

## VAMT receives recognition for effective governance and management

Earlier this year Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) was awarded the PQASSO Quality Mark, a nationally recognised quality assurance standard, developed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). It is the only UK quality standard designed to help third sector organisations operate more effectively and efficiently.

VAMT was assessed against the 11 standards of effective practice in PQASSO, including in governance, leadership and management,

managing staff and volunteers and managing money, and proved to meet all standards.

If you are interested in finding out more about PQASSO, and particularly PQASSO Essentials for smaller organisations, VAMT hosts a session on Tuesday 9 October between 10:00am and 12:00pm at the Voluntary Action Centre in the town centre. Please email [training@vamt.net](mailto:training@vamt.net) if you'd like to attend.



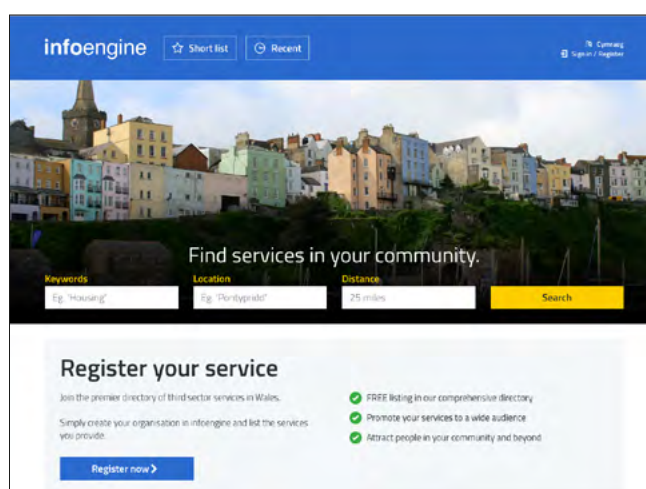
## Easier Access to Information On-line

**There is a new opportunity to promote the services of your organisation to the community as information about third sector organisations and services is now able to be shared between two information sources, infoengine and Dewis Cymru.**

infoengine is an online directory of third sector services in Wales. It is provided and supported by Third Sector Support Wales, a partnership of County Voluntary Councils (including VAMT) and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. It has over 4,000 services offered by voluntary organisations and community groups. This number increases daily. (<https://en.infoengine.cymru/>)

Dewis Cymru is a website providing information about well-being in Wales. The website is developed by Data Cymru on behalf of the 22 local authorities in Wales. It contains a resource directory of over 6,000 local and national organisations and services including local authority services, community groups, voluntary organisations and businesses.

infoengine adds to this a comprehensive set of information about third sector services making it a unique source of information for use across Wales. It also includes a set of information pages designed to



help people think about 'what matters' to them, and helps them find local, practical support. (<https://www.dewis.wales/home>)

This development is a real example of practical collaboration between the third sector and the public sector in Wales and ensures that information is readily available to both the public and to those who offer advice and support to the public across Wales. Organisations wishing to publicise their services using either resource will need to visit the websites and register their details.

**Welcome** to the September edition of Inform in 2018. Our aim is to provide our members with up to date news and information and we welcome contributions and feedback from all readers of this newsletter.



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## YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

If you could like to include an article, news item or Focus on your group in the next edition, contact VAMT enquiries for more information: [enquiries@vamt.net](mailto:enquiries@vamt.net).

VAMT's Board would like to thank **Maria Thomas** for her time as a VAMT Trustee. Maria recently stood down from VAMT's Board due to the pressure of work from her role as the Vice-Chair of Cwm Taf University Health Board.

The Board would also like to welcome **Suzanne Davies** as a co-opted Trustee. Suzanne will be familiar to many due to her previous roles at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

## Merthyr Tydfil Voluntary Action Centre

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Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UH

Tel: 01685 353900

Fax: 01685 353909

email: [enquiries@vamt.net](mailto:enquiries@vamt.net)

