent.'

'People without their own transport cannot get to work using public transport on time. School buses often late. Young people looking for work whose parents do not drive do not find work easy. They cannot afford or are unable to travel far for work. Lack of bus service no chemist no local doctor no library living rural now means being cut off more especially for the sick or elderly.'

'No public transport and no services in the area other than what is put on my community in the village hall. So anyone who can't drive is not able to access services.'



In conclusion

- **People in rural Wales:**
 - **Value public services**..... waste, roads, education and social services are long term priorities.
 - **However**..... they generally feel that key services are not as available, affordable, accessible, adequate and acceptable as they used to be
 - They recognise that **public services need to change** to meet future needs
 - **But**..... most are not prepared to pay more to safeguard provision or take responsibility for delivery
- **Brexit and Austerity** – the great unknowns



Councils and their partners are not always responding effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities

- The role of Public Service Boards is evolving but there are opportunities to articulate a clearer and more ambitious shared vision for rural Wales
 - Short-term focus – good at highlighting problems, but less effective at identifying solutions
 - Too often Rural Wales is presented as a “place” beset by a myriad of problems
 - Some recognition that Rural Wales is a vibrant place with many positive attributes
 - Rural Wales strong culture of self-reliance – something positive to build on

Councils and their partners are not always responding effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities

- Councils and their partners need to improve their understanding of the impact their decisions have on people from different communities
 - Analysis of data to understand problems and agree appropriate solutions is poor
 - Generally inadequate assessment of needs at county level only
 - Engagement with key players – private sector, third sector and Town and Community Councils – is mostly inadequate
 - Primarily rural authorities generally have a clearer focus on the challenges they face rather than authorities with a mix of urban and rural communities – the latter often overlook rurality issues

Councils and their partners are not always responding effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities

- Whilst partnership working and collaboration is long established and can be effective, integration of services is limited
 - Little fundamental revision of services to reduce demand - Single service approaches predominate
 - Response to date has been centred on one 'one off' approaches to manage/reduce demand or prevent service requests
 - Managing and preventing demand is acknowledged as essential in maintaining services in rural areas but progress is mixed
 - Channel shift and digitisation remain an ongoing problem
 - Positively, there is recognition that services need to work differently which requires changes in how services are configured and provided

Councils and their partners are not always responding effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities

- Councils are not always tapping into their communities to help them prioritise and deliver services
 - Communicating, consulting and engaging with citizens is not driving service delivery choices or endorsing the focus of improvement work
 - A wide variety of approaches is used to engage with people – surveys, citizen panels, engagement events, social media, etc.
 - Few citizens are directly asked for feedback and most residents have not been given the chance to voice their opinions
 - Too many bodies engage in ‘set piece’ consultations and do not fully utilise all the feedback and data that is available

Councils and their partners are not always responding effectively to the challenges faced by rural communities

- Public bodies need to improve their understanding of the impact they make on people from different communities when changing services
 - Most bodies undertake impact assessments – e.g. Human Rights Act, Legal, Equality and Welsh language - when implementing new policy or revising existing plans
 - Impact assessments tend to consider single broad-brush analysis that can overlook and ignore differences within areas “one size fits all”
 - No one uses the Welsh Government Rural Proofing Tool
 - Generally, public bodies lack the data and evidence to judge the impact of their work on rural communities or to identify what works and how they can improve

Announcement.....

**PUBLIC BODIES
ACTING ALONE
CANNOT
EFFECTIVELY
SOLVE THE
PROBLEMS OF
RURAL WALES!**



Public bodies need to think and act differently



From our research we identified 10 key principles to underpin future work

- 
- 1. Ambitious and optimistic vision for the future – “rural communities are important”
 - 2. Place-based instead of organisation based planning
 - 3. Collaborative community based leadership
 - 4. Collectively identifying and understanding need and setting out how and what needs to improve
 - 5. Collectively build capacity, social capital and encourage communities

From our research we identified 10 key principles to underpin future work

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- Public bodies “Enabling” and working “Smarter” – colocation and integrated responses
 - Growing role for the third sector, town and community councils, social enterprises and the private sector
 - Addressing infrastructure gaps
 - Supporting self help in rural communities
 - Encourage citizens to do more for themselves

