

AGM 2017

VAMT's AGM was held on 10th November and attended by 81 people. Both our Chair, Brian Lewis and our Vice Chair, Helen Thomas were ill so the Treasurer, Paul Gray chaired the meeting at very short notice and we thank him for that.

The Annual Report for 2016/17 was presented and can be viewed on the VAMT Website www.vamt.net. There was a ballot at the meeting for the three vacancies on the VAMT Board. This resulted in Mark Ward from Pontsticill Community Group being elected for the first time and Nicola Mahoney and Anne Roberts MBE were re-elected. The officers of the VAMT Board will be decided at the next Board meeting in December.

David Davies, the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan, spoke about this historic role and promoted the High Sheriff's Youth Community Awards. Kevin O'Neill, the new Leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council spoke of his hopes for Merthyr Tydfil under his administration and welcomed further discussions about how the relationship between the Council and the Third Sector locally can be improved for the benefit of our communities.



Kevin O'Neill, Leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Merthyr Tydfil 50+ Forum

The Merthyr Tydfil 50+ Forum was re-launched on the 11th October 2017 with an event at High Street Baptist Church.



The event was very successful and was attended by over 80 people, including 10 local councillors and the Chief Executive of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, and was opened by the Mayor, Cllr Kevin Gibbs. A number of presentations were delivered by organisations such as Care and Repair, Citizens Advice, Merthyr Tydfil Credit Union and Power Up! who provided information on issues that affect people through the winter months and included advice on home safety and repairs, financial advice and assistance, energy saving and reducing bills. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Kevin O'Neill and the Older Persons Champion, Cllr Howard Barrett also addressed the audience and provided information on local issues, and the presentations were followed by a question and answer session, chaired by Professor Jonathan Richards.

From the feedback received, many attendees felt the event was very informative and look forward to the next one which will be held early in 2018.

For further information, or to become a member of the Merthyr Tydfil 50+ Forum, please contact **Elaine James, Community Coordinator** on **07580866547** email **elaine.james@vamt.net** or **Suzanne Lewis-Abbott, Older People and Supporting People Coordinator** on **01685 727416** email **Suzanne.Lewis-abbott@merthyr.gov.uk**

Welcome to the December edition of Inform in 2017. 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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VAMT's Board

Brian Lewis	<i>Chair</i>
Helen Thomas	<i>Vice-Chair</i>
Paul Gray	<i>Treasurer</i>
Ruth Hopkins	
Nicola Mahoney	
Ann Roberts	
Maria Thomas	
Mark Ward	
Huw Williams	

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.

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Rachel Thomas Healthier Communities Lead Officer

Kendra Tarplee Primary Family Support Officer

Bethan Evans Family Liaison Key Worker

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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



@VAMTtweets
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@merthycarers
@merthyrMAGNET
@onevoicemt
@c1stsouth



Helping build resilient communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf & Merthyr Tydfil

Yfed
Doeth
Heneiddio'n
Dda



Alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm is increasing in older adults, yet services are not designed to adequately represent this age group. The Drink Wise, Age Well programme was established in 2014 to meet the distinct needs of the over 50's population; helping them to make healthier choices about alcohol as they age. Along with raising awareness and supporting individuals and their families around alcohol use, we run a variety of social activities across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.

Social activities

Our activity groups are intended to reduce social isolation and increase people's confidence in their ability to cope with challenges and stresses. We run craft and art groups; indoor curling; Nordic walking; coffee mornings and low impact aerobics to name a few. We are passionate about getting it right for each community and will adapt activities to meet all levels of skill and ability.

"It gave me a reason to get up and get out. The craft sessions get us talking, laughing and joking".
Social activity group attendee.



Live Wise, Age Well

We all experience life changes as we age, and whilst some of these will be enjoyed and celebrated, for some people these changes may be more challenging. In response to this, we offer a six-week structured group work course aimed at improving well-being, and increasing people's resilience and ability to cope with stress. It's called Live Wise, Age Well and is delivered in various community settings and work places. The sessions focus on a number of well-being areas such as diet, sleep and exercise and also introduce participants to the concepts of mindfulness and relaxation.

"I really found the mindfulness good, it helped me relax in difficult situations" Live Wise, Age Well attendee.

Volunteering

We recognise that volunteering is hugely beneficial to the community but also to the person who is volunteering. We have a variety of different roles which we can match to the individual. We provide alcohol awareness training; ongoing support and will cover expenses and provide a reference based on the role. This could include befriending in the local community; helping plan and run group activities. It's a great chance to use current skills and develop new ones whilst meeting a diverse range of people.

"Its giving me confidence I never had and improved my self-esteem." Donna, Community befriender.

Get in touch

If you would like to find out more about the opportunities above or to seek support for yourself or another, please get in touch with us by **calling 0800 161 5780** or **emailing wales@drinkwiseagewell.org.uk**

Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust



Bedlinog School Community Library Volunteer

Purpose: To provide a friendly and helpful welcome and service to users of the Community Library at Bedlinog Primary School.

Main tasks: To support School and Library staff by:

- Being a visible and friendly initial point of contact for visitors coming into the library.
- Maintaining the library environment.
- Issuing and discharging books.
- Shelving books.
- Assisting library users in joining the library service.
- Assisting library users to locate books.
- Assisting library users in requesting / reserving books from the wider library system.
- Monitoring the use of public access pcs and the internet.
- Actively promoting the services and facilities of the Trust.

DBS: Required

Location: Bedlinog Community primary School

Training and Support: Volunteers are expected to attend half day induction and will receive any other necessary training while undertaking the role. Full training on library services will be provided. Time

Commitment: 2 to 10 hours per week dependent on the number of volunteers. The library will be open Monday to Friday, 3.30pm to 5.30pm during school time.

