

INFORM

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Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful

August 2022

**Volunteers'
Week**

**Mental Health
Awareness Week**

**Focus
On**

**Members'
News**

**VAMT
News**

Welcome to the August edition of Inform. Our aim is to provide our members with up to date news and information and we welcome contributions and feedback from all readers. It's been a while since our last publication so sit back and read through the amazing things that have happened over the past few months and all the exciting things about to happen.

VOLUNTEERS' WEEK

VAMT celebrated Volunteers' Week by organising two events in the Community. An outreach event took place at Tesco where VAMT staff promoted volunteering and the other was a Volunteering Fayre in the town centre which was attended by 12 third sector organisations. The aim of the Fayre was for organisations to promote their volunteering opportunities and services to members of the public.

As well as the two events, videos, photographs and case studies were promoted throughout the week via our social media platforms as well as the VAMT website and this showcased the amazing volunteers that we have in Merthyr Tydfil. We were also lucky enough to receive two special thank you videos from Andrea Byrne (https://www.youtube.com/shorts/JE_6PKlvflg) and Hannah Thomas (<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Fqp0YHNjLJY>) both News Presenters at ITV Wales.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

VAMT wanted to use Mental Health Awareness week to start the conversation around mental health and promote the organisations, resources and opportunities of support in the community.

This was also a chance for us to tell the community of our dedicated Mental Health roles that are now in post at Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil.

- Members of the public were invited to our drop in event where they could access advice, training, skills to support their mental health and opportunities to chat with others with shared experiences. Organisations involved included Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind, Citizens Advice Merthyr Tydfil, The Samaritans and The Outdoor Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind delivered training on Project SPEAK ('Suicide, Prevention, Education, Awareness and Kindness')
- Working with local organisations and groups, we put together a timetable of activities and opportunities that offered those in the community different ways to support or improve their mental health. This included Wellbeing walks run by Coed Lleol, an allotment open morning run by the Reconnect 50+ project and an art group run by Adult Learning Wales.

A short film with Groundwork created by Black Box Media showed how volunteering outdoors improves your mental wellbeing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR1KTyrZ0a8>



We are Sense, the national disability charity – supporting everyone who is deafblind or has complex disabilities. We believe everyone should be able to take part in life, no matter their disability. Our work empowers thousands of people who are deafblind or have complex disabilities to communicate, experience the world and fulfil their potential.



We offer residential care, virtual support, and we have a network of centres in communities across the country. We also provide lifelong opportunities for disabled people to be creative and active through holidays, arts, sports, and wellbeing programmes.

70% of disabled people report that they want to be more active so in March 2022, here in South Wales, we joined the Sense Active programme (which was already running in England). The aim of Sense Active is to provide lifelong opportunities for people with complex disabilities to be active by establishing meaningful & engaging local opportunities.

The objectives are to:

1. **Provide** lifelong opportunities for people with complex disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity in more areas of Wales
2. **Influence** and equip the sports and health sector to enable more sustainable opportunities for people with complex disabilities to be active throughout their lives
3. **Develop** insight in measuring and evaluating the benefits of sport and physical activity for people with complex disabilities across the sports and health sector

There are over 10,000 individuals across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board (RCT, Merthyr & Bridgend) living with complex disabilities. By complex disabilities we mean anyone who has two or more disabilities, this includes sensory impairments and learning disabilities. In partnership with the Football Association and Lawn Tennis Association we have developed really useful resources for sports such as [football](#) and [tennis](#) to adapt how the traditional game is played. The resources focus on achieving the same outcomes as the traditional game but reimagining

how the activity is delivered. We offer free workshops to support the delivery of these activities. These are suitable for coaches, leisure centres, schools, support staff and anyone that works within the disability sector that would like to start providing more inclusive opportunities.

We recently trained up 20 walk leaders, third sector staff and volunteers at the Dowlais Community Centre in Merthyr to be able to embed more sensory walks into their programmes. Sensory walks are a perfect way to engage more people with sensory impairments into activity. In partnership with Ordnance Survey, here in Wales we are starting to build a portfolio of accessible [sensory walk routes](#) which can be accessed by anyone in the community. Going forward, we hope to collaborate with local organisations to develop sensory led walks and to enhance the network of routes on the Ordnance Survey app. Our training offer doesn't end there, we also have an accredited course, 'Connecting Differently Through Sport'. We have delivered this course to many sport and charitable organisations including Headway.

