



**VOLUNTARY ACTION
MERTHYR TYDFIL
GWEITHREDU GWIRFODDOL
MERTHYR TUDFUL**

Annual Report

2015-16



Mission Statement

To support, represent and assist the development of high quality Third Sector organisations and volunteering in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

Vision Statement

- To be the centre of excellence in Merthyr Tydfil for the provision of services to organisations and individuals involved with the Third Sector and volunteering.
- To create a healthy civil society by helping to develop organisations to meet their needs, maximizing volunteering opportunities and sharing our mission with all external stakeholders.



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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Foreword by the Chair and Chief Officer

We are pleased to introduce the nineteenth Annual Report of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT).

This year we were faced with the most dramatic downturn in income relating to our core services in VAMT's history. For the first year since 1998 VAMT has not benefitted from European funding and this, coupled with a further significant cut in core funding from Welsh Government, has been problematic. Sadly this resulted in reducing staffing through redundancy and reductions in working hours with the inevitable reduction in capacity.

However, VAMT continues to achieve results. We were delighted that our partners implementing the Social Services and Wellbeing Act decided to prioritise continuing to fund the Community Coordinators and the Community Capacity Fund despite the Intermediate Care Fund allocation to Cwm Taf being reduced. In addition, the South Cluster Communities First project continues to achieve results and the MAGNET project demonstrated several notable achievements during the year.

VAMT has further collaborated with our neighbour, Interlink RCT, and agreed a regional working plan which was implemented during the year. In particular, there has been close collaborative working with regard to the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act.

As Chair and Chief Officer we are committed to ensuring that we remain an effective organisation with the aim of facilitating a strong and influential third sector and improving volunteering in Merthyr Tydfil. We can only achieve this with a committed team of trustees, staff and volunteers. We thank them for their support and hard work.



Finally, we must take the opportunity to thank the main funders of VAMT for their continued support; namely the Welsh Government, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cwm Taf University Health Board and the Big Lottery Fund. Also, thanks to Wales Council for Voluntary Action who administers several of the Welsh Government funded schemes from which VAMT benefits.

Brian Lewis
Chair

Ian Davy
Chief Officer

Facts & Figures

Number of volunteers placed **137**

Number of website visitor sessions **34,487**

Total number of enquiries received and responded to **2,951**



Number of magazines/newsletters published **4**

Number of recipients for each issue **406**

Number of trustee enquiries received and responded to **38**

Number of funding advice enquiries received and responded to **57**

Amount of funding obtained by groups as notified during the reporting period **£122,742**

Number of training courses provided **29**

Number of participants **287**

Number of new organisations/social enterprises or new services developed **15**



Amount of funding provided through grants/loan schemes **£245,256**

Number of strategic planning/working groups involving third sector membership **72**



Number of third sector forums or networks supported **7**

Total membership **263**

Some Highlights

- 215 potential **volunteers** have been interviewed at the Volunteer Centre and of those, 137 individuals have been placed and are actively volunteering.
- In August, a **'Celebrating Volunteers'** event was held at the Red House in Merthyr Tydfil. The event was a certificate celebration for volunteers and was attended by 18 groups with a total of 120 individuals. The certificates were presented by the Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil, Gerald Jones MP and senior staff from Cwm Taf Health Board and South Wales Police. Specially designed certificates were endorsed by Huw Lewis AM.





- At the VAMT AGM in November, **Terry Collins** of Merthyr Tydfil PHAB Club was presented with the **Nicola Park Award** for his “outstanding contribution to volunteering in Merthyr Tydfil”. The Award was presented by Gerald Jones MP.

Following the experience of a **Job Centre** open day, it was agreed that a Volunteering Officer could have a presence at the Job Centre. This commenced in January 2016 and in the first three months 30 potential volunteers were interviewed and 13 placed.

- South Cluster Communities First's **food co-operative project** allows customers to access fresh fruit, salad and vegetables weekly at wholesale prices. Seven volunteers have been recruited for the three food-co-ops based at Treharris Boys and Girls Club, Fir Tree Community Centre and Trinity Chapel, Merthyr Vale.
- With support from VAMT, New Pathways have achieved their **Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard** following their assessment.
- 29 organisations have been assisted with **good practice** in volunteering.

- The Findagroup website was launched at VAMT's AGM in November (<http://findagroup.cymru/>). The website enables citizens to search for local groups, activities, facilities and services provided by the third sector in RCT and Merthyr Tydfil.