Expenses: Genuine agreed out of pocket expenses are reimbursed with a valid receipt

Valley Steps – Course Support Volunteer



Valleys Steps are looking for volunteers to assist practitioners in the running of their Mindfulness and Stress Control courses which are run throughout RCT and Merthyr Tydfil. Flexible day/evening hours are available. Volunteers would need to commit to two hours per week for the six week duration of a course. Duties would involve meeting and greeting participants, setting up the room, handing out course materials, assisting the presenter in course exercises, using first aid if necessary (training is provided), provide general advice or signposting. Volunteers need to be 18+ and a DBS check will be required.

Samaritans – Listening Volunteer



Volunteers will provide confidential, emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

To provide this support face to face, in various venues across the Valleys region, you may be based with other organisations or out on the street with our van. The role is flexible with a minimum of 4 hours expected per week. Training and mentoring of listening volunteers can take up to 9 months. You will always be volunteering with at least one other person and the support of a shift leader. Full training is provided and a DBS check will need to be undertaken.

Volunteer Helpline Operator – Action on Elder Abuse

Action on Elder Abuse is looking for enthusiastic and committed volunteers across Wales to work as operators for the Action on Elder Abuse Helpline.

As a volunteer you will provide support to victims of abuse, their families and friends and professionals. You will receive training, support and supervision, but will need to have excellent communication skills and be able to work independently as the role is home based.

Volunteering opportunities are available between Monday and Friday 9am-5pm, with a minimum commitment of 2 hours per week for 6 months.

Volunteers need to be 18+ and will require a DBS check.

For information on these and many other vacancies call:

Karen Foley on 01685 353913

karen.foley@vamt.net

or Frances Barry on 01685 353901

frances.barry@vamt.net

or visit www.volunteering-wales.org.uk

Maria Thomas is a lay member of Cwm Taf UHB and contributes an update to each edition of Inform.



Cardiff University and Cwm Taf UHB join forces to create new course in health inequalities

Medical students are to study the causes of health inequalities as part of a degree course developed by Cwm Taf University Health Board. The optional module is being offered for the first time this month to the students following an intercalated BSc course at Cardiff University. Up to 10 medical students in their fourth year will take up the pioneering study at the Academic Centre at Keir Hardie University Health Park in Merthyr Tydfil.

Part of their studies include placements in clinics in Cwm Taf, with health checks teams at GP practices, drug addiction services, and visits to a food bank. They will study the impact of social deprivation and rural poverty on the health of communities, including marginalised groups – children in poverty, the elderly, ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees who are particularly at risk of health inequalities.

Multi-million pound refurbishment of the ground and first floor of Prince Charles Hospital gets underway

The Health Board has secured £7.6m from Welsh Government to begin the first phase of work in October, which will see construction work start on the temporary catering facilities to pave the way for a new dining room and kitchens on the ground floor as well as a new pharmacy.

This first phase up to next Spring will consist mainly of enabling works to prepare for the big second phase which includes new theatres, a critical care unit, a full new radiology department and the bringing together of outpatient facilities from across the site combined with new therapies, endoscopy and maxillofacial facilities as part of a new ambulatory care centre. These larger developments are subject to further WG business cases which we hope to get decisions on later next year and will address the fire safety improvement work required within this part of the hospital.

Changes to Obstetric, Paediatric and Neonatal services

Early in the summer next year, the multi-million pound expansion of maternity and special care baby facilities at Prince Charles Hospital will be completed and the health board will be ready to implement some of the key changes set out in the South Wales Programme.

In 2014 the South Wales Programme (SWP), a major public consultation exercise spanning four health board areas, was set up to address the challenges faced by many hospitals in recruiting and retaining highly skilled staff in certain speciality areas. It concluded that obstetrics, paediatrics and emergency medicine would in future need to be provided at fewer hospitals across South Wales to ensure their sustainability and provide the best possible care for patients.

Consultant-led maternity and neonatal services as well as inpatient children's services will no longer be delivered from the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. Instead the hospital in Llantrisant will provide a midwifery-led birthing centre as well as a new Paediatric Assessment Unit. To accommodate the changes, a major expansion is currently underway at Prince Charles Hospital and is due for completion in the middle of next year. More than £6m has been invested to increase the size of its special care baby unit to 19 cots, redevelop the obstetric labour ward, refurbish the birthing rooms, and provide two birthing pools.

Bridgend local government changes and implications for the health board

The Welsh Government has announced a 12 week consultation on the re-alignment of the Bridgend local authority boundary.

The proposal, as part its Local Government reforms, would also impact health board boundaries and transfer the management of Princess of Wales Hospital as well as primary and community services in the Bridgend area from Abertawe Morgannwg University Health Board into Cwm Taf University Health Board.

Whilst both Health Boards will be responding to the consultation and a decision will not be made until the New Year, Cwm Taf UHB is working closely with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB on scoping the implications of any agreed change.

Until the Welsh Government makes a decision in January it will remain 'business as usual' in Cwm Taf.

Cwm Taf Rural Development Plan **INFORM**

The Rural Development Plan for Wales is part of a European & Welsh Government Programme which aims to promote community development, improve competitiveness in the agriculture and forestry sector and safeguard and enhance the rural environment.

There are a number of elements to the Rural Programme including a community led programme called "The Rural Action Cwm Taf LEADER Programme". The programme covers 9 wards classed as rural in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf: Vaynor, Cyfarthfa, Plymouth, Merthyr Vale, Treharris, Bedlinog, Ynysybwl, Maerdy and Rhigos.