As well as our innovation programme, we work with providers to deliver long-term inclusive activity sessions such as dance, bowls, indoor climbing and watersports. We offer telephone activities such as yoga and tai chi. These are perfect for individuals with visual impairments as the sessions are audio described. To see what is available and to book on, please use our [activity finder](#). If you are a provider that would like to work together on a project, or an organisation that needs support to implement more inclusive activity into your line of work, do reach out. A real key focus for us is to engage more children and young people into sport.

If you are interested in anything mentioned within this article, please contact lauren.heath@sense.org.uk



Merthyr Tydfil Borough Credit Union

5 Reasons to be a payroll partner!

1. Eases financial worries!
2. Allows you to save hassle free!
3. Enables you to repay a loan hassle free!
4. Grants you access to exclusive ethical loans
5. Helps us stamp out those despicable loan sharks

Merthyr Tydfil Borough Credit Union - Payroll Deduction Scheme:

Want hassle free saving opportunities? Begin saving or repaying a loan directly from your wage with our Payroll Deduction Scheme! Merthyr Tydfil Borough Credit Union works with organisations of all sizes within our common bond to ensure every employee can access our innovative scheme, developed by Moneyworks Wales! You can easily join the scheme as an employer!

The scheme is a collaboration of 10 not-for-profit credit unions across Wales all coming together to build a better, brighter future for employees! Our scheme has attracted organisations such as Welsh Government, NHS, JNP Legal, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and over 150 others!

With the current climate it's important to be supporting employees with financial worries. We want to aid you in that endeavour.

"Surveys have shown 43% of adults in the UK reported that their mental health had worsened since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown"

Just in time for the continued rising cost in living, the scheme now offers a £500 express loan exclusive to payroll partners only! Whilst your employer will know you have joined the scheme, they do not know what you're paying into, it's all completely confidential!

Professor Sir Cary Cooper, Manchester Business School, former President of the CIPD and British Academy of Management claims "there is a pressing need for every organisation to urgently step up and prioritise financial wellbeing among employees"

Are you an employer looking to provide financial wellbeing opportunities for your employees? Please don't hesitate to contact us, we're happy to help any organisation of any size!

If you're an employee looking to benefit from this scheme then please get in contact, we will make the effort to reach out to your employer!

Contact Us:
Telephone – 01685 377888
Email – info@mtbcu.org.uk
Website: www.moneyworkswales.com



New Pathways

New Pathways have launched a brand new monthly newsletter that aims to raise awareness of sexual violence issues, share the voices of those affected by rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse and highlight the support that is available to people across South, West and Mid Wales.

This month's issue highlights pupils in Treorchy calling out sexual harassment and abuse, shares a video on ways to help overcome trauma and highlights the work of Sexual Abuse Referrals Centres (SARCs) in Wales. It also reveals the work New Pathways is currently doing to support the staff of the Ukrainian helpline and Welcome Centres to stay well and avoid vicarious trauma when undertaking their critical work with refugees coming to Wales.

You can see the latest version here [New Pathways Newsletter July '22](#).

Please sign up to receive this newsletter [here](#).

The Jewish Heritage Trail

Merthyr Tydfil synagogue saved and given a new lease of life



Since 2006, the former synagogue of Merthyr Tydfil had been lying empty, its condition deteriorating, the fabric of the building seriously compromised with a gaping hole in the roof and broken windows. This is despite the fact that the synagogue, built in the 1870s, is grade II listed, the most important Jewish heritage site in Wales and one of the most important synagogues in the UK.

The UK-based Foundation for Jewish Heritage works on preserving Jewish heritage at risk and it began seeking views on a vision of creating a national 'Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre' at the synagogue site, presenting the 250+ year history of the Welsh Jewish community and providing a new cultural venue for Merthyr. The concept was well received with strong support from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, local politicians, and the Jewish and heritage communities of Wales. This led to the Foundation purchasing the site in 2019 and then carrying out urgent repairs. A wider consultation process followed which culminated in a funding submission to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The wonderful news came through in June that the application had been successful.

The Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre project has a dedicated website with an appealing logo based on the Welsh dragon that adorns the front of the synagogue. Gerald Jones MP and Dawn Bowden MS are the project's Special Ambassadors, and leading BBC news broadcaster Huw Edwards recently joined as a Patron alongside David Baddiel and Sir Michael Moritz KBE. Indeed, HRH The Prince of Wales visited the synagogue last year which was another important boost for the project.

The work to bring the idea to fruition will take several years with the projected opening set for autumn 2025. However, as part of the preparations, the project will be reaching out to the Merthyr community and beyond to discuss the plans, engage people and recruit volunteers.