### Office Staff

**Ian Davy** Chief Officer

**Hilary Edwards** Development Officer

**Carol Hindley** Admin & Finance Manager

**Laura Johnson** Volunteering Officer/Admin and Finance Officer

**Sharon Richards** Health & Social Care Facilitator/ ICF Project Manager

**Vacancy** Community Co-ordinator Merthyr Tydfil

**Deanne Rebane** Community Co-ordinator Cwm Taf Primary Care

**Frances Barry** Digital Support Officer

**Susan Broad** Admin and Finance Assistant

### VAMT's Board

Suzanne Davies *(co-opted)*

Brian Lewis *Chair*

Helen Thomas *Vice-Chair*

Paul Gray *Treasurer*

Ruth Hopkins

Nicola Mahoney

Ann Roberts *Acting Chair*

Mark Ward

Huw Williams

## Adverts/Inserts policy

In each Inform we are able to insert adverts and up to 5 different leaflets from member or other organisations. We have a rate card for private agencies who wish to advertise or place inserts and prices start for £25. There is also a rate card for voluntary organisations for charges covering pre-printed inserts and inserts that need to be copied. Contact VAMT [enquiries@vamt.net](mailto:enquiries@vamt.net)



@VAMTtweets  
@VAMTvolunteer  
@merthycarers  
@merthyrMAGNET  
@onevoicemt  
@c1stsouth



## A New Chapter for Bridging the Gap Youth!

A new chapter has begun at Bridging the Gap Youth. The after-school and holiday club for children with additional needs has entered its twelfth year, and with that we have bid farewell



to Project Manager Christine Butler. For the last twelve years Christine has dedicated her life to ensuring that those with additional needs in Merthyr Tydfil have a safe and stimulating environment, where inclusion is

paramount, promoting empowerment, equality and opportunity for young people in the area. We hope you enjoy retirement Christine, and we wish you all the best.

However, when one door closes another door opens. Bridging the Gap Youth has appointed Louise Morris as its new Project Manager. With a background in marketing and education, Louise aims to revitalise Bridging the Gap Youth, focusing on increasing member numbers, broadening age remits, and focusing on opportunities and activities that grant our young people the same experiences that their peers without additional needs enjoy.

Over the summer holidays, our young people have visited Taf Bargoed Fishing Club and learnt important life skills, regarding how our food sources start out and the process of how they become products for consumption further down the line. Our young people also prepared and cooked the fish for their tea, instilling a sense of independence with various household tasks.



Bridging the Gap Youth has also been lucky enough to work closely with Cyfarthfa Castle and Merthyr Tydfil Library this summer participating in various activities.

Bridging the Gap Youth is also experiencing a re-brand of sorts. After twelve years, we are launching a new logo, new staff uniforms, social media pages and a website is also in development. This will enable us to have a greater reach across Merthyr Tydfil and the surrounding area, providing much needed stimulation for young people with additional needs and respite for parents, guardians and carers. In an era where cuts across various sectors are rife, we as an organisation have a duty to provide sanctuary and a place where young people with additional needs can socialise, integrate and feel empowered.

We are currently recruiting Inclusion Playworkers at Bridging the Gap Youth, and we are always looking for volunteers to lend a helping hand. Donations are also welcome. For further information, please contact **Louise Morris, Project Manager**, at **[bgyouth@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bgyouth@hotmail.co.uk)**.

To find out more about Bridging the Gap Youth and what we have to offer, please follow us on

 **@bgyouthmerthyr**

 **bgyouthmerthyr**

 **Bridging the Gap Youth.**

### Independent Visitors

**National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) is seeking to recruit volunteer Independent Visitors for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.**



Volunteer IVs are individuals who befriend children and young people who are in care (looked after by the Local Authority). To fulfil this role you must be able to listen to children and young people, be available to meet with individuals and show commitment. Applicants must have experience of working face to face with children and young people but no formal qualification is necessary. You will receive training, supervision and support to fulfil this role. References and a DBS check are required.

### Reconnect 50+

Safer Merthyr Tydfil are seeking volunteers for their Reconnect 50+ project which aims to tackle social isolation experienced by anybody aged 50+ living within Merthyr Tydfil. Social isolation is a challenging reality for many. Its effects can be pronounced, and may even lead to a decline in overall health and well-being, in addition to feelings of depression or anxiety. Are you interested in signing up for our unique volunteering opportunity where you'll be given full training and can commit to as little or many hours to suit? Do you have a particular skill or passion you think may be suitable for our aged 50+ group workshops, such as the ability to run (with our support) an arts or crafts, cookery, exercise or musical/arts activity?