Following a call for grant applications during the summer of 2017, the following projects were approved for funding by the Local Action Group:



Connecting with Nature



Basing activities at sites in 4 Rural Wards of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, Actif Woods and The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW) will engage with local communities with the following aims:

- Enhance and protect local biodiversity
- Increase local skills and capacity to care for nature reserves and create sense of ownership
- Improve community cohesion
- Improve health and wellbeing

These aims will be achieved by carrying out surveys, habitat and access management, and offering activities and training. This project will engage with rural community groups to encourage access to local green spaces, to benefit the health of the landscape, individuals and the community. Delivered by The Small Woods Association & Wildlife Trust. **ActifWoodsMerthyr@smallwoods.org.uk**
See more on page 14.

Countryside Guardians

The aims and objectives of this project are to provide skills and knowledge to local groups

and volunteers to improve their confidence in responsibly managing local green space and improving their health and wellbeing. The project will work in the rural wards of Vaynor, Cyfarthfa, and Bedlinog. Through volunteering activities the project will also provide accredited training in countryside management to cement the skills learnt and improve community confidence, and provide opportunities for the beneficiaries to improve employment prospects. Delivered by Keep Wales Tidy. **Jake.Castle@keepwalestidy.cymru**

Cwm Taf Place Based Digital Support

The Cwm Taf place based digital support project supports community groups in rural wards and addresses the limited access of IT, lack of IT skills to address community needs and the lack of ability to make effective use of IT to increase grant income and access on line resources. The project will provide IT workshops and support community groups by upskilling leaders of community and voluntary organisations and active citizens in subjects such as On line funding and fundraising; Online governance and access to information, advice and guidance; IT tools to support strategic, business and financial planning and Web based tools for community engagement and communication including using social media. Delivered by Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil. **Lisa.Toghill@vamt.net**



Supporting Rural Assets & Services

This project will provide flexible, tailored support to community groups who may be looking to take on an asset within the rural communities of Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) and Merthyr. The project will engage with organisations that wish to consider or undertake a transfer and deliver Action Plans which will review and highlight areas in community groups which require support such as: governance; board skills and experience; financial management systems, policies, business model, equal opportunities, community support, and work with the group to gain the skills to ensure they are ready to undertake an asset transfer. **Natalie.Sargent@coalfields-regen.org.uk**

Taf Bargoed Catchment

This is a community project which will work to engage landowners, Commoners, local residents and schools with their river catchment and learn about the importance of healthy rivers and the biodiversity within them. A skills, engagement and training project, surveys will be undertaken with Natural Resources Wales to identify issues in the catchment as well as a river restoration course for volunteers involved in the project. Delivered by The South East Wales Rivers Trust. **Tonyreesuk@googlemail.com**

TIPical Valleys

Through a two year-long phase of public engagement, education, active citizenship, research and sympathetic community management, the project will bring together people from local communities with specialists from a wide cross section of stakeholder organisations and encourage them to work together and take part in a series of walks, talks, surveys and inspirational activities and experiences which will embrace, promote and interpret mineral spoil localities. Communities will be encouraged to form interest groups around mineral spoil sites and work with the project to change the perception of rural Tip land areas. Delivered by The British Institute for Geological Conservation. **TIPicalvalleys@gmail.com**

Taking care of your health this winter - have YOU had your flu jab?

The Community Coordinators have recently been busy supporting this years' flu campaign, by helping as many people as possible take up their free flu vaccination, and at the same time advising them of the range of third sector services and activities available locally help improve/enhance health and wellbeing.

From mid August through September, Deanne focussed on Morlais Medical Practice where in the previous year, vaccinations rates had been lower compared to other GP Practices. She attended patient surgeries at the Practice and chatted to patients to find out whether or not they intended to have their flu jab this year. Almost 200 people were engaged during this period – 17% of whom said that they did not intend having their flu jab. Following “myth busting” with these individuals 77% agreed to reconsider their decision and have their flu jab this year!

Alongside this work, Deanne brokered 3rd sector organisations into GP Practices across Cwm Taf, as a means of improving connections between the sectors and to enable the organisations to directly raise awareness of their services with large numbers of patients. Feedback shows that organisations want to continue to build on the relationship with the Practices as it enables them to meet patients they would otherwise find it difficult to engage.

If you would like your organisation to link with any GP practice throughout Cwm Taf, or if you would like to have a Myth Busting talk for your community group, then please contact **Deanne on 01685 353954 or mob 07580 869983.**



PREVENT - working with communities to support people vulnerable to radicalisation or extremism

Following the tragic events in the UK and across Europe this year, there is an even greater need to raise awareness of PREVENT, to engage with local communities and encourage people to share concerns they may have about someone who could be vulnerable to radicalisation, or displays signs of supporting or becoming involved in any form of extremism. At the heart of PREVENT is safeguarding; protecting children, adults and communities from the threat of terrorism or extremism; providing early intervention to protect people who are at risk of radicalisation or exploitation, and divert people away from being drawn into terrorism.



PREVENT forms a key part of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST), and the Home Office works with Welsh Government, local authorities, community organisations and a range of government departments to deliver the strategy. The Police play a significant role in PREVENT, similar to the preventative approach used to tackle other crimes. PREVENT covers any type of extremism, whether this is based on a religious ideology or not, from Far-Right to IS inspired terrorism, and some aspects of non-violent extremism.

PREVENT does not target a specific faith or ethnic group, rather it protects those targeted by extremist recruiters or who are vulnerable to radicalisation from other sources. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, and relies on the community to share information on people who are showing signs of being radicalised or self-radicalising. This is particularly relevant in light of the recent attacks, which appear to have been carried out not by a group, but an individual or small group of individuals who have self-radicalised rather than been recruited to act on behalf of a terrorist organisation.

