

Swansea Local Area Coordination - Best Practice Guide



What Is Local Area Coordination?

Local Area Coordination recognises the power of taking time to get to know people, families and the wonderful connections, resources and opportunities within local communities and is a key component in the successful delivery of the Social Services and Well-Being Act, and the Ageing Well Plan.

The **Local Area Coordination Vision** is that:

'All people live in welcoming communities that provide friendship, mutual support, equity and opportunities for everyone.'

local area
coordination
Swansea



This powerful vision is the ambition for an international movement to develop a long term, evidence-based, capacity-building approach for working alongside people of all ages and backgrounds in our communities. We work towards this vision through the **LAC Charter**:

'Develop partnerships with individuals and families as they build and pursue their goals and dreams for a good life and with local communities to strengthen their capacity to include all people including those at risk of exclusion, as valued citizens.'

What Does a Local Area Coordinator Do?

Local Area Coordinators are there for the whole community. They walk alongside individuals and the community to help people to:

- Make new connections and friends;
- Get involved in groups and activities;
- Overcome personal challenges;
- Get their voices heard by people in power and get involved in improving public services;
- Make contributions to their communities;
- Think about what their good life looks like.

Local Area Coordinators are guided by [ten principles](#) when walking alongside people. They can take introductions (rather than referrals, as an introduction best describes the manner of the relationship) from other Health & Social Care professionals, community members or direct from the person themselves



LAC Ten Principles

How Does It Work?

Each Coordinator works in a defined community of around 10,000-12,000. They approach, or are introduced to people who want to make changes to their lives, or who may be isolated, or at risk of needing formal services. Coordinators support people to build their own **vision for a good life**, finding pragmatic and creative solutions, drawing on individual's **strengths**, and family and community resources, before considering commissioned or statutory services.

Walking alongside individuals in this way enables them to stay stronger, confident and interdependent for longer, delaying – or even removing – their need for formal service support.

This means that instead of assessing or signposting people into services, they can:

- Invest enough time in understanding what a good life looks like to the person or family, and how they could get there;
- Help people to build their own capacity and connections, so that they can stay strong and independent;
- Build new community connections or capacity where they don't exist.

It is a connected, integrated, preventative and strength-based role – whole person, whole family, whole community, whole system - which is embedded in and connected with community, whilst also being connected with formal services providing a valuable bridge between community and Local Authority.

Local Area Coordination in Swansea



A list of all the Local Area Coordination areas in Swansea is included in **Annex A** for information and all their contact details can be found on the Council [website](#)

In Swansea, Local Area Co-ordination started with 3 Coordinators in 2015. Swansea is one of 12 areas across England and Wales that has been developing and implementing this approach as part of the national Local Area Co-ordination Network www.lacnetwork.org

Over time, the approach in Swansea has grown to the point where we now have **full coverage** of all areas across the county. There is a dedicated Coordinator covering each of the **twenty-three areas** based on population size (as opposed to ward areas).



Part of the Community

Coordinators are **place-based**, working in their community rather than from an office and focussing on people and possibilities rather than issues and needs. As part of their role they identify what we call **'bumping spaces'** where they can get to know and can become known by the community. This could be the community centre or library, if there is one, but can equally be a café, shop or social venue. They will learn about the groups that meet in their area and will attend occasionally, especially if they are attending with someone they are walking alongside. They are not community development workers; their Coordination is **in the area** rather than **of the area**.

Often, Coordinators are asked to provide lists of groups or assets in a community. While having the local knowledge is vital and can help other colleagues, a published list is not ideal as it easily gets out of date and is not a suitable location for the many informal sources of support to be advertised. Because the Coordinator builds relationships with local people they become a **knowledgeable and known community member**. Nothing is better for local knowledge than these **reciprocal and valuable connections**.

They make connection with **key community members**, such as elected Members, faith leaders, local businesses and other community professionals but will also get to know the many individuals who are active in the community, often in **informal** and low profile ways.

Building relationships is key to the role and is the way the Coordinator gets to find out about the resources and the **many great things** that are happening in the community.



Working In Partnership

Partnership working is critical to the success of Local Area Coordination, as each Coordinator develops relationships with service providers and stakeholders that work in their communities. This includes relationships with organisations and groups such as:

This partnership working also extends to **include informal groups and individuals** many of whom operate with low profiles. This could include the local shopkeeper who has lived in the area for many years and has vital local knowledge. It could also include individuals who are active in supporting neighbours in informal ways. By building relationships with these, the Coordinator gains local knowledge and connection which are important tools in their toolbox when they are walking alongside a person.