Governance and General Support was provided to:

- Merthyr Vale Ex-serviceman's Club
- Pontsticill Community Group
- Dowlais OAP Association
- Heartbeat '95
- Ad Lib Productions
- Merthyr Tydfil Talking Newspapers
- Taff Bargoed Development Trust
- Merthyr Tydfil Anglers Association
- Trinity Child & Family Centre
- Trelewis Gardening Group
- Brambles Community Garden
- Parkinson's Disease Society – Merthyr Group
- SNAP



Global Village

VAMT participated in the funding fairs organised by the AM's Constituency Office and Merthyr Tydfil CBC.

The following organisations have received funding as a result of support:

- Merthyr Aloud
- Trelewis Community Arts
- Gellideg Football Club
- St John Ambulance, Merthyr Vale
- Galon Pen Community Association
- Forever Young
- Pontsticill Community Group
- Troedyrhiw Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
- Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project Community Transport
- Cancer Aid
- Accessible Caring Transport
- Cilhaul Community Centre
- Elite
- SNAP Cymru

MAGNET is a portfolio of 7 projects aiming to engage with marginalised communities of interest to strengthen their voice in influencing public services and policy. All of the projects within the portfolio have been working closely with the local authority in the review and writing of the new Equalities Strategy and Action Plan. The projects are recognised as key for reaching some of the most excluded within society and having knowledge in relation to equality matters.



Some of the outcomes of the project were:

The **Focal Point** project has become the 'go to' regarding immigration matters in Merthyr Tydfil. The project has participated in the Welsh Government's Equalities and Inclusion consultations. A medical student has linked with the project and undertaken research into best practice within **GP and A&E services** for persons whose first language is not English.

A cultural toolkit has already been developed with Cwm Taf University Health Board and the aim is now to adapt and roll this out to other service providers.

The **Bridges** project worked in partnership with the local authority to undertake the **Gypsy Traveller Housing Needs Assessment**. Bridges is supporting with the engagement within the community and ensuring that their opinions are considered.

The **Visible** project continues to have a high demand for the LGBT training which is supporting service providers to be able to fulfil their policies effectively.

The **Up and Coming** project has successfully recruited more young reporters and the topics to be identified range from services associated with self-harm through to the declining bee population. The young reporters have covered Pride Cymru and a mental health film screening which was examining mental health / self-harm support in schools.

The **Possib** project targeting families and working aged men in north Merthyr Tydfil has developed very creative methods of engagement. Examples are coffee and collage sessions with mothers examining what it is to be a mother leading to a personal portrait being made. "Photovoice", a project that had young people undertaking street photography to express their views about their community was successful that "Photovoice 2" has begun.

The **Perthyn** project held a consultation event with young people, older tenants and social housing officers to establish policies and services to review.

The **One Voice** project (managed by VAMT) has influenced a number of initiatives that enable the delivery of public services:

- **Visually impaired** volunteers attended a consultation regard the development of the new St Fagan's exhibitions. Approximately 40 recommendations were made.
- Merthyr Tydfil **railway station** regeneration initiative led to project participants being involved at the design stage. Approximately 13 points were raised and led to amendments to the design and an improved installation.
- Discussions were held with the Children's Disability Team and CAMHS concerning diagnostic and statementing processes in order to explore more inclusive **working with parents**.
- **Autism awareness training** was delivered to "Frankie and Benny's" staff in partnership with NAS Merthyr Tydfil. This is to be rolled out to other businesses in the leisure park.
- The project has played a lead role in the implementation of the **Orange Card** scheme in Merthyr Tydfil endorsed by Arriva Trains and Stagecoach. The scheme helps people with ASD and learning disabilities travel independently.

A **showcase event** for MAGNET was held in September and attended by 45 people. This has helped to raise the profile of the projects and the many successes to date and was positively received.

- The **Communities First South Cluster** project supported:
 - Rock UK
 - Trinity Child & Family Centre
 - Bedlinog Miners Welfare
 - TACT (Treharris Area Community Trust)
 - Friends of Parc Taf Bargoed
 - Little Cubs preschool Bedlinog
 - Merthyr Tydfil Heritage society

In addition, 34 participants have completed **Self-help, Mindfulness and Stress Control courses**.