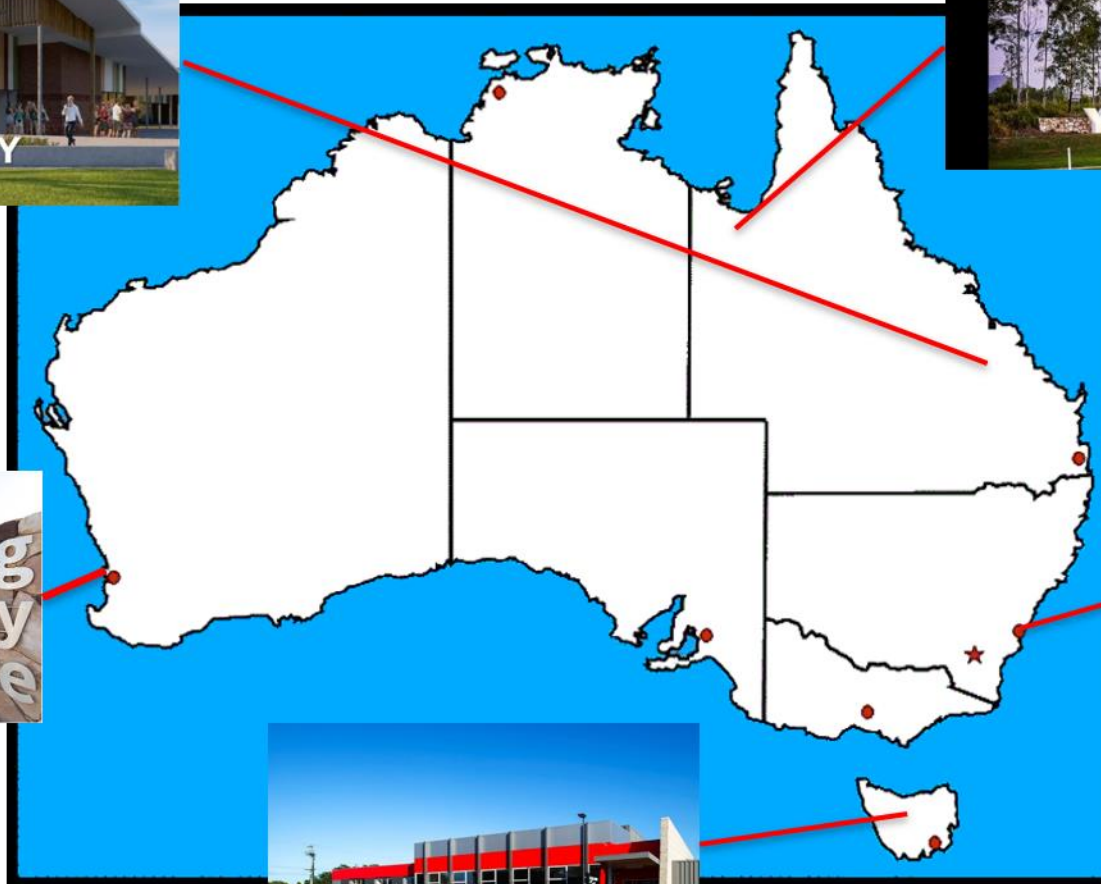
Australian CHaPs approach



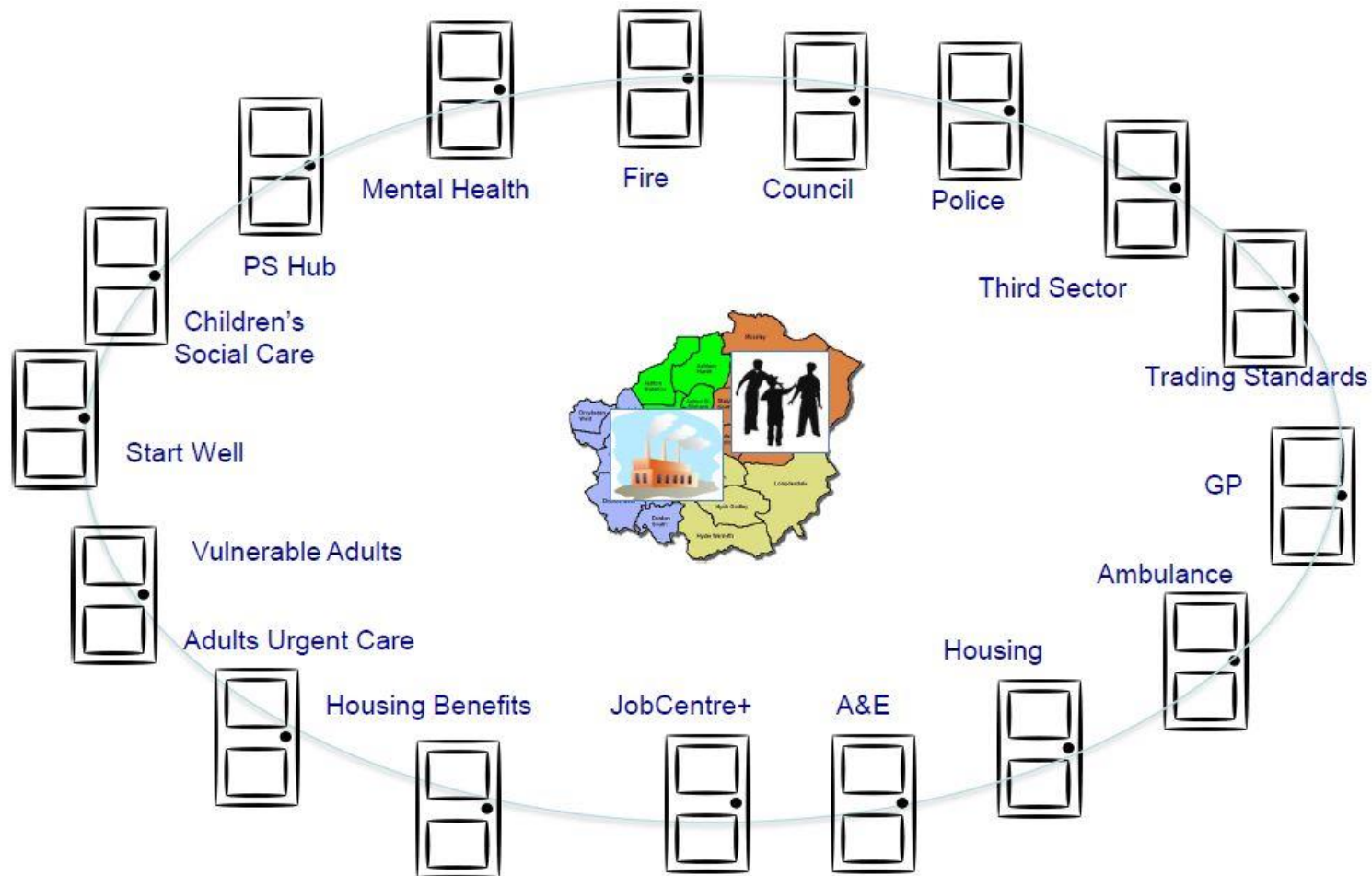
Australian CHaPs approach

- Community Hubs and Partnerships (CHaPs) dedicated multiagency initiative focussed on unlocking social infrastructure and integrated service delivery opportunities by:
 - evidence-based collaborative approaches to service and infrastructure planning
 - improved sharing of and access to cross government information
 - place-based decision making
 - greater accessibility to streamlined and integrated services
 - maximised investment and optimised use of government resources
- CHaPs works with all levels of government, non-government organisations and industry.