- Ward Councillors, Town & Community Councils
- Colleagues – inc. Social Services, Education, Housing & Regeneration;
- Swansea Council for Voluntary Services
- Registered Social Landlords – including Coastal, Pobl and Caredig
- Swansea Bay University Health Board – including local GP Cluster Groups and Community Mental Health Team
- Social Prescribers
- South Wales Police – including local Police Community Support Officers
- Mid and West Wales Fire Service Community Safety
- Citizens Advice
- Many Third Sector groups – inc charities, food banks and community groups
- Community-based enterprises
- Education and learning partners
- National and Welsh Government forums



Strategic partnerships are also vital to the development and effectiveness of LAC.

“All the Swansea based housing associations invest both money and time, along with other statutory and voluntary groups and have both championed Local Area Coordination and facilitated good working relationships with Coordinators. Academic input too from Swansea University is invaluable.” [LAC blog](#)

Walking Alongside People & Families

Local Area Coordinators are **alongsiders**, in that they take time to get to know people and walk alongside them whilst they identify, explore and work towards their version of a good life. Working with individuals in this way is the main part of the role.

Coordinators are primarily focussed on making themselves available to individuals in their area in two ways;

- 1 For anyone in the community for information, connections, or **short-term** support.
- 2 For **longer term** support alongside people in the community who may be facing more complex and enduring life issues.

Working together they will look at any challenges the person is facing and how best they can overcome them or learn to live with them. They will take real action to work towards the goals the person has set for themselves and help them access the **information** they may need. The Local Area Coordinator will never take the lead and will never dictate what should happen. The person has **natural authority** and, as the expert in their own life, has **choice and control**.

The Local Area Coordination principles underpin everything a Coordinator does. By following these principles, which are highlighted here, the Coordinator will have a strengths-based conversation with the person, focusing on what they can do, what they are good at, what they are interested in and what their good life looks like. They will focus on **relationships, community and contribution**. They will work together and talk about **citizenship**, with all its opportunities and responsibilities, as well as **lifelong learning**, for which everyone has capacity.

Local Area Coordination recognises the **complimentary nature of services**, and a Coordinator will be help someone if they are at the point that they need to access a service, helping them access the right service, at the right time.

How Someone Can be Introduced to Their Local Area Coordinator

Meet in Their Community

Coordinators are present and visible, and anyone can find them at a variety of places in their community.

From Family or Friends

With consent, a Coordinator can be introduced to someone by family, friends or neighbours.

From a Professional

With consent, a Coordinator can be introduced to someone by a professional they know (GP, Social Worker, Housing Officer, Librarian, Councillor, etc.)

How a Local Area Coordinator Can be Contacted

Social Media

Each Coordinator has a Facebook page for their area and can be messaged there.

Email

You can email directly or a central email inbox can be used:
Local.AreaCoordination@swansea.gov.uk

Phone

They can be contacted by phone call, Text message or WhatsApp message.

In Person

Local Area Coordinators are based in your community and will regularly visit community venues so you can speak with them when they are in the area.

What to be Aware of When Introducing Someone to a Local Area Coordinator

Good Life

Has the person previously explored their version of a good life?

Consent

Has the person given consent to be introduced to their Local Area Coordinator?

Understanding

Do they understand what Local Area Coordination is?

Safety Concerns

Is there anything the Local Area Coordinator needs to know to keep people safe?

What to Expect When Meeting Your Local Area Coordinator

Taking Time

Your Coordinator will take time to get to know you; and build a trusting relationship

Good Life

They will talk to you about what's important to you and what you'd like to achieve

What's Strong

They will be positive and help you look at what your strengths are, rather than on deficits and what you can't do.

Challenges

Are there challenges that you need to overcome? Your Coordinator will help you look for ways to do this.

Shared Agreement

You will both complete a shared agreement which sets out what you are both responsible for, what your aims are and what you have both agreed.

The Nature of the Local Area Coordination Relationship

Instead of asking:

“What services and money do people need?”

Local Area Coordination is asking:

“What makes a good life for each person and what are the different ways we can get there?”



The Coordinator **takes time to get to know the person**, exploring their strengths, formal and informal network, helping them to access information when required and helping them advocate for themselves. Taking action and connecting them with others in their community and finding local solutions to challenges all comes before considering their need for formal services.