Merthyr Tydfil synagogue represents *shared* heritage – it is a unique part of Jewish and Welsh heritage. The Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre project will educate about and celebrate the Jews of Wales, and community life in Merthyr, while conveying an important contemporary message about diversity, respect and understanding. The project will preserve a heritage of the past in order to play a meaningful role for today.

To learn more about the project, please visit the website – <https://jewishheritage.wales/> - or contact Foundation Chief Executive Michael Mail on michaelmail@foundationforjewishheritage.com.



Legacy in the Community

Legacy in the Community (LitC) is a charity based in Merthyr that seeks to curate an inclusive, supportive community. Through their projects, LitC reach out to all areas of the nine protected characteristics, with some projects, namely Working on Wellbeing, focused on disability.



Working on Wellbeing and Careers Fair

The Working on Wellbeing Project which is delivered in partnership with Scope has been awarded extended funding, which means that LitC are able to recruit employment advisors so that the project will be pan-Wales.



The LitC team have recently been involved in a careers fair at Merthyr Tydfil College, where they have been able to engage with students and inform them about how the Working on Wellbeing project can help them, along with engaging with other organisations and businesses. Students from the college also visited the Legacy office in June, where students were able to experience what a day in an office looks like!

Funding Secured: Citizen's Science Project

Left to right: Dustin Yemm (Business Liaison), Samantha Gratland (ALN Advisor), Lewis Wilmot (Customer Co-ordinator)

In July, LitC was granted funding by FOR Cardiff's City Ambition Fund. LitC are working alongside the ANI Group's City4All programme that highlights how Cardiff can be improved in terms of accessibility. The LitC team in liaison with the City4All objectives will be conducting a thorough citizen's science project and will facilitate focus groups to ensure the voices of everyone are heard. One focus group in particular is **transport** – LitC recognise that access from the valleys into Wales' capital city can often be difficult, and intend to facilitate a focus group that shares the experiences of people from Merthyr and valley areas that commute to help improve services.



Left to right: Henry Waring, Russell Bradley and Rhiannon Morgan. Members of LitC who are directly involved with the Citizen's Science Project.

Sponsored Golf Day and Mental Health Hub

In a sponsored charity golf day organised by Tilbury Douglas at Morlais Golf Club, over £1,100 was raised in funds for LitC, which will be going towards the charity's Mental Health Hub. The Hub aims to provide people in Merthyr and surrounding areas with a sense of belonging as well as providing support, somewhere they can step away from pressures of everyday life and relax over a cup of coffee.

Currently, LitC are running an active campaign to support the mental health of men in local communities, and providing funds raised towards this initiative is a significant contribution. Managing Director Gareth Marshall and Russell Bradley have been meeting up with members of the community in Theatr Soar in the heart of Merthyr's centre.



Left to right: Gareth Marshall and Dustin Yemm at Cardiff4All Stakeholder Launch

Taff Bargoed Development Trust

The Taff Bargoed Development Trust is a charity engaged in regenerating the Taff Bargoed Valley after the closure of the three coal mines that were located within the Valley. Creating employment is vital due to very little opportunities that exist locally and the Trust developed the climbing centre and supported businesses to help address the economic issues faced.



The Trusts centre now employs over 60 local community members which is making a telling difference to the local economy and long may this continue. The Trust has also increased its membership from 1,200 to over 1,600 in the past year and this is growing each month.

The Trust created a solar array recently and the monies generated is used to support local community groups. Last year the Trust supported the three local parks within the Valley. The funding was used to afford the sculpture of a dragon at Treharris Park. The Millennium and Nant Llwynog Parks received funding in order to educate people in the importance of protecting the environment and the dangers of climate change.



The Trust is also supporting Treharris Athletic Western & Mini FC through its Helen Thomas Community Awards programme. Treharris has long had a reputation with football and the Athletic ground held football matches for over 100 years. The funding provided will support the ground becoming active once again having been closed for over 6 years due to needing improving. This initiative will support up to 10 football teams and see football thrive once more in Treharris. For further information please email Howard Jackson at enquiries@tbdtd.co.uk

BulliesOut Youth Engagement Programme



The BulliesOut Youth and Mini Ambassador Programmes provide a vehicle for children and young people to become involved in an anti-bullying campaign. It inspires them through positive opportunities and experiences and seeks to empower and develop children and young people further by providing them with training and skills-based activities. Our Anti-Bullying Ambassadors volunteer together on an issue that affects thousands of children and young people every day and are empowered, inspired, and supported to come up with ideas and solutions that can make positive changes.