**Safer Merthyr Tydfil**  
Merthyr Tudful Mwy Dioge

### School Support – Children affected by Parental Imprisonment

**The Invisible Walls Accord project supports school age children within the South Wales area who have been affected by family imprisonment.**



IWA is currently piloting a toolkit which will allow schools to be able to independently support children who are affected. This will enable schools to raise awareness, educate communities and reduce stigma around imprisonment. IWA is recruiting volunteers to support schools and to promote and maintain the Invisible Walls work within the school environment.

Volunteers will go through Barnardo's in-house training scheme to support with this role. Volunteers will also receive regular supervision. References and DBS check will be necessary. Volunteers must be 16+.



### Cruse Bereavement Care – Children and Young People's Service

**Cruse Bereavement Children and Young People's service needs more bereavement volunteers across the whole of its area – could you help fill that gap?**

The CYP Service supports children and young people who are having difficulty coping with the loss, through death, of a significant person in their lives whether a parent, grandparent, sibling, other relative or friend. Volunteers need to have at least two years' experience of working with children or young people in any field of work, some regular spare time to give and a desire to be involved.

Volunteers will need to attend a pre and post course, interview, an initial intensive 8 day training course and complete coursework.

**For further information on these and many other volunteer opportunities please contact Laura Johnson on 01685 353902 or [laura.johnson@vamt.net](mailto:laura.johnson@vamt.net)**



### Fit and Fed - Tackling School Holiday Hunger!



**Merthyr Housing**  
Where People Come First  
**Tai Merthyr**  
Lle Daw Pobl yn Gyntaf

**60% of families living on an annual income of £25,000 say they can't always afford food during the school holidays, and families on less than £15,000 report that it is a constant struggle. During the six weeks summer holidays the average family weekly shop increases by £40. Holiday hunger is a stark reality that faced 3 million children and young people this summer in the UK.**

Through a collaborative approach with Street Games Wales, the Youth Service and local third sector organisations, Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association have taken on the task to help alleviate the impact that holiday hunger has upon the children and young people of Merthyr Tydfil. Through money awarded through a Community Capacity Grant, MTHA are working in partnership with five organisations across the borough to pilot a project that looks to get children and young people more active, more engaged with friends and peers and provide them with a meal and snacks that will help fuel them for the day.



The project ran at Treharris Boys and Girls Club, the Willows Centre Troedyrhiw, and sites through the Gellideg Foundation Group, Pant and Dowlais Boys and Girls Club and at the new 3Gs Youth Project on Chestnut Way. Each site offered their own unique version of a project to get as many children and young people engaged in stimulating activities for the mind, body and soul.

The project ran throughout the 6 weeks school holidays and will also run during the October and February half term school holidays. The project has proved very successful so far and we hope to continue to use this collaborative approach to continue the programme in the long term ensuring children and young people have free access to activities and healthy meals and snacks during school holidays

If you are interested in any of these projects, please contact the sites closest to you or visit the Merthyr Housing website [www.mtha.org.uk](http://www.mtha.org.uk) for details of activities in future school holidays:

**Treharris Boys and Girls Club 01443 410582**

**Gellideg Foundation 01685 383929**

**Pant and Dowlais Boys and Girls Club  
01685 375318**

**The Willows Troedyrhiw 014443 692 198  
3Gs Youth – 07921 991075**

### Food co-op gets a revamp!

**MTHA have rebranded their Food Co-op as Fruity Fridays. For some time there was confusion around the food co-op as many people got it confused with the food bank and wrongly assume that it is not open to everyone in the community.**

Nothing else has changed you are still able to order the same great quality, healthy items at the same great price, prepared by our fantastic volunteers. To place orders or discuss Fruity Fridays you can contact the community development team on 01685352800 or Nicola Garbett on 07867359427.

### Pentrebach OAPs support PHAB Club with Donation

**Pentrebach OAP Association recently supported the Merthyr Tydfil PHAB Club with a donation of £150.**

The Group was set up over 32 years ago by local man Terry Collins to provide after-school activities to a group of pupils at Greenfield School in Pentrebach. Assisted by Rita Taylor, the PHAB Club continues from strength to strength.