- 12 participants have taken part in the **Afon Taf High School Peer Support Programme** to date
- In total 46 participants have engaged in a mental health programme, 20 of whom report that they feel **more positive about their mental health** and have an increased knowledge of support available to them

Communities First Homework Clubs -

the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths AM visited Afon Taf High School in June. The purpose of the Minister's visit was to meet staff and pupils who have been part of the Communities First Homework Clubs within the school. The Homework Clubs have seen significant improvement in the number of young people achieving 5 Grade A-C GCSEs and highlights the excellent partnership working taking place in Merthyr Tydfil. GCSE Level 2 results inclusive A* to C grades including Maths and English increased from 39% to 51% on last year's results.



Year 10 pupils Dylan and James
with the Minister

• **Community Capacity Fund**

Following on from previous success with the Intermediate Care Fund, VAMT was asked to administer a Community Capacity Fund of £66k on behalf of the Social Services & Well Being Act partners across Cwm Taf. A multi-agency panel agreed to support 12 new projects which included:

- A **befriending service** to provide support to isolated older people who are recently bereaved.
- Introduction of **training courses** to help reduce waiting lists for bereavement services.
- Accessible gardens at two residential care homes.

• The development of a **Memory Box Project**

which uses local materials to help evoke memories and stimulate discussion. Boxes are accessible at libraries/mobile library facilities and can be loaned to groups.



- Positive Action Towards Change (PATCH) in relation to Parkinson's through developing **social café sessions** where individuals can meet and build their confidence in re-engaging in community life.
- Social opportunities developed by **young people** for the benefit of **older residents**. This included afternoon tea/tea dances; aromatherapy and massage sessions.

- The **Carers Information and Development Project** informs and supports carers. Three hard copy newsletters have been produced and distributed this year. The project has both Facebook and Twitter sites where it posts information on events and support for carers, but also **consultations and engagement** that may pique their interest. The Project has also supported carer involvement in engagement and consultation for **Cwm Taf Carers Strategy 2016 – 2019** which involved drafting plans and identifying opportunities for engagement, carrying out engagement itself and collating and feeding back information gathered.

- **Carers Support Services** – At the start of 2015/2016 the Carers Grants panel awarded 6 grants to 4 organisations to **deliver carers support services** in the county borough. A Carers Rights Day event hosted by the Project also gave an outreach opportunity for 10 organisations to meet with carers and offer information and support.

- **Social Services & Wellbeing (SSWB) Act Implementation**

- VAMT is an integral member of the structure to support the implementation of the SSWB Act and alongside Interlink colleagues ensure the sector is represented at all levels. This includes representation of the Chair at the SSWB Act Partnership Board and the Chief Officer at the Executive Board. VAMT is also represented on **key workstreams** for the third sector i.e. commissioning, information, advice and assistance, population needs assessment. In addition, the CVCs have been asked to **lead one particular workstream** around building community capacity.

Community Coordinator Primary Care – This is a Cwm Taf wide role and a specific focus during this period has been the **flu campaign**, with the Co-ordinator developing a community based “Myth Busting” model. It has been successful in engaging community members, as well as those who work with community members, with the intention of improving understanding of the positive benefits of vaccinations.



Myth Busting talk at The Stay Young at Heart Group September 2015

Brokering Third Sector into Primary Care - 18 organisations were supported by the Primary Care Community Co-ordinator and arranged for them to directly attend GP practices on 41 separate occasions.

Local Service Board / Regional Collaboration

Board/ Single Integrated Plan - VAMT continues to be an active member of the Merthyr Tydfil LSB and the Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board. VAMT also chairs the Merthyr Tydfil SIP Steering Group and the Adult Community Learning Partnership.



Compact between Police and Crime Commissioner, South Wales Police and the Third Sector.

VAMT have led on the development of this Partnership Agreement. A Compact was drafted and a consultation event was held in July. Subsequently the draft was amended and an action plan and terms of reference drafted. The Compact was successfully launched in October and the Fire and Rescue Service has asked to also become a signatory to the Compact which has been agreed. Area nominations from CVCs were sought and the first Compact Steering Group meeting was held in January. Work on developing the Action Plan has commenced and a stakeholder survey planned to inform the Action Plan.