PREVENT works in many ways to challenge extremism, providing services and support to vulnerable people, supporting local schools, local industry and partner agencies, as well as providing advice and training,

Prevent uses a range of measures to challenge extremism including:

- Supporting people who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist or extremist activity through the Channel process. The Channel programme, is a national multi-agency process chaired by the local authority, to which individuals suspected

to be vulnerable to radicalisation are referred. It draws on existing collaboration between local authorities, the Police and other partners such as education, social services and the health service. Channel is a voluntary process, which works by partners jointly assessing the nature and extent of the risk, and where necessary providing an appropriate support package, tailored to the individual's needs. The 3 key stages of Channel are:

1. To identify individuals at risk of being drawn into violent extremism or terrorism.
 2. To assess the nature and extent of that risk, and whether the individual has the capability to take ideas or opinions further.
 3. To develop the most appropriate support plan for the individual concerned, ensuring that they have access to a wide range of services.
- Working with and supporting community groups and social enterprise projects who provide services and support to vulnerable people.
 - Working with faith groups and institutions to assist them in providing support and guidance to people who may be vulnerable; and
 - Supporting local schools, local industry and partner agencies through engagement, advice and training.

The tragic events this year highlight that attacks can occur at any time or place, without warning. By working together with the Police, thinking about your safety and security at home or work, or when you are out and about and staying alert, you can make it harder for terrorists to plan or carry out an attack.

The Police and the security and intelligence agencies depend on information from you. Help keep yourself, your family and your local community safe, by looking out for suspicious activity and reporting it to the police. The information you provide will be kept secure and your identity will be protected.

You might see or hear something that could be a vital piece of information needed to stop a terrorist attack. Notice, Check and Share is a subconscious process that we all use to deal with any concern which enables us to make informed decisions about what needs to be done.

NOTICE – are you concerned about someone in your community? Maybe you have noticed a change in

their behaviour; are they becoming withdrawn or acting differently?

CHECK – don't ignore your concerns. Check with others in your community who may have also noticed something, and see if they share your concerns.

SHARE – If you are still worried about them, you can contact the PREVENT Co-Ordinator at the local authority by e-mail at **Claire.blackmore@merthyr.gov.uk** or phone **01685 725494**.

You can report concerns on-line by visiting the Action Counter Terrorism website

<https://act.campaign.gov.uk/> or by calling Police confidentially on **0800 789 321**.

Dementia Friendly Merthyr Tydfil

Dementia Friendly Communities is a programme which facilitates the creation of dementia-friendly communities across the UK. Everyone, from governments and health boards to the local corner shop and hairdresser share part of the responsibility for ensuring that people with dementia feel understood, valued and able to contribute to their community.



Dementia Friendly Merthyr Tydfil and Alzheimer's Society aim to improve the lives of people affected by dementia and support a Dementia Friendly Community that empowers people affected by dementia to have high aspirations and feel confident, knowing they can contribute and participate in activities that are meaningful to them.

We need to create more communities and businesses that are dementia friendly so that people affected by dementia feel understood and included, and that they can confidently contribute to community life and, in order to achieve this, we are inviting organisations and businesses to take a pledge to become a member of Dementia Friendly Merthyr Tydfil.

As a member, you will receive an annual certificate and window sticker/s displaying that you are 'Working to become Dementia Friendly' and will also receive all the relevant guidance documents on dementia and advice on how to arrange Dementia Friends sessions. At any point during your membership you will be able to contact Dementia Friendly Merthyr Tydfil, for support and advice in regards to your pledge.

Dementia Friends sessions

Members of your organisation/members of staff can attend a Dementia Friends session where they will learn all about dementia and the small ways they can help. An Alzheimer's Society's Dementia Friends session is a free 45 minute workshop that is delivered by a volunteer Dementia Friends Champion. The session is designed to change people's perceptions of dementia and aims to transform the way the nation thinks, acts and talks about the condition. The sessions can be delivered free of charge in your place of work or via an online process. As Dementia Friends your members/staff will receive a wearable pin badge to identify to fellow employees, customers and general members of the public that you understand the condition and will treat those affected by dementia with dignity and respect.

If you are interested in joining Dementia Friendly Merthyr Tydfil, or, if you would like your organisation or business to receive a free Dementia Friends session, please contact **Elaine James, Community Coordinator on 07580866547** or email **elaine.james@vamt.net**

Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil Anniversary Celebrations

September 2017 marked the tenth anniversary of the opening of Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil's purpose built Cancer Centre of Excellence. We would like to thank every single person who has been part of this journey, staff, trustees, volunteers, fundraisers, supporters, clients and friends of the organisation, and our funders. Throughout this last decade we have received such fantastic support from the local community and it's a testament to the community spirit and generosity of the people of Merthyr Tydfil that the centre is thriving 10 years on.



To mark the 10th anniversary of the opening we arranged an open day to view the facility and meet with staff and volunteers. Staff and supporters

took part in our first bake off competition and our therapists were offering taster sessions of treatments. A fantastic day was had by all those who attended. Thank you to Miller Argent for the use of the community minibus.



From our Cancer Centre of Excellence we provide one to one counselling and family/couples counselling, aromatherapy, reiki and reflexology treatments and provide a door to door transport service for all cancer related hospital appointments. We are always looking for new volunteers to join us in a variety of roles if you are interested please contact us on **01685 379633** or email us at **info@canceraidmerthyr.co.uk**



Merthyr Tydfil Youth Music

Merthyr Tydfil Youth Music are looking for new players. Membership is free and is available to young musicians of all abilities. It welcomes Brass, Woodwind, String and Percussion players of all ages and abilities. Come along to learn new skills, meet new people and take part in regular performances.

Youth Orchestra

Fridays 4:30pm-6:30pm at Cyfarthfa High School.

Wind Band and Percussion Ensemble

Tuesdays 4:00pm-5:00pm at Afon Taf High School.