It all starts with building a trusting relationship, taking time to listen, getting to know, and finding out what is important:
good, purposeful conversations: **purposely unprescribed**

The Nature of the Local Area Coordination Relationship



1. We start with exploring and discovering someone's dreams and aspirations now and in the future.

2. Understand, respect, and acknowledge their journey, gifts, skills, experiences and needs.

3. Help them to access accurate, relevant, and timely information.

4. Support people to build and maintain a valued, mutually supportive relationships – family, friends, shared interests, shared experience.

5. Help people to have a voice and be heard.

6. Assist and encourage people to take practical action to do what they want or need to do in life.

7. Nurture more welcoming, inclusive supportive and better resourced communities. Be part of - and actively contribute to - community life.

8. Help people to access, navigate, choose, and control services and resources they need.

Examples of Positive Outcomes Achieved Through Following the Principles of Local Area Coordination

Georgia misses the sea air. She also misses walking and chatting with other people. She has been increasingly isolated due to Covid, her failing eye sight and other health concerns. But, together with Seren, her Local Area Coordinator, she **builds her confidence** to the point of joining a walking group in her community. And once again, she is **active, connected and enjoying her life**. *“Seren is lovely - it’s made such a difference to my life, I used to go months without going out at all and now I go out weekly and it’s really improved my life.”*



Marvin is a young man who has experienced lots of difficult times in his life. After moving to a new town he started to feel lonely, not knowing anyone and spent much of his time on his own. Following the death of his foster mother Marvin’s situation quickly got worse. He felt the only support and person he could trust had now gone. Marvin was introduced to Anne, the Local Area Coordinator at a time when he was experiencing frequent low moods and felt totally isolated. While Anne walked alongside him, Marvin was able to start to make some changes. Anne introduced him to the Roots Foundation who support care leavers and Marvin was able to start thinking about the future again. Roots offered him support with his finances and a safe place he could start to **connect with others**.

Eric is 83 years old and struggles with multi health conditions on a daily basis. When introduced to Dom, the Local Area Coordinator, his health was limiting his ability to stay independent and this was causing Eric some distress. Dom was able to **connect him up with a number of individuals in his community** who were able to offer practical support in the short term, until Eric felt stronger again. As things started to get better for Eric, Dom ensured he had access to the right aide so that he could start to regain his independence again. Eric now enjoys a much fuller life, is enjoying his hobbies, and is able to look after himself again.

Dan, the Local Area Coordinator, was initially introduced to **Mervyn’s** wife Carys, who was living with dementia. It became evident that Carys had a great team of professionals around her offering her support. However, Mervyn was increasingly struggling as Carys’ full time carer. With so many people involved in Carys’ care, and the focus being on his wife, Mervyn had felt forgotten and a ‘ghost in his own home’. Dan was able to walk alongside Mervyn, helped him **access information that was important for him to better understand** the things that were happening, **and gave him choice and control again**. Dan was also able to help coordinate the many professionals entering his home and supported **Mervyn to have his own voice heard**.

Stories

Why do we produce stories?

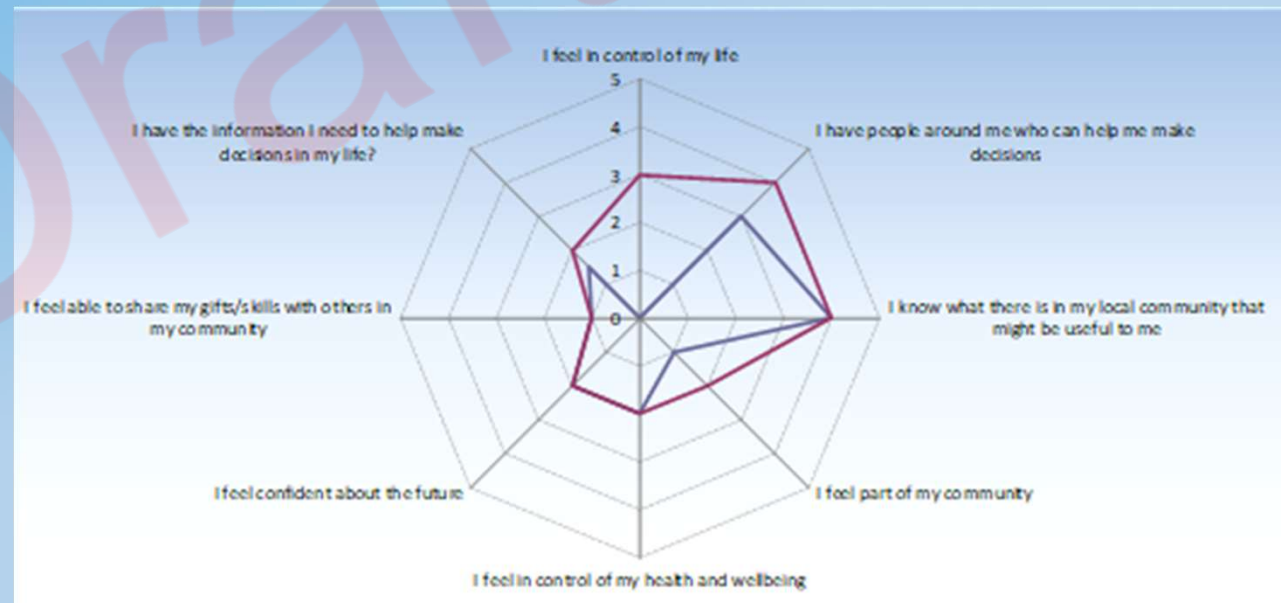
- Reflection for the person we are walking alongside: How far have you come? What have you achieved? Where are the gaps and challenges for you?
- Data capture: qualitative as well as quantitative.
- For Self-reflection and for Peer–Peer sessions.
- To ensure adherence to Local Area Coordination principles and lessen practice drift.
- For sharing and learning across the team.
- To promote the work we do.