The Youth and Mini Ambassador Programmes create a sense of belonging, independence, and empowerment, as well as helping children and young people to develop social and decision-making skills, build their sense of competence and motivating them to achieve. From leadership and teamwork to communication and meeting new people, our ambassadors can develop as individuals at an intensity which suits them.

Youth and Mini Ambassadors must:

- Be aged 11+ for Youth Ambassadors and age 5yrs – 10yrs for Mini Ambassadors
- Be able to speak, read and write in English
- Have a history of demonstrating good moral and ethical character
- Be passionate about stopping bullying behaviour and making a difference
- Be someone who cares about others
- Be friendly, approachable and willing to listen
- Be willing to commit to the programme

To find out more please contact us on ambassadors@bulliesout.com or visit our website www.bulliesout.com/get-involved/

The Bevan Foundation



The Bevan Foundation has had a busy year, and it's not over yet!

The Bevan Foundation is a thinktank and charity which aims to end poverty and inequality in Wales by influencing public policy. The organisation produces ground-breaking insights into a range of themes including poverty, economy, people, democracy and environment.

This year has been one of financial difficulties for many, following the pandemic and cost of living crisis. We have been working hard in response to produce new insights which we hope will make a positive difference to people's lives.

Our work on Free School Meals has been ongoing since 2018, and we were pleased that we were able to drive forward their implementation. Our report in April 'Pledge to Plate' helped to persuade the Welsh Government of the need for quick roll-out, so that children can access free school meals from September 2022.

We have also been developing insights on the shortfalls in Local Housing Allowance compared with rents with a severe shortage of rental properties for low-income households in Wales. Our work has taken us to an event at Westminster, various roundtables as well as discussions with the Welsh Government.



Additionally, we supported groups of migrant women from South Riverside Community Development Centre, TCC and CPLW in Wrexham to share their views on childcare with the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee. We are pleased to be able to continue our work with migrant communities by running a new project to increase access to advice about all immigration statuses.

The Bevan Foundation has many upcoming projects and reports that may be of interest to your organisation. We have a free e-newsletter you can sign up to, or you can support our work directly from just £3.75 a month. For organisations, we offer a subscription for £35 a month that will save you time and resources. Many third sector organisations are already signed up and receive exclusive access to our State of Wales briefings, reports and Exchange Magazine. As well as this, we offer exclusive invitations to events, discounts on training and opportunities to expand your reach and raise your profile.

We'd love to chat about the opportunities with Inform's readers- just get in touch via email, alice.peters@bevanfoundation.org

Community Trust Awards Grants

The Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust has recently awarded small grants to 9 local organisations. The recipients were Dowlais Pony Improvement Society, Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust, Ti a Fi Gurnos, Ti a Fi Soar, Merthyr Tydfil Museums and Heritage Group, Merthyr Tydfil Rotary Club, Society of Recycled Teenagers, St David's Baby Bank and 4Tom.

Last November, the Trust also awarded small grants to the Good Friendship Group, Friends of Nant Llwynog Park, Bedlinog FC, Gellideg Mini Football Club and the Heads of the Valleys Dyslexia Association.

The Trust will be calling for more applications in 2023. Look out for the notice from VAMT to all members.

The Outdoor Partnership

The Outdoor Partnership work to support people of Wales take up outdoor activities as a life-long pursuit.

We work closely with stakeholders, partners, funders and National Governing Bodies to provide an effective development continuum for participants on all programmes.

Our new VISION means enhancing:

- people's physical and mental health and wellbeing,
- the economic return (including employment),
- the social value through outdoor activity,
- grassroots participation in activities such as walking, cycling, climbing, canoeing, paddleboarding, sailing, mountain biking, and many more.

This summer we have provided #summeroffun activities at the Summit Centre in Trelewis, loads of paddlesport, indoor and outdoor climbing, girls sessions, boys sessions, inclusive sessions...something for everyone!

We organised a #summeroffun family trail running weekly sessions. We also have a #greenprescribing opportunity coming up which is a 10 week program of sofa to summit trail running for beginners.

This Autumn we have organised a 'Climbing for all' course, where we will train up climbing instructors

from indoor climbing walls centres. These instructors will be coming from across South Wales to attend this course in the Summit Centre. After this training they will be able to provide climbing sessions for people in wheelchairs and those who wouldn't normally be able to access climbing indoors.