Wind Band, Brass Ensemble and Guitar Group

Thursdays 4:00pm-5:00pm at Pen y Dre High School.

For information or details about tuition and other ensembles contact **Sarah Jones on 07963 181 582** or email her **sarah.jones@merthyr.gov.uk**

 **@merthyrMusicService**

 **MerthyrTydfilYouthOrchestra**

Elite Supported Employment Agency Ltd Recognised as an Investor In People



Established in 1994, Elite Supported Employment Agency Ltd is a registered charity delivering Supported Employment services to people with disabilities, health conditions and those at a disadvantage across South and West Wales.

ELITE Supported Employment Agency has been awarded **GOLD** accreditation against the Investors in People Standard, joining the top seven per cent of accredited organisations across the UK, demonstrating their commitment to high performance through good people management.

With branches across South, Mid and West Wales and their Head Office in Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taff, ELITE have a proven track record of providing employment related services to people with limiting health conditions. Success rates are high and a lot of this is based on their experience in this field together with an established staff training programme and a team of over 40 dedicated staff and volunteers. Operating the pure model of Supported Employment, ELITE has shown innovation in adapting its provision to meet the changing needs of disabled jobseekers. They believe it is important to raise the profile of disabled jobseekers by promoting equality in the work place and partnership working with large national employers as well as small local firms.

Investors in People is the international standard for people management, defining what it takes to lead, support and manage people effectively to achieve sustainable results. Underpinning the Standard is the Investors in People framework, reflecting the latest workplace trends, essential skills

and effective structures required to outperform in any industry. Investors in People enables organisations to benchmark against the best in the business on an international scale.



Paul Devoy, Head of Investors in People, said: "We'd like to congratulate ELITE, Investors in People accreditation is the sign of a great employer, an outperforming place to work and a clear commitment to success. ELITE should be extremely proud of their achievement."

Commenting on the award, Kathy Rivett, Assistant CEO at ELITE, said: "Achieving Investors in People accreditation at the GOLD award level is a huge accolade that recognises ELITE as an exemplar employer with a clear focus on empowering, supporting and improving our staff teams to deliver quality services for people with disabilities and health conditions in line with the organisations values and commitments to continuous improvement, development and sustainability "

For more information about Investors in People please visit www.investorsinpeople.com



Property to Let

The Taff Bargoed Development Trust has an **industrial unit to let** that comprises 2,500 square feet and includes mechanical equipment, four offices, storerooms and toilets.

We also have two industrial containers to let each 8 feet x 18 feet and two large fully furnished offices and each office comprises 400 square feet. The offices contain desks, conference tables, chairs, projectors and an interactive white board. **For further information contact Howard Jackson on 01443 710827.**



Football coaching sessions kick off at Merthyr MUGA

Young residents at Wales & West Housing's Twyncarmel scheme spent the half term holidays learning to dribble and tackle with coaches from Merthyr Town Football Club.

The free football coaching sessions at the Twyncarmel Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) have been praised by parents as a "great way to get kids active."

The sessions gave 7 to 11 year olds and 12 to 16 year olds the chance to brush up on their football techniques and learn new skills with qualified coaches Dominic Maloney and Christian Davies from Merthyr Town FC. The young people practiced dribbling around cones and passing to one another and ended the afternoon with a game of tag football.

The MUGA was reopened in the summer after WWH & Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council invested £35,000 to upgrade the facilities with new fencing, new play surfaces and equipment.

Organiser Alison Chaplin, WWH's Community Development Officer, said: "WWH were delighted to sponsor the sessions at the MUGA. It's a great



resource for the Twyncarmel community and it was good to see the young people having fun and getting active.

"Merthyr Town FC is piloting community training in Gurnos and Treharris and we hope they will be able to include Twyncarmel in their future projects."

The football sessions are the latest community partnership between WWH and Merthyr Town FC. For several years WWH has sponsored the club's Mini-Football Festival for young people, which takes place every May.

Curling at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust

The 'Sheds for All' programme is the community arm of Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust offering indoor curling sessions to people who wish to improve their fitness and meet others.



Indoor curling sessions have proved so popular for people of all ages and abilities that groups currently meet twice a week on a Monday and Wednesday at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre.



As well as improving fitness members of these groups say there are many other reasons they look forward to playing every week including friendship and a chat, social interaction, fun and laughter, all while keeping mind and body healthy.

Members who started out by playing indoor curling have found it so enjoyable and worthwhile that they are now volunteering to run sessions.

They said: "We recognise that there are numerous benefits to this form of exercise and would encourage anyone to come along and give it a try"

As a Trust our focus is enhancing life through leisure and culture and indoor curling is proving a great way for people to enjoy activity together. **For further details contact Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre on 01685 727476.**

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from MTBCU!



At the Credit Union this Christmas we're continuing to give people in our local community the opportunity to save & borrow responsibly. Over the Christmas period it can get very busy, but we really want to encourage people to use the Credit Union's services and avoid pay-day lenders this Christmas!

We're currently in the middle of a Christmas marketing push to reach more people in the local community; we currently have over 5,500 members of the Credit Union, but we hope this number will significantly grow over Christmas.

We currently have over £1,000,000 on loan to members!

We offer various services alongside our savings & loans including a free payroll deduction scheme to employers for their employees, to enable the employees to save through their pay for whatever cause or occasion. This scheme is becoming more popular throughout the Borough, with large-scale employers such as NHS, MTCBC, Welsh Government & various others joining the scheme.

We currently have over 40 volunteers throughout the Borough, volunteering their time to help others. All our volunteers do fantastic work and were recently presented with awards at VAMT's 'Celebrating Volunteering Event' in the 'Redhouse Cymru' hosted by Michael Sheen; we are really proud and thankful to them all for the work they do!