Each Local Area Coordinator, together with the person, will write an account of their involvement in the life of someone and the changes the person has been able to make as a result. The story includes a distance-travelled tool as below, which illustrates the two sets of scores each person has assigned themselves and notes the 'journey' between each score. The larger the number the more significant the change for that person in that area of their lives.

Check out [Hugh & Janet's story](#) [Gary's Art For veterans story](#)

These stories are powerful testimonials to the impact of the walking alongside relationship with the Coordinator. This qualitative evidence is powerful and shows the many positive outcomes, not only for the person themselves but also for those connected to them and often their community. Stories are shared regularly and all the stories that have been shared are filed on the Staff Intranet here:

[Local Area Coordination Stories - Staff portal \(swansea.gov.uk\)](#)



Best Practice Illustration 1

The Car Analogy – The Local Area Coordinator is Never in the Driving Seat

1

Imagine you are going on a car journey, taking a route that is totally unfamiliar. You are the driver and are nervous about this. You have an idea of where you need to be but feel unsure about how you will get there alone.

2

I (The Local Area Coordinator) am joining you on this journey, on hand in the passenger seat to talk through any challenges you experience along the way and to encourage you. This journey is not straightforward – you may come across diversions, traffic jams, one way streets, all of which may affect the route you take. It may be stressful but I am sat alongside you offering suggestions on different routes you may want to consider, pointing out the good things and celebrating with you how far you have come, and chatting through concerns you may have, but you are always in control of the speed and direction of your journey

3

After weeks of repeating that journey, you begin to get more confident at handling any challenges you come across along the way. You may not be quite ready to take the journey alone, but are happy for me to move into the back seat while someone else you met on the journey takes my place. I am still on hand to chat through route options with you, but not needing to be sat beside you as your confidence is growing.

4

Eventually, you will have become confident with the route. You may still have to take diversions occasionally, but you are confident that you will reach your destination and feel able to tackle any challenges you meet along the way. At this point, you will probably feel you no longer need me to come along for the ride - me singing away in the back seat is something you can now do without. This is where I get out, as your focus on where you want to be and how you are going to get there is now very clear and there are others around you. I am always available to get back in the car in the future if you need me to, but **never in the driving seat!**



Best Practice Illustration 2

Safe Waiting

This concept was produced by the LAC team in Derby, and is a useful video presentation of some of the elements of the relationship that a Local Area Coordinator builds when they are alongside someone.

“Safe waiting is a stance, like a professional position, that we can take when supporting someone. It's a commitment that we make with that person to stick with them while life unfolds, whatever pace it wants to go at. And....that's waiting. The safe element of it is that we, as professionals, safeguard people. Although you're allowing life to unfold for this person, you are taking into consideration their safety and dignity and assessing that risk as well”

[Watch the Safe waiting video](#) on YouTube



Working with Communities

Whilst their priority is to work with individuals, Local Area Coordinators also work with communities where they adopt an asset-based approach. This approach strengthens communities by identifying and encouraging the skills, resources, experience, knowledge, connections, and passions that already exist within them. It acknowledges **'what's strong' instead of 'what's wrong'**.

Coordinators notice and celebrate the assets that already exist in communities and looks for opportunity to mobilise them, (**making the invisible, visible**). They support individuals to make connections to others with the same skills and passions and focus on community capacity building.