### Merthyr Housing Active Families project



**Merthyr  
Housing**  
*Where People  
Come First*

**Tai  
Merthyr**  
*Ue Daw Pobl  
yn Gyntaf*

Active Families is a MTHA family engagement initiative that has also been created through partnership with Street Games Wales. Its focus was to work with families living in MTHA homes and to establish barriers that they face in being active together as a family and building their skills and confidence to empower them to break down these barriers.

The project discovered the perceptions that the families had on being physically active and what barriers and concerns that they face to becoming more active. Through the consultation, key themes emerged including health, transport, and money.

When the group were asked what being physically active meant to them, their ideas were high impact, energy consuming and very much sport orientated and focussed mainly around what the children and young people do to get active. There was little emphasis on play and low impact activities that families could do together such as walking the family dog.

The families reported that through the project they have become more active. The resources provided in an activity pack have been a great help in providing a range of activities that help families get active in the garden, street or the local park. The information provided on local Park runs, trails and walks as well as what each local park has to offer has helped to get families out and about more and doing things that are low cost. The families identified that the geocaching session and providing ideas on other games such as nature bingo and mini-beast hunts have given them ideas of what they can do in the outdoor spaces that are around them and don't have a cost to them. The project helped challenge their perception of being physically active and introduced ideas of low impact, low cost, and low energy output activities. This alongside the family healthy slow cooking sessions have enabled the whole family to both eat more healthily and be more active together as a family.



### Would you benefit from a fundraising health check?

**Is your organisation heavily reliant on unreliable grant funding, or do you struggle to see the wood for the trees in planning ways to raise money for your organisation?**

**The Institute of Fundraising Cymru can help!**

Funded by the Big Lottery's Third Sector Skills programme, IoF Cymru's Fundraising Health Check and Executive Coaching project seeks to build fundraising knowledge and confidence in charities across Wales.

In the Fundraising Health Check, charities are matched with fundraising coaches who support them to develop new fundraising strategies. Registered charities with voluntary income (not including grant income) under £50,000 and at



*Excellent fundraising for a better world*

least two members of part- or full-time staff are eligible to apply.

In the Executive Coaching, coaches provide coaching support to individual fundraisers. Fundraisers from registered charities based or working in Wales are eligible to apply.

For application packs or for further information, please contact Alison Pritchard, Project Coordinator, on 02920 340062 or email [alisonp@institute-of-fundraising.org.uk](mailto:alisonp@institute-of-fundraising.org.uk).

### Clean up for St Tydfil's Park

St.Tydfil's Neighbourhood Watch was formed in October 2015, with a committee of four, and a very small membership.

In the time since, the committee has evolved, and membership now is in the 30s with obviously the need always to increase both.

In addition to wanting to improve the neighbourhood, with regard to littering, traffic problems and anti-social behaviour, it was decided that St Tydfil's Park, in front of the former St Tydfil's Hospital, an area that had fallen into disrepair, would be our priority.

The park is such an oasis, a lovely green space in a busy built up area - but one that had sadly fallen into underuse due to certain problems. The park was full of litter, drug paraphernalia, dog fouling and was generally looking very dejected.

In January 2017, the very first community clean-up day was held. So many people turned up to help - Gerald Jones MP, Dawn Bowden AM, local councillors Dai Jones, Linda Matthews and Sian Slater, Jake Castle of Keep Wales Tidy, in addition to local residents and the local PCSOs. 45 bags of rubbish were cleared on that day. Since that time support has been received in the form of volunteering groups from the Welsh Assembly, the Mormon Church, two local schools; Caedraw Primary and Ysgol Santes Tydfil. A local artist, Mrs Yvonne Williams worked with Caedraw children to paint a vibrant mural on one of the park's walls.



Through fund raising and grants benches, picnic tables and a notice board have been purchased and wildflowers and perennials planted to enhance the area. Even free dog poo bags are supplied, so that the park can be free of dog fouling!



To celebrate the regeneration of the Park, a very successful community event was held on Sunday July 15th. It was so gratifying for all the committee to see so many families taking full advantage of this peaceful green area within their community.

The park is now regularly used by responsible dog walkers, and frequented by both individuals and families alike.



**More volunteers are always welcome**, whether to join the committee or to give whatever time they can spare. Anyone interested can contact **Olga Jones** on **07850 441319**.