Still, not enough people in the local community know about the Credit Union and what we do. It's time for that to change!

What is a credit union?

Credit Unions are financial co-operatives that are community-focused and controlled by their members, offering savings and loans. Here at the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Credit Union we are a non-profit organisation.

We are owned by our members, run for our members - Offering a safer way to save and a cheaper way to borrow.



Why join MTBCU?

- Wide range of easy & flexible saving accounts for all ages.
- Access to highly competitive, low-cost, affordable loans.
- Free life savings & loan protection insurance for members (T&C's apply)
- FSCS Protection – Guaranteed money protection up to £85,000.
- Online account access / Local branch/ Local service points throughout Merthyr Tydfil / Telephone service
- Payroll deduction schemes for employers & employees.

How to join?

It could not be simpler to join MTBCU. You can either:

- **Pop into branch in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre.**
- **Join online at www.mtbcu.org.uk**
- **If you're an employer and wish to join the free employee scheme, please call: 01685 377888 for additional information.**

Tel: 01685 377888

Address: 139 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8DN

Website: www.mtbcu.org.uk



/MTBCU



@MTBCU

Actif Woods and Wildlife Trust

Actif Woods and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales have been successful in a joint funding bid from the Rural Development Fund. We have funding for 3 years to work specifically on four sites within the rural wards of Merthyr Tydfil – Bedlinog, Vaynor, Bryngolau and Gellideg.

The aim of the project is to involve the whole community in using the sites and for the sites themselves to be improved and hopefully designated as LNR's (Local Nature Reserves). We used Merthyr Tydfil's Green Spaces Strategy to find sites that are suitable for community use and designating them as LNR's should protect them as green spaces for the future.

Actif Woods is a project run by Coed Lleol and has been developed over the past 7 years in numerous areas across Wales. We have been running activities in Merthyr for the past year, working with groups such as Hafal, Adref, Valley Steps, NERs among others, using woodland activities to engage people with their environment and to improve both their own health and the 'health' of their surroundings.

The Wildlife Trust already manages Taf Fechan; the only current Local Nature Reserve in Merthyr, along with other sites across the valleys. They will be running environmental/conservation activities, such as surveying sites, plant id, coppicing, etc and developing a management programme. Actif Woods will be facilitating community engagement, to identify volunteers who may be able to help with this work, but also running family events and 12 week programmes using woodland activities

to improve people's health. Activities for this could also include conservation work, plant id etc, but also green exercise, green woodwork, willow weaving and other seasonal crafts.

We are keen to work with the whole of the community with the 4 wards, to ensure that the sites are used effectively for all and as such, we would welcome suggestions from everyone.

We are planning a willow wreath making sessions on all 4 of the sites in December, where we can combine a short walk looking at what is growing on the site with collecting greenery for decorating our wreaths.



For more information please contact:

Anna Stickland – actifwoodsmarthyr@smallwoods.org.uk

Lorna Baggett – l.baggett@welshwildlife.org



Samaritans South Wales Valleys Project will be available to provide emotional support in the main entrance of Prince Charles Hospital on Tuesday, 19th December 2017 6.30pm to 8.00pm

We offer a safe place for you to talk, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal.

For further details of Samaritans work in Merthyr Tydfil and the Valleys, please contact **Susan Francis tel. 07850 312217**, email **s.francis@samaritans.org**

Merthyr parkrun... It's more than just a walk in the park!



What is parkrun?

Parkrun is a free, weekly, 5km timed event that happens every Saturday morning, rain or shine, at 9am. You may have heard about parkrun already because there are hundreds of parkruns happening all over Wales, the UK and the world, every Saturday morning.

Who can come?

Parkrun is open to walkers, joggers, runners, sprinters and everyone in between too. You don't need to be a marathon runner to come to parkrun! You just have to want to get up, get out and get a little bit fitter! Adults and children are welcome to come and children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult within arm's reach. Our course isn't wide enough to accept buggies and dogs though.

Why parkrun?

There are a million and one reasons to parkrun and here are just three...

- It's an amazing opportunity for families to spend time together, doing something outside and doing something active. It's an amazing way to get children off their phones and tablets in a safe and supportive environment! It's also an amazing way for families to lose weight together.
- It's great for positive mental health and wellbeing. Whether you walk or run, parkrun offers you opportunities to be active and get fit whilst having lots of fun and getting to know people from your community. We know that activity is good for positive mental health and now, you have your very own parkrun on your doorstep!
- It's a wonderful opportunity for people to volunteer. You may decide that you aren't going to run and you want to be a full time volunteer. You may decide to run one week and volunteer the next. You may need to evidence volunteering as part of your school or college qualification. Whatever your reason, volunteering at parkrun is a wonderful way to give something back to your community and help to make Merthyr parkrun a huge success. Whether you're 13 or 113, we'd love to have you along to join our hi-viz hero team!



New Year, New You?

We know coming to parkrun might be daunting the very first time you come along and



this is why our Hi-Viz Hero Volunteers make sure that anyone who comes to parkrun is welcomed and supported. The parkrun route is well marshalled and no one gets left behind. There is always a tail-walker at the end of the parkrun so you'll never need to worry about being last. All you need to do is get to the start line – we'll get you to the finish!

So, if you're looking for a worthwhile new year's resolution that will be good for you and good for your community, make parkrun your habit for 2018.

Find out more about us here....

www.parkrun.org.uk/merthyr/ or here
www.facebook.com/Merthyrparkrun/

We're looking forward to seeing you!

Cyfarthfa Museum announces new Artists in Residence

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery are delighted to announce new Artists in Residence – ARRTDUO.

The Merthyr-based collaboration, long term friends Alison Richards and Rob Taylor, have built an enviable collection of work based on their passion for telling stories through the medium of ceramics, poetry, stained glass and wood.