Using this asset-based approach to community develop results in community members becoming active citizens as they participant in the process of change. They are not a recipient of a service or an outcome from a development programme, but are individuals and families living in communities making a difference for themselves.

While this approach to community development can often take longer, it also promises a strategy for longer term, sustainable changes that last.



Working with Communities

BE Learning from community successes throughout Swansea **# 2**

INSPIRED

WALKER, RYLAND DOYLE, TALKS WALKING GROUPS.

LLANSAMLET WEDNESDAY WALKING



WHAT DID YOU DO?
Some people talked to the Local Area Coordinator, Anne, about going walking. She then got everyone together for a meeting. Anne also invited John, Walking Development Officer with Swansea Council. 13 people turned up at that first planning meeting and we all chatted about what we wanted from the group.

HOW DID YOU DO IT?
The library was our start point, and they give us a cuppa at the end. It's a free group, open to everyone: 'NO SPECIAL STUFF REQUIRED.' It's a gentle walk around our beautiful area. 15 people came to the first walk. John talked to us about walk leader training.

WHAT IMPACT HAS IT HAD?
We are well known now. GPs even recommend the group. We have set up a second walk, for people that want to walk further. We've had dog walkers, and mum's with babies join us. The social aspect of the group is as important as the exercise.



HAVE YOU BENEFITED?
Definitely! I have benefited through meeting new people and enjoying visiting parts of the area where I live, which I hadn't visited.

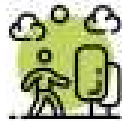
WHAT CAN OTHER COMMUNITIES TAKE FROM THIS?
If there is an interest for something to be done in the community, our group is proof that it can easily be set up.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?
Get in touch with your Local Area Coordinator if you have any ideas you'd like to discuss in your area.
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/localareacoordination>

Local Area Coordinators don't organise or run community groups or take a lead in community development but play a **catalysing role** and focus on enabling communities to drive their own developments.

As the Coordinator connects people together, local groups benefit from the contribution of skills, gifts and abilities of the people the Coordinator walks alongside, building community, as well as individual, capacity.

10 distinguishing features of LAC



LAC's are rooted in **communities**, not office based. They are **accessible, approachable and flexible**.



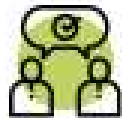
The **relationship with the LAC lasts for as long as necessary**.



Introductions come from **anyone or anywhere – no referral, no eligibility criteria, just a conversation**.



There is **limited or no paperwork directly with people**.



LACs **take time to get to know people, investing in trusting relationships**.



LACs work by having **one foot in communities and one in the service system**.



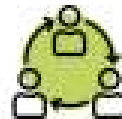
LACs see **people as experts in their own life**. They won't try and prescribe solutions or "fix" people.



The work of LAC **reduces demand on statutory health and social care services**.



LACs look to **support people through natural community connections**.



LACs **help people avoid getting lost in the gaps between different services and help services work together better**.

Comments and Feedback

"I am proud of myself for starting to make changes and ringing people myself, thank you for listening to me and helping me to focus on what I needed to do"