## Sported – can we help your sports group?

**Michelle Llewellyn is the Membership Support & Development Officer for Sported in Wales.**



**Sported support community groups who are delivering sport for change by working with young people aged 11-25. They are a FREE membership organisation and members benefit from the following:**

- Mentor support from professionals in any areas you may need support – business planning, governance, financial planning, fundraising, marketing & PR and networking & partnerships
- Monthly funding bulletin – highlighting funding available in your area
- Help with grant funding applications
- Insurance and legal advice service
- Monthly newsletter – where we can publicise your accomplishments
- Workshops and training
- Help to measure your impact

If you require any further information or if you would like to join Sported please give **Michelle** a call on **07557 398466**

Merthyr Falcons are one of the local groups working with Sported. It is an amateur cheerleading club based in Merthyr Tydfil, established in 2017 with the focus to attract young people, especially females into sport. Merthyr Falcons use cheerleading to engage with young people in order to reduce obesity levels and increase their health and well-being. They promote volunteering within the organisation and offer young people the opportunity to become coaches. Cheerleading consists of many aspects including dance, strength, fitness, acrobatics and gymnastics and as it comprises all these different elements, cheerleading attracts a wider audience. Merthyr Falcons are the only cheerleading group in Merthyr Tydfil and their numbers are growing daily.

The founder Caleala Clifford was completely new to running an organisation and needed assistance to develop a constitution and relevant policies in order for Merthyr Falcons to meet all its legal requirements and to allow the group to apply for funding.



Caleala signed up to become a member of Sported and received one-to-one mentor support from one of their experienced business mentors.

Merthyr Falcons was matched with volunteer mentor Nicki Arthur to assist in developing the governance for the organisation. Nicki says "Caleala worked tirelessly to put the constitution together, everything has been covered and included to ensure members' safety, wellbeing and development have been thought about. The foundations have been laid to add credibility to a very professional club that will last well into the future and provide reassurance to parents that this is a well-managed and organised group". She added "this was my first placement so it was all new to me, Caleala and I however got on straight away and I have very much enjoyed working with her and enjoyed the learning experience this has given me. It is very humbling when you see people give so much of their time and energy for the benefits of young people to help them develop and learn while getting fit".

Caleala said "I was starting the Cheerleading Club completely from scratch and had no idea where to start with all the governance documents that were required. Sported helped me get all of the policies in order and refine the constitution. They were there every step of the way. I now feel like the club has a good foundation to build from."

Kiah Williams volunteers for the Falcons, she said "without the support from Sported, there would be no policies and procedures in place and without them I could not volunteer. Club participants are increasing every week and I'm now able to help with

the growth of the club thanks to the help we received from our Sported mentor Nicki". The group now have in excess of 40 young people attending the sessions; the club has expanded to have a beginners and intermediate group. The more confident participants have begun competing in regional competitions.



## A big thank you to Groundwork Wales' Volunteers!

**Groundwork Wales has achieved the Investing in Volunteers quality standard, in recognition for excellent practice in working with volunteers.**

Groundwork Wales is an environmental charity, helping communities across Wales create better neighbourhoods, build skills and job prospects and to live and work in a greener way. This is achieved through a variety of projects, from community garden projects to furniture revival stores. Each project sets out to improve the lives and life chances of volunteers, the landscape and people living in local communities

'We are delighted that our wonderful volunteers – and the organisation - have the recognition they deserve through this award. There wouldn't be a Groundwork without our volunteers. This award has enabled us to continuously improve our offer to volunteers, and supports their ongoing development" said Katy Stevenson, the Chief Executive Officer of Groundwork Wales.



For further information about Groundwork Wales and our existing projects, please contact our team on **01495 222605**, or visit the website at <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/wales>

## Carer's Social Evening hosted by Age Connects Morgannwg and M&S Merthyr Tydfil

**Age Connects Morgannwg (ACM) has teamed up with Marks and Spencer in Merthyr Tydfil to host a Social Evening for carers. This is a great opportunity for carers and their dependants to interact with other like-minded people over a coffee and a cake.**

Hosted in the M&S Merthyr coffee shop, each social evening provides an informal presentation from Age Connects Morgannwg about their services, followed by an activity run by Artis Community Group and refreshments provided by Marks and Spencer. Activities are suitable for all ages but are specifically aimed at people over 50 years of age.