They make a welcome return to Cyfarthfa this December for their second exhibition in the Gallery entitled 'Wilderness- art beyond the edge of ordinary', which opens on December 12th with an official launch by Kim Howells taking place on December 14th.

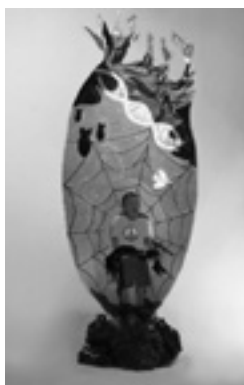
Visitors will be able to purchase all pieces from ARRTDUO's collection with a unique range of glassware linked to the theme of the exhibition available at the Museum shop - just in time for Christmas.



Rob, of Cefn, said: "Our art very much involves mixed media- using ceramic, glass wood and poetry to essentially tell a story through each piece.



'Moving'



'Arriving'

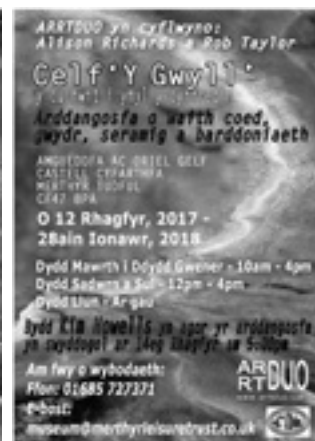
Rob, a former accountant and a passionate poet since his early teens; and former teacher and celebrated ceramic artist Alison, formed ARRTDUO four years ago- devising their name by linking their initials.

While the duo work closely with each other in devising and planning ideas, they work independently at their own studios in Merthyr, often dedicating many months to one piece, some of which measure more than a metre tall.

They say they are thrilled with the appointment and will use it as a great opportunity to get more public involved in art.

"Within this exhibition visitors will discover pieces that will effectively 'talk to each other' and our hope is to ignite an emotional response in people, ignite a feeling about it, visually and through poetry.

"We embrace all kinds of art but are very much inspired by people and by nature in creating our own work. We are keen that our residency is a chance for us to really promote Cyfarthfa Museum and Art Gallery and bring more people in to enjoy all the fantastic artwork here."



The Innovation Fund is funded by the European Social Fund and Welsh Government to support Communities for Work

The 'Together Into Employment' project empowers single parents on their journey into employment. With support from Gingerbread, the charity for single parents, we will support single parents to gain work experience and build confidence in the workplace, through group learning and personalised one-to-one support.

Eligibility criteria

Participants must be:

- A single parent under 25 years
- Be registered with Communities for Work
- Live in a Communities First area in Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly or Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Support offered to single parents

- Personal development/employability training
- Two week work experience placement
- Opportunity to meet and connect with other single parents
- Online Family Finance course

Placement with an employer: During the project, single parents ready to move into employment will take part in a two week work placement with one of our partners. They'll be supported throughout the placement by Gingerbread, as well as dedicated employees in the workplace. Whilst we cannot guarantee jobs at the end of the placement, single parents will come away with two weeks' work experience to add to a CV and valuable recent experience of managing family life in a workplace.

Training & recruitment: Our experienced Project Officers will meet with single parents on a one to one basis to identify the best progression route for them. We therefore offer both employability and personal development training. Focusing on 'life skills' such as assertiveness and decision making, this is often the first step to moving closer to employment and address barriers to entering the workplace.

Our four days of pre-employment training addresses common issues facing single parents wanting to return to work, as well as building confidence and preparing participants for a work placement.

Become a Peer Mentor: We also encourage our project participants to become volunteer peer mentors to support other single parents looking for work. Peer mentor training will be provided to single parent volunteers wanting to build their experience and support other single parents on their journey into employment.

If you are interested in joining the project or have more questions, please contact Gingerbread:

Project Officer Kevin Morgan on 07814 793456 or kevin.morgan@gingerbread.org.uk

Peer Support Officer

Tori Roberts- Burt on 07771 333440

Gingerbread Wales Office: 02920 471 900



Working in partnership with Communities and Job Centre Plus

Gweithio mewn partneriaeth â Chymunedau ar Ganolfaen Byd Gwaith

Staff Changes at VAMT

Thanks to funding from the Rural Development Fund Lisa Toghil joins VAMT as Cwm Taf Digital Support Officer working across the rural wards in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. Many people in the North Merthyr area will know Lisa, who previously worked as Communities First Co-ordinator in Dowlais, and Prosperous Communities lead in 3Gs Lisa can



help and assist groups in all things digital – so if your group is based in Vaynor, Cyfarthfa, Plymouth, Merthyr Vale, Treharris, or Bedlinog or benefits people from those wards, and you've got a digital challenge – contact **Lisa** on **07557342480** or **01685 353904**.

Rhonda Braithwaite has also recently joined VAMT as One Voice Project Officer until March 2018. Rhonda who previously worked for Town and Park Communities First and Communities First in Mid Cluster takes over the disability advocacy project from Nia Williams. **Rhonda** works Mondays and Tuesdays and can be contacted on **01685 353993**



Third Sector Officer Role – VAMT

Alison Harris is the Third Sector Officer for VAMT. The role has many functions around supporting organisations which could include:

- Helping you to seek funding to develop your constitution
- develop policies such as safeguarding
- help you with planning to become more sustainable
- Supporting the engagement of the sector within the Partnership arena.
- Representing the sector on partnerships
- and delivering Safeguarding training

I work Tuesday to Friday and will be glad to hear from you. If you would like any support you can contact me on my direct line which is **01685 353915** or my email address is **alison.harris@vamt.net**

Community Safety

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Community Safety department have now launched a brand new intelligence database and are encouraging you and members of the public to pass on information. Although we always advise residents to call 101 and report incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour & Crime to the Police, there may be information that could be of use to our Community Safety department that you wouldn't always report to police.