Crystal Trophy Award - In July, VAMT and Interlink provided supported the process of this Cwm Taf Public Health initiative. They coordinated responses, were actively involved in the multi-agency selection panel and supported the planning and running of the awards ceremony. 17 applications were received, and the top three were all Merthyr Tydfil-based:

- 1st Prize:
Safer Merthyr Tydfil - Domestic Abuse Project (£1500)
- 2nd Prize:
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association - Boxfit Project (£1000)
- 3rd Prize:
Almond Tree Christian Fellowship - Counselling Service (£750)



Statement of Financial Activities

(including income and expenditure account)
For the year ended 31 March 2016

	2016			2015
	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Total £
Income				
Income from charitable activities:				
Grants and contracts	151,786	1,292,623	1,444,409	1,420,544
Management fees	85,220	7,342	92,562	73,502
Income from other trading activities:				
Rent and accommodation income	60,559	-	60,559	54,457
Telephone and postage recharged	9,128	-	9,128	10,271
Training income	1,900	-	1,900	1,470
Investment income	1,129	-	1,129	2,147
Other income	1,231	8,044	9,275	15,813
Total Income	310,953	1,308,009	1,618,962	1,578,204
Expenditure				
Expenditure on charitable activities	298,218	1,322,302	1,620,520	1,581,821
Total Expenditure	298,218	1,322,302	1,620,520	1,581,821
Net Income/(Expenditure) for the year	12,735	(14,293)	(1,558)	(3,617)
Transfers between funds	(7,003)	7,003	-	-
Net movement in funds	5,732	(7,290)	(1,558)	(3,617)
Funds brought forward	621,048	65,944	686,992	690,609
Funds carried forward	626,780	58,654	685,434	686,992

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet

As at 31 March 2016

	2016	2015
	£	£
Fixed Assets		
Tangible fixed assets	329,788	356,914
Current Assets		
Debtors	393,271	94,655
Cash at bank and in hand	154,495	383,526
	547,766	478,181
Liabilities:		
Amounts falling due within one year	192,120	148,103
Net Current Assets	355,646	330,078
Net Assets	685,434	686,992
Funds		
Unrestricted income funds	626,780	621,048
Restricted income funds	58,654	65,944
Total Funds	685,434	686,992

Board and Staff Members



Board 2015-16

Names of Directors

Brian Lewis – Chair
Helen Thomas – Vice Chair
Paul Gray – Treasurer
Nicola Mahoney
Ceinwen Statter
Maria Thomas
Huw Williams
Anne Roberts
Laura Guard

Volunteers

Louise Patterson
Helen Mahoney
Kevin Eddy
Sarah Gibbon
Diane Sheppard
Selina Kim Andrews
Brian Williams
Kay Powell

Staff Members 2015/2016

Alison Harris	Third Sector Officer
Amy Jones	Communities First – Community Inclusion Officer
Bethan Evans	Communities First - Family Liaison Key Worker
Bethan Morgan	Communities First - Performance & Monitoring Officer
Carol van den Berg	ICF Community Coordinator (until May 2015)
Carol Hindley	Administration and Finance Manager
Claire Williams	Communities First – Learning Communities Lead Officer
Darcy White	Clerical Work Placement (June – November 2015) Jobs Growth Wales Clerical Assistant (from December 2015)
Deanne Rebane	ICF Community Coordinator
Elaine James	Carers Information and Development Officer (until July 2015) Community Co-ordinator (from July 2015)
Frances Barry	Volunteering/Youth Volunteering Officer
Hannah Mills	Communities First – Prosperous Communities Lead Officer
Hilary Edwards	Deputy Chief Officer
Ian Davy	Chief Officer
John Scott	Community Well Being Coach – Volunteering (May – October 2015)
Karen Foley	Volunteering Officer
Ken Long	Communities First South Cluster Manager
Kendra Tarplee	Communities First – Primary Family Support Officer (from June 2015)
Laura Johnson	Administration and Finance Officer
Maria Abson	Mental Health Development Officer ¹
Maria Roberts	Communities First – Administrative Officer
Nia Williams	One Voice Project Officer (from September 2015)
Patrick McNally	Communities First – Primary Family Support Officer (until April 2015)
Rachel Thomas	Communities First – Healthier Communities Lead Officer
Rachel Wyatt	Mental Health User Involvement Development Officer ²
Ravi Vedi	Community Economic Development Officer (until April 2015)
Rebecca Meredith	One Voice Project Officer (until July 2015)
Sally Richards	MAGNET Project Manager
Sharon Richards	Health and Social Care Facilitator / ICF Project Manager
Sian Musto	Carers Information and Development Officer (from September 2015)
Shawn Williams	Clerical Assistant (from December 2014) (until May 2015)
Steve Morgan	Community Well Being Coach – Volunteering (until April 2015)