We have funded and subsidised a monthly ASD climbing club at Summit Centre.

We have organised an introduction to Canoeing at Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer and hope to organise more introductory subsidised outdoor sessions to the public this winter.

Lastly we have been running a 'pathways to the outdoors' across Central South Wales, where we have opened up loads of training and qualifications for FREE to 18-25s. If you would like to find out what training is available then please email Leila Connolly at leila.connolly@partneriaeth-awyr-agored.co.uk



Heads of the Valleys Dyslexia Association

We are a new charity sited around the top end of the Southeast Wales Valleys.

Our aim is to raise awareness of dyslexia and provide information and advice to people with dyslexia and their friends and family.

We have a website, a Facebook page, email address and a mobile number.

For information or advice, our volunteers are available on weekdays between 10am and 6pm if you would like to call us or you can text us at any time.

Website:

<https://dyslexia-hvda.wixsite.com/headsofthevalleysda>

mobile numbers:

0751 9885 444

* 0756 3523 009

email:

headsofthevalleysda@gmail.com

Events

We will be holding our first 'raising awareness' event on Friday 2nd September at Trago Mills, Merthyr Tydfil. We will be there from 10am to 3pm, come along and chat to us if you would like to find out more about dyslexia. Our next event will be during Dyslexia Awareness Week, on 7th October, during at Trago Mills.

One Off Opportunity

One of our founder members is studying for AMBDA qualification, which will enable her to assess for dyslexia. She is looking for 2 people between the age of 16 and 24 years that would like to have a free assessment for dyslexia (usual cost £350) as part of her training. All assessments will be reviewed by a practicing dyslexia tutor. If anyone is interested, please contact the email address for further information.

Cwm Taf Care and Repair

The main role of Cwm Taf Care and Repair is to assist older and disabled clients to remain in their homes with greater comfort, independence and security.

Our service is client led that is based on a visit to the older person's home. This visit will result in a personalised package of home improvement.

The objective is to support the older person's choice to remain living in their own home and in their own community for as long as they are able and chose to do so.



CWM TAF
Care & Repair | Gofal a Thrwio

How we can help you

- ✓ Free home visiting service
- ✓ Free Healthy homes check to your property
- ✓ Help to reduce risk of falls
- ✓ Aids and Adaptations
- ✓ Grant / Benevolent funding assistance
- ✓ Energy Efficiency assistance
- ✓ Handyperson services
- ✓ Safety & Security assistance
- ✓ Free Fire Safety Check
- ✓ Check what benefits you are entitled to

FREE
information
service for
older people

We will help
you to remain at
home in greater
comfort, warmth
and security



We're here to help you manage
better with trusted, reliable
information and support.

Call us on 0300 111 3333
enquiries@cwmtafcr.org.uk

Twitter: @CwmTafCandR #CandR



Cwm Taf Care & Repair

Supporting older and vulnerable people across Merthyr Tydfil & Rhondda Cynon Taf to repair, adapt and maintain their homes



Care & Repair is an industrial & provident society with charitable status No. 2063451

Repair Café Wales



Have you ever heard of a Repair Café?

Have you ever wondered what else you could do with your toaster that no longer toasts, or your vacuum cleaner which no longer cleans, other than throw it away? Would you know how to fix it? Would you like to learn (and save some money buying new, into the bargain)?

Repair Café Wales supports and assists the development of local repair cafés and, to date, over 80 Repair Cafés in Wales (and further afield) have been established under its umbrella.

Would you be interested in starting a Repair Café in your area? There's at least one Repair Café in almost every local authority area in Wales, but at the moment, there isn't one in Merthyr Tydfil.

What is a Repair Café?

They are informal, pop-up events which usually happen about once a month for 2-3 hours. Some happen much more regularly, others less so. A group of enthusiastic volunteers come together, with the help of a local Organiser, to fix things which otherwise might be thrown away. The help available depends on the skills of the volunteers, so for example it might include small electrical items, sewing repairs to textiles, checking over a bike to make sure it's safe to use, repairing small garden tools, repairs to phones or IT devices ... the list could go on! Volunteer Fixers don't need to be professionals, just to be competent and to feel confident enough to try a fix. If an item can't be fixed, they will be able to tell you why and can share that information via Repair Café Wales so that manufacturers can be lobbied in a bid to make it easier to repair items rather than just throw them away. It also provides a social function, where people can sit and chat over a cuppa while waiting to see a fixer. There are other volunteering roles needed, which don't need special skills, but are equally important.