What are we looking for?

Community Safety covers a wide variety of issues and some of the things we would like to know more about are;

- Rough sleepers – so we ensure services are offered and vulnerable people are safeguarded
- Discarded needles and drug litter - so we can monitor such areas, work with street cleansing teams to clear up, inform needles exchange programme commissioners and service providers, request Police enforcement where appropriate etc...
- Drinking in public & significant amount of alcohol litter in areas – we can use this info for multi-agency working to improve the perception of certain problem areas, engage with youths (if involved), refer for outreach support, arrange enforcement action where required
- Anti-Social Behaviour such as; dangerous joy riders, dangerous off road bikes, smell of cannabis, disputes within communities
- Suspicious behaviour or possible criminal activity – you might not have witnessed a crime but may have seen something that could be suspicious. Such info could be a vital piece of intelligence allowing us or partner agencies to take swift and robust action

We welcome any intelligence you might have whether its specific details such as cars registrations, addresses, names, locations or just reports of something a 'bit odd' or suspicious in your community. All contact can remain anonymous and your details will not be shared without your explicit consent.

If you or anyone you know would like to pass on information you can ring 01685-725000 and ask for Community Safety or email RYAN.EVANS@MERTHYR.GOV.UK Community Safety Team leader.

New Fund from Big Lottery

Big Lottery's new Helping Working Families fund provides grants of up to £500,000 to help improve working families' lives in Wales.



The fund is aimed at enabling households affected by 'in-work' poverty to improve their lives, targeting households where someone is working and with a child under the age of 18. Organisations will need to work with families to design and deliver activities that matter to them. Working with and empowering families will be key to deciding which projects to fund.



Voluntary and community organisations such as charities, community groups, co-operatives and social enterprises can apply for funding, providing they are working closely with:

- Working families.
- The community.
- Formal or informal partners (this could include local organisations from the public, private or voluntary sector).

To begin their application, applicants must check their eligibility on Big Lottery's website, then get in touch with them to request an application form.

The deadline for applications is 15 March 2018 (5pm).

Changes to Big Lottery People and Places

Big Lottery People and Places programme has changed. Applications now must address the following three approaches which are vital to help us achieve our mission and address inequality in Wales. We want all activity we fund to embrace these:

People-led – we want the people who will benefit from, or be affected by your project to be meaningfully involved in the development, design and delivery of your activity.

Strengths-based – we want to encourage organisations to make the most of, and build on, the skills and experiences of people and strengths within communities.

Connected – we want to know that you have a good understanding of what others are doing locally, that what you're doing complements and adds to this, and that you have working relationships with other relevant groups.

People and Places has now been split into two strands, medium grants and large grants.

Medium grants offers funding from £10,001 to £100,000 for projects lasting up to five years. The application process has been streamlined. For more information, please visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/peopleandplacesmedium

Large grants offers funding from £100,001 to £500,000 for projects lasting up to five years. For more information, please visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/peopleandplaceslarge

Awards for All

Changes have also been made to the small grants programme Awards for All. The good news is that community groups can now apply for bigger awards (from just £300 up to £10,000 per project) from the National Lottery Awards for All programme. The new application process is already proving popular with community groups and charities.

Women who worked in the Textile Industry

Wall To Wall is the television production company responsible for numerous 'living history' series for BBC2 such as Back In Time For Dinner, Victorian Slum, The Sweet Makers and we also make the documentary series Who Do You Think You Are? for BBC1. Right now we are working on an exciting new living history series specific to Wales.

This new series will take a group of 12-15 modern women to experience what life was like working on a factory production line in the 70s in Wales. We're setting up a textile factory, set initially in the late sixties, through the 70s and into the 80s, our cast will re-live the day to day experiences of working on a factory production line during that era. Some may have a personal connection to the factory story (perhaps their gran, auntie or mum worked in a factory in Wales during that time) while others may work in the textile industry today. They will work across the jobs within the hierarchy of the factory floor from the offices, to seasoned machinists through to new apprentices. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for people from all walks of life to experience the day-to-day reality of the factory floor. We won't just be immersing them in the work, they will also experience the social life of the factory, from works outings to other social events, they will be stepping into the shoes (and clothes and hairstyles) of their forebears.

We are looking into best avenues for trying to find people to take part in our series. We're looking for a combination of women who may have some industrial sewing/dressmaking experience (and so won't be completely phased by having to use 1970s industrial machines/follow basic garment patterns) as well as those who don't have the experience but could be up for the challenge of learning a new skill on the job. All of those who take part will be

re-living the experience of generations of working women, possibly even their own family members depending on their background.

We are interested in reaching out to the communities near Merthyr Tydfil and the surrounding towns, because of the rich history of textile factories in the area, Kaysor Bonder, Berlei, amongst many others – there will hopefully be a rich collection of stories to tell, and perhaps people in the community with family connections to these factories who would be interested in taking part?

We are also looking for interviewees – women who worked in the factories during this time who would be interested in sharing their stories with us, if you know of anyone who worked in the big textile factories in the area and would like to talk to us, even if it was just for our research at this stage, with no obligation to take part, we'd love to hear from them.

We're at a very early stage of production and at the moment we're trying to talk to as many people as possible who are connected to this industry and might be able to suggest potential cast members to us.

Contact Sophie Fairs: 0117 307 2339.

Sophie.fairs@walltowall.co.uk

www.walltowall.co.uk



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The views expressed in this edition of Inform are not necessarily those of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.
Croesawir erthyglau nail ai'n ddwyieithog neu'n uniaith Gymraeg.

The closing date for articles for the next edition (March 2018) is 24 February 2018.