In the previous social evenings, ACM have been joined by Merthyr and the Valleys Mind who gave a presentation about their services and their Carer's Star Project, which provides support and assistance to adult carers living in Merthyr Tydfil. Local arts organisation, Artis Community have run various sessions including, 'Dancing for the Brain', 'Creative Writing', and 'Crafty Card Making', which are suitable for all ages and a great way to interact with other people.

ACM have also been joined by the Alzheimers Society, who have provided information about their services and groups they deliver across Merthyr Tydfil.

Tony, who heard about the event via the befriending service offered by Age Connects Morgannwg, is now a regular attendee and said this about the social evening; "It was really good. I have been to the sessions and so far I have really enjoyed it. It's a bit of fun and the staff were very helpful and friendly. The more people that attend, the more opportunities there will be to make even more friends."



The next Carer's Social Evening is **25th September**, followed by another on **23rd October** at M&S Merthyr Tydfil coffee shop. If you would like more information about the event, you can call **01443 490650** or email [information@acmorgannwg.org.uk](mailto:information@acmorgannwg.org.uk).

## Volunteering in Merthyr Tydfil with Homestart

**As Home-Start RCT and Merthyr Tydfil celebrate another successful year, they would like to say a huge thank you to all their fantastic volunteers who are at the heart of what they do.**



Home-Start offer support within the home and this enables the families to build up a trusting relationship and friendship. Often when a family asks for help, it is a volunteer who makes a difference and Home-Start recognise that volunteer support is priceless.

Here are some of the thoughts and feelings that current volunteers have shared:

Here's what Emma had to say:

'My experience with Home-Start has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. I have been a volunteer for over three years and in this time I have met some brilliant people who I have stayed in touch with.'

Here's what Charlotte had to share:

'I love volunteering, giving someone a friend and putting a smile on their face is such a great feeling, even after moving on to a new family the relationships and experiences I have gained with my first family is amazing'

### Why volunteer?

Volunteers give their time and support for many reasons:

- To make a difference to those families who are facing difficulties.
- To give something back to their local community
- To share their parenting experience/similar experience

### Volunteers may also benefit from:

- Increased self confidence
- Gaining experience in this area, preparing them to return to work, or preparing for a career change
- Improved health and general well-being

If you feel you are able to make a difference, then please contact **Home-Start on:**  
**01443 406664** or email  
**info@homestarttrct.org.uk**

## New Fundraising Group for Alzheimer's Society

**Join our Volunteer Fundraising Group in Merthyr Tydfil. Bring your family, friends and workmates together to raise money for services and research. Are you enthusiastic, friendly and have a passion for our cause?**

Joining our local fundraising group is a really great way to raise funds for Alzheimer's Society Cymru, while also meeting new people and having lots of fun!

Find out how you can make a difference in the Merthyr Tydfil by getting in touch today. Contact **Cheryl George** for more information **cheryl.george@alzheimers.org.uk** **07484510012** or **02920 475588**

**Alzheimer's Society**

Leading the fight against dementia

## South Wales Food Poverty Alliance – take collective action on food insecurity

The South Wales Food Poverty Alliance was set up in January 2018 with support from Sustain's Food Power project. It is aiming to broaden its' membership to include more organisations taking grass roots action on food poverty in South Wales. The Alliance is mapping indicators of food insecurity across all local authority areas in the South Wales.

This data and narrative on local action will be used to produce a South Wales Food Insecurity report to push Welsh Government to do more to ensure no one in Wales goes hungry. They would also like to gather views of people with a lived experience of food poverty to help shape action moving forward. If you would like to be involved in or want to know more about the South Wales Food Poverty Alliance please contact Hayley Richards (Chair) on [hrichards@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:hrichards@oxfam.org.uk)

The Children's Future Food inquiry is also currently gathering evidence from children, young people and those who live and work with them about children's experiences of hunger and how it affects their lives. They would like to hear from anyone who has experiences, evidence or real-life case studies which they would like to share with the Inquiry via an online portal <https://bit.ly/2zBbpkN>.

FOOD *Power*



If you know or have observed children who don't have easy access to nutritious diets please share these experiences via the evidence portal.