One thing all Repair Cafés (and there are over 2,400 across the world) have in common is they share 3 common values:

• Waste Reduction

Repair cafés help household items have a longer life by fixing them rather than throwing them away. This reduces the volume of raw materials and energy needed to make new products. It cuts CO2 emissions by reusing instead of manufacturing new products.

• Sharing Skills

By promoting a repair culture and inviting each one of our visitors to sit with a volunteer fixer, repair cafés show appreciation for the people who have practical knowledge and ensure these valuable skills are getting passed on.

• Community Cohesion

Repair cafés promote social cohesion in the community by connecting local residents from very different backgrounds and with different motives with each other through an inspiring and low-key event.



Interested in finding out more?
Visit repaircafewales.org or email us at info@repaircafewales.org
We'd love to hear from you.

Gellideg Foundation Group

We've had an action-packed summer at Gellideg Foundation Group – delivering a Summer of Fun programme sponsored by MTCBC as well as delivering our youth programme through the holidays. This gave us the chance to offer a full programme of support to families with children of all ages as well as opening the Centre three times a week for community lunches.

The youth team accompanied our youth members, aged 8 plus, to Vertigo, spent six days at the Fire Station being young fire fighters, and 11 young people went on an overnight adventure in Neath where they went gorge walking and rock climbing. They also went on a 5 day sail from Penarth to Portishead and surrounding islands. We celebrated national play day, held workshops in circus skills and cooking and play.

This year we launched our new family Summer of Fun programme for children under 11 years and their families. Every Monday in August, Danni held a morning music and movement workshop for babies and toddlers, and Elise from Small Woods led environmental sessions on the Gellideg Fields. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, specialist tutors held workshops in drawing, dance, circus skills, song-writing, screen printing and sports. All these activities were free. For our community programme we organised Friday trips to Raglan Castle and Symonds Yat, Barry Island, Swansea and Tenby.

The community meals have been a great success and we are looking to repeat these in the future, especially in the school holidays.

We are still getting used to our new Centre and all the possibilities it offers to community members and partners. We look forward to an ever expanding and exciting programme of new activities to support everyone in Merthyr Tydfil, especially as the months ahead will be financially tough for everyone. For more information on the Foundation Group please email Helen at helenb@gellideg.net

GELLIDEG FOUNDATION



Blind Veterans UK's support and urges others to get in contact with the charity



Rebuilding lives after sight loss

70-year-old Noeline from Caerphilly is supported by Blind Veterans UK and is urging eligible veterans in and around Merthyr to grab their help with both hands.

Noeline served for two years with the Women's Royal Army Corps. In 2008 Noeline noticed something was wrong with her eyesight.

She said: "At first I only noticed my eyesight was failing at night. I blamed the lightbulbs in the house but when the evenings began to get lighter, I realised I could no longer blame the lightbulbs or the dark."

"I was referred to the hospital and it was confirmed I had wet and dry macular degeneration. Nothing could be done to save my central vision. I was initially in denial but then reality hit me, and the power of darkness came in like a flood."

Noeline joined Blind Veterans UK at the start of 2020.

"I hadn't knitted for years but joined the online knitting group and was encouraged to give it a go. I started off by knitting a simple square."

"I was then given the pattern for knitting poppies but eventually ran out of red wool. Caerphilly was back in lockdown meaning we could only get essentials. Within 48 hours of mentioning it to Blind Veterans UK I'd been sent more wool."

"I burst into tears. I'd never met these people and they were sending me gifts and the gifts were so wonderful."

"I've been provided with talking scales so I'm able to keep cooking and a magnifier so I can carry on with my card making hobby."

"When you're visually impaired and trying desperately to keep hold of your hobbies these small things are such a lovely help."

"If you think you may be able to get support from this wonderful charity, get in touch with them today. They give you so much support, it's life-changing. Go out there, grab Blind Veterans UK by the hand and don't let them go."

Blind Veterans UK supports thousands of blind veterans across the country, but knows there are tens of thousands more who still need its support to rebuild their lives after sight loss.



If you, or someone you know, served in the Armed Forces, including National Service, and are now struggling with sight loss, then please get in touch.

Call **0800 389 7979** or visit **blindveterans.org.uk/support**

Nant Llwynog Earth Hour and other events

Several interesting events have been held in the borough valleys recently. Over the spring and into high summer, people have come out to enjoy the warm weather at **Nant Llwynog Park**. From Earth Hour and Easter hunts to fun days and moth nights, all have led to a growing interest in the natural world.