Australian CHaPs approach



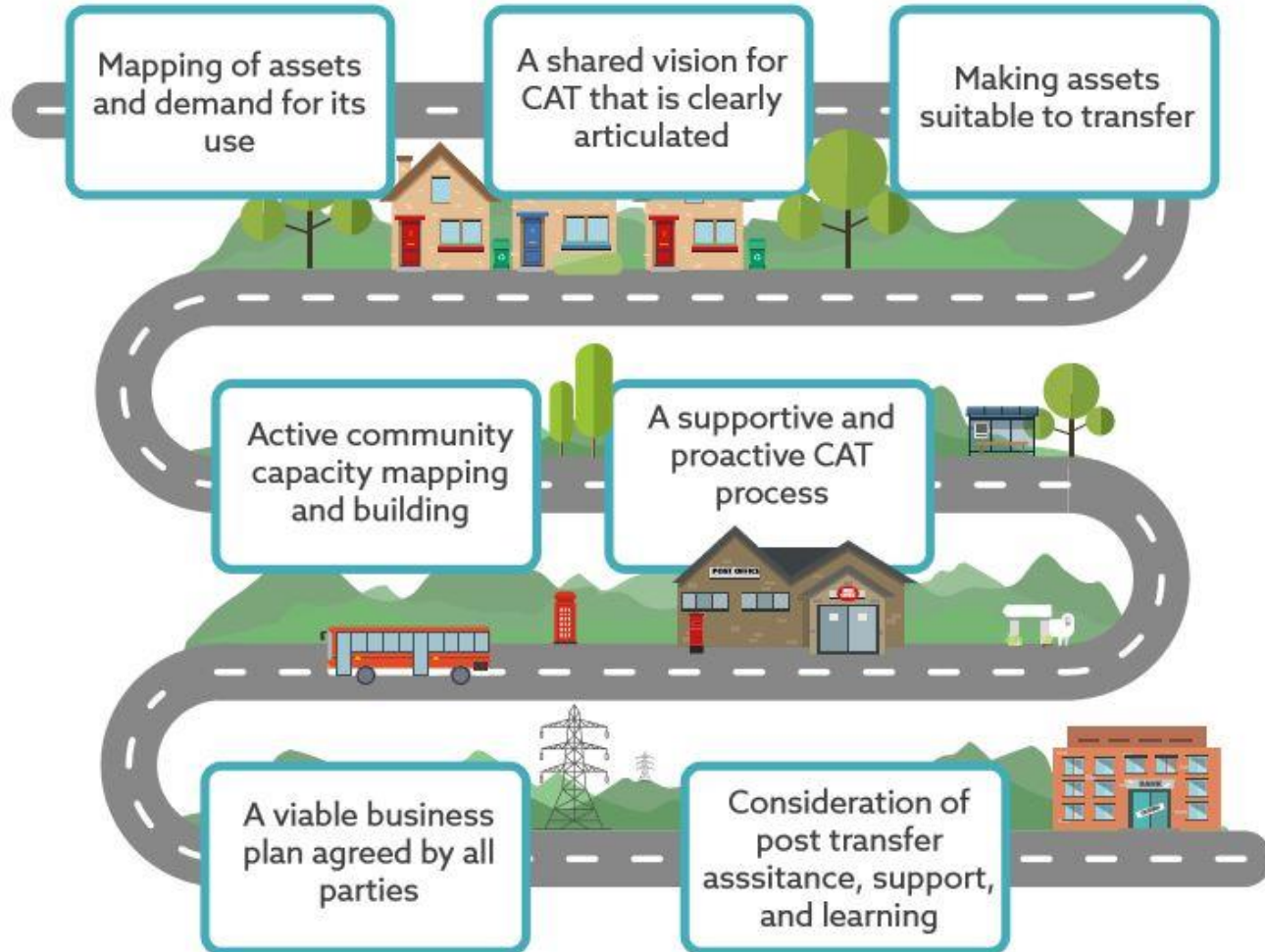
Manchester - Placed based service approach



Manchester - Placed based service approach

- Systems are often designed to reduce risk – focusing on this rarely leads to addressing need
- Label people based on our ‘profession’
- Front doors are often designed to keep people out
- The presenting issue is often not where the needs lie
- Results in passing demand around the system e.g.
 - Concerns to welfare passed to the police when they don’t have the tools to address any needs
 - Referrals are often NFA’ which means demand escalates before offer an intervention
 - Agency working hours are often out of kilter with need / demand

Community Asset Transfers



To help sustain rural communities, councils and their partners need to think and act differently in the future

- Some questions:
 - Is a place based collective approach the right model?
 - Is there strategic ownership to address challenges?
 - Role of public bodies?
 - Role of PSBs?
 - Role of FGC?
 - Role of Welsh Government?
 - Difficulties that need to be overcome in rural Wales?
 - Example of what works?
 - Anything else?