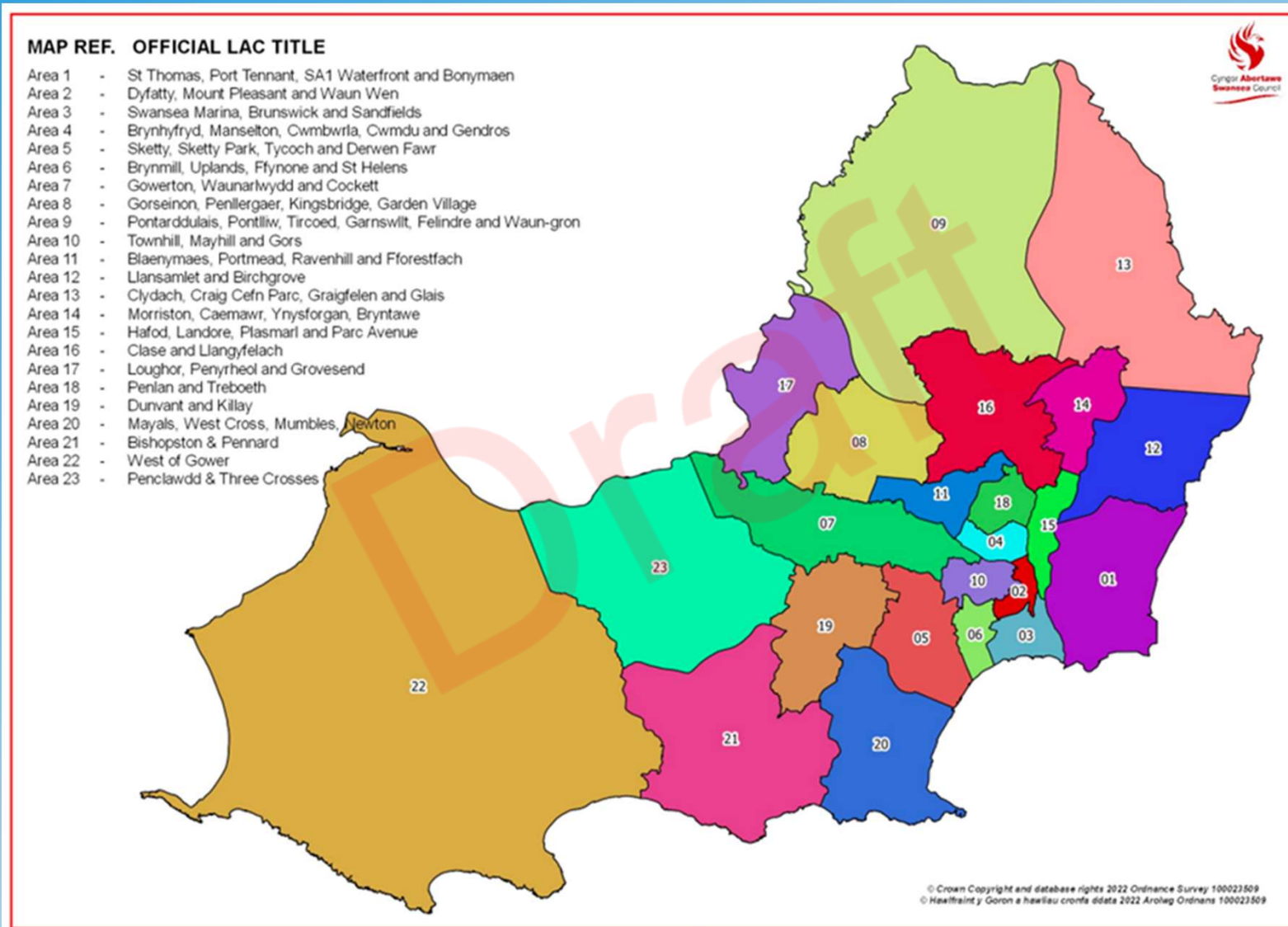
"I am in position where I now have the freedom of choice on my life for the first time since I was 15 years old"

"Having a Local Area Coordinator by my side has really made a difference to me."



"My confidence has grown and I feel that my life is changing for the better."

Annex A: List of Swansea Local Area Co-ordination Areas



Annex B: Swansea LAC leaflet

Who is my Local Area Coordinator?

My Local Area Coordinator is

Contact number

Email address

You can often find them at



Leaflet adapted from content by the Local Area Coordination Network with kind permission of Community Catalysts CIC. The Local Area Coordination Network supports Local Area Coordination programmes across England and Wales.



local area coordination®

in Swansea

Find out more about [Local Area Coordination](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/localareacoordination) and how it could benefit you

www.swansea.gov.uk/localareacoordination



“ Local Area Coordinators take time to get to know us - me, my family, my community ”







What is a Local Area Coordinator?

A **Local Area Coordinator** walks alongside you and your community while you:

- Make new connections and friends
- Get involved in groups and activities
- Overcome personal challenges
- Get your voice heard by people in power and being involved in improving public services
- Make your contribution to your community
- Think about what your good life looks like

How does it work?

Anyone can meet with a **Local Area Coordinator**.

You could meet them in your local area or through an introduction from someone else. You and your Local Area Coordinator will get to know each other on your terms, exploring your idea of a good life and plans to achieve it.

The amount of times you meet really depends on what you want to achieve. They can help you to find out about your community and introduce you to friendly, helpful people within it.

They can help you explore and build on your strengths and can support you to share your skills and gifts with others. They can help you connect with formal services if that is what you feel you need.

Do they help groups too?

Local Area Coordinators are there for the whole community.

They can help local community groups to keep going and grow by introducing more people and supporting them with things like finding opportunities for funding. Local Area Coordinators can also support people set up groups when someone has an idea to start something new.



“ Our vision: ‘All people live in welcoming communities that provide friendship, mutual support, equity and opportunities for everyone’. ”