Earth Hour was sponsored by WWF Cymru and is an annual event to inspire awareness of natural features in the late hours. As it gets dark nocturnal creatures spring forth and behave differently. Frogs and toads suddenly appear in the grass so you might almost step on them. Bats take to the air in search of flying insects. Amidst all this, we had talks and played music from the EH playlist and listened to poems. We also had speeches from Laura Jones MS, Shadow Education Minister, on finding new ways for people to learn about nature. Jim Davies also spoke as did Martin Bell and Ai-Lin Kee.

Outdoor play is important for a child's development and such simple activities as hunting for eggs or collecting leaves can leave an impression. We've had leaf printing on large sheets with bright colours resulting in all sorts of patterns. Making small craft items from natural objects can be very satisfying and enriching. This kind of interacting with nature can make us look at it in a new light!

Nant Llwynog or Pitwoods, is a former industrial site which was carefully smoothed out and landscaped. It is a good place to study nature and identify species, or just to relax in and absorb the atmosphere. The wide range of wildlife present makes it worthwhile checking the plant lists, which number over 250 kinds. There are also many species of birds nesting in the park, which adds to the biodiversity.

Feedback suggests all people had a good time and would like to do similar things again next year. Sites like this are part of a series of open spaces, and many send members to the meetings of the VAMT Open Spaces Network. For more information please contact Edward Dawson at edawson1215@gmail.com.



Stephens and George Charitable Trust

Stephens and George Charitable Trust have a thriving Youth forum with young people aged 12 to 25 volunteering, participating in youth activities and creating opportunities for others. This summer they have been activity volunteering at our Summer of Fun for our younger people. They have also been able to enjoy their own Summer of Fun with Theatre visits, Surfing and Climbing.



If you are a young person wanting to volunteer, doing your Duke of Edinburgh or want experience for a career pathway or course get in touch with us via charity1@stephensandgeorge.co.uk

Victim Support currently has two Volunteering Opportunities



South Wales Victim Focus
Ffocws Dioddefwyr De Cymru

Community Engagement Volunteer

For Victim Support's services to reach as many people as possible we must bring our organisation directly into each community. Community Engagement Volunteers will form a direct link between Victim Support and the local communities to ensure we are accessible and can work together to support victims of crime.

Service Delivery Volunteer

Victim Support is dedicated to supporting and empowering people affected by crime, and our Service Delivery Volunteers support our frontline staff to deliver emotional and practical support to service users both in person and over the phone or via video call. The support provided by our Service Delivery Volunteers working with our staff has a direct impact on a service user's sense of wellbeing and their recovery from crime.

- Please contact the Volunteer Centre on 07958 132822 for more information



Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil needs your help!

We need to recruit volunteers, to help us run our services.

If you have spare time on your hands and would like to make a difference to your community then please volunteer for your local cancer charity. Sparing a few hours every week really does make a big difference, and by supporting our charity you are also supporting your community.

Benefits of volunteering:

You can gain new skills, make new friends and increase self-confidence.

Volunteering also gives you the feel-good factor and a sense of purpose.

Anyone can become a volunteer, so why not make a difference today and join our volunteering community at Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil.

We are always looking for brilliant people to come on board as a volunteer and join our 50 strong volunteer workforce. Roles are varied and include driving, retail or covering reception. We offer complete flexibility around hours committed and work around your schedule. If you are interested in volunteering please call Rebecca on 01685 379633 for more information.

Why Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil?

Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil are continuing to deliver information, advice and support to anyone whose lives have been affected in some way by a cancer diagnosis. We are a local Cancer support charity providing support within the community. Our core services of a door to door transport service, counselling services, complementary therapy and podiatry sessions are delivered free of charge to both patients and carers from our centre in Dowlais. Our referral process is simple, simply call into our centre in Dowlais, or give us a call on 01685379633 and we can complete the registration over the phone.

In addition to our free services for patients and carers we are now able to offer monthly fundraising clinics with a 1 hour session of complementary therapy or counselling from £30.00 which is open to the wider community.

Valleys Steps Camau'r Cymoedd



Volunteers Needed!

Can you spare 2 hours a week to support our Wellbeing Practitioners in local community settings?

Do you work well as part of a team and care about the wellbeing of others?

If so, this could be a great opportunity to help further your own wellbeing and help others at the same time.

Full training will be given and any out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

Interested?

For more information contact:

vs.volunteers@valleysteps.org

and/or tel: 01443 803048

Our website www.valleysteps.org has lots of information about the charity and more ideas of how you can get involved.