Finally, the roll out of Universal Credit is having a dire impact on some of the poorest people in our society. According to End Hunger UK, in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out foodbanks and other food aid providers report a surge in the numbers of people pushed into greater debt, destitution and hunger as a result of delays, errors, a lack of flexibility and adequate support. End Hunger UK is calling on the UK Government to urgently fix the problems with Universal Credit to prevent more people going hungry. You can support this campaign by signing the petition online <http://endhungeruk.org/ucpetition/> and also inviting others to sign it such as foodbank providers, community food projects or churches and other faith groups.

## Voices from Care Merthyr Forum

The Merthyr forum is a free monthly group run by Voices from Care for children and young people aged 14-22 who are, or have been, looked after in Merthyr Tydfil. The group meet once a month at VAMT between 5.30pm-7pm and is a platform for young people to have a voice and to make positive changes in the local area for care experienced young people. The group have already had the opportunity to run a care leavers conference at the Redhouse, meet with decision makers, sit on youth panels, travel to Scotland for a week's summer camp, attend Radio 1's Biggest Weekend and even sail a 72ft around-the-world sailing yacht. Some of the group will even be running the Cardiff half-marathon in October!

It's easy to get involved, all you have to do is call Amber on **02920 451431** or email [Amber@vfcc.org.uk](mailto:Amber@vfcc.org.uk). You can also message Voices from Care on Facebook or Instagram: **VoicesFromCareCymru**





# INFORM



Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*

## Connecting People and Nature



Actif Woods Wales  
Coed Actif Cymru  
Caring forests for people & place  
Heddi y gaeirio a gaeirio i'w iach

Coed Lleol  
SMALL WOODS

**Connecting People and Nature is a project run between Actif Woods Wales and the South and West Wales Wildlife Trust. It is a community engagement project where we will be working to encourage access to local green spaces with the aim of benefitting the health of the landscape, individuals and the community.**

The project covers 4 rural areas in the Merthyr Tydfil county borough: Bryngoleu in Merthyr Vale; Gellideg Fields in Cyfarthfa, Nant Llwynog Park in Bedlinog and the old Welsh Water site off Vaynor Road in Cefn Coed.



### Woodland skills in Bedlinog Park

**Making open spaces better for people and wildlife is a great aim. Increasing their interest is also essential. This is the task taken on for Nant Llwynog valley in Bedlinog by a local Friends group. It aims to restore a green valley much used by local people.**

As well as wildlife, the valley has much heritage. Llwynog is Welsh for Fox and is the village mascot. The Nant stream descends to the Taf Bargoed River. It is a valley of coal and mine-workings. The colliery began in 1876, but closed after fifty years. A horizontal drift mine then kept coal going until 1954. During the 1970s, old slag heaps were smoothed out and the stream channelled. Over the next few years, sports fields were created, and play kit installed. It is a multi-purpose open space.

The site now badly needs restoration and improvement. This is because many of the planted spinneys need thinning out to allow in more light. More than that, we want to draw the community into thinking about the site and working on it as volunteers.

A very successful dry stone walling course took place over the Summer months at the entrance to Nant Llwynog Park in Bedlinog, with the group continuing to meet at the Park. Additional courses will be run in the Autumn so look out for further details. Further information from **Anna Stickland** at Actif Woods [annastickland@smallwoods.org.uk](mailto:annastickland@smallwoods.org.uk) **07765 213514**



Having rebuilt the entrance walls, we are planning a Tools Maintenance 2-day course, which is free and open to all. This will be on 19th and 20th September. This and the next course on Hedge-laying will be led by Keep Wales Tidy. Book in if you wish to attend, and just come along to see what it's like.

Health and fresh air is vital for people and we are also working with Actif Woods Wales to encourage healthy attitudes. Recording species is also important, and we have joined the Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership. We are also working with KWT to clear rubbish and with the Wales Wildlife Trust and Merthyr Borough Council, who own the site, to develop a full-scale Management Plan.

To get in touch, please contact **Edward Dawson** at [edawson1215@gmail.com](mailto:edawson1215@gmail.com) or **07956 662959** and come and enjoy the great outdoors, as well as learn a new skill.

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Croesawir erthyglau nail ai'n ddwyieithog neu'n uniaith Gymraeg.

The closing date for articles for the next edition (December 2018) is 19 November 2018.