Volunteer with the Witness Service

Are you:

- Free at least 1 day a week?
- A great listener & effective communicator?
- Confident to support people at a difficult time?
- Non-judgemental?
- Able to make a commitment of being with us for a year?
- Aged 18+?



Witness Service need volunteers in the Merthyr Tydfil area to help people who are going to be witnesses in court.

cyngor ar
bopeth

citizens
advice

For more information:

- Contact Frances Barry at Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil - (email Frances.Barry@vamt.net)
- Or scan the QR code below
- Or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/witness/



WE ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Re-engage alleviates loneliness for older people across the UK who live alone and are extremely isolated, with a special focus on the over 75s.

Here's a link to all our services we offer at Re-engage:

Social activity groups for older people & befriending service (reengage.org.uk)

Activity groups in Wales

Activity groups for older people in Wales (reengage.org.uk)

Re-engage host free activity groups for people over the age of 75, to help reduce loneliness and improve general health and wellbeing (in-person and online). We host physical activities and/or exercise groups delivered by instructors and volunteers which run fortnightly or on a monthly basis for around 2 hours. As part of our free groups, we provide light refreshments to all of those attending. Activities vary from Tai Chi, chair exercise and accessible Zumba to skittles, boccia and cornhole and we recruit volunteer drivers who can provide transport to and from our groups.

We run our groups all over Wales and our next stop is Merthyr, if you'd like information on volunteering with us then please email **Gavin Stewart** on Gavin.Stewart@reengage.org.uk, alternatively you can look at our website www.reengage.org.uk

Wastesavers

Wastesavers are a Newport based charity and following the success of our Newport Reuse Centre and Tip Shop we now manage 8 shops in the South

East Wales area including 'a new lease of life' shop in Pentrebach. We sell a large selection of good quality used furniture, electrical appliances and computers at great prices; we provide quality placements for volunteers and have recently gained 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation.



General Assistant Volunteers needed for their shop based in Pentrebach

As a General Assistant Volunteer you will be involved in all areas of our business. It is important that you can be flexible and composed when volunteering in a busy environment. You will be expected to be professional, with the ability to work on your own initiative.

Duties Include:

- Assisting with tidying and rearranging the furniture in the shop;
- Constructing and deconstructing furniture;
- Cleaning all areas of the warehouse, and the stock;
- Greeting customers and answering their queries;
- Assisting with IT duties such as dismantling and recycling equipment;
- Assisting the Online Sales Office with daily tasks such as wrapping parcels;
- Data entry, photocopying and administrative tasks;
- Occasionally assisting with collections and deliveries on the van;
- Other duties as required by your manager (Shop Manager) or any other member of staff.

Skills Required:

- Ability to follow instructions and work with other people;
- Honesty, trustworthiness and dependability;
- Flexibility and willingness to try new things.

We are flexible to accommodate your availability but our volunteer hours are Monday to Friday, 10am to 3pm. We will provide you with appropriate informal training which will help you fulfil your role. Out of pocket expenses are reimbursed.

If you are interested then please contact the Volunteer Centre on 07958 132822 or email frances.barry@vamt.net

Volunteer Role – Gardener

Why we need you?
We are looking for volunteers to help provide a regular gardening club for our residents and to help maintain the gardens at our care home.

What skills do you need?

- Have an enthusiasm for horticulture and working outdoors
- A positive enthusiastic person who has a passion for gardening.
- Able to offer and implement new ideas for activities to engage our residents
- A caring and compassionate nature that is adaptable to individual needs
- A friendly, sociable, patient and caring manner
- Good verbal communication and listening skills
- Able to emphasise and build relationships with residents and visitors
- Offer wider social contact for our residents

What will you be doing?

- To maintain the gardens, including mowing the lawn, planting, weeding, watering plants, general plant care, safe use of tools and equipment and providing guidance to our residents
- Work is of a practical hands-on nature running a range of garden projects, including seasonal planting and future development of the gardens
- Prepare gardens for Hallmark's annual competition 'Hallmark in Bloom'

Time commitment
Time commitments will be discussed and agreed; a regular time commitment is preferred. Volunteers must be 16 years old and over and need to apply for a DBS disclosure

What benefits do you gain?

- Opportunity to build self confidence and work on gardening projects
- Motivation and self achievement boost your career options
- Participation in our training and development programme
- New experience and meeting a diverse range of people
- Free DBS Disclosure
- Paid travel expenses
- Enriching our residents' day to day experiences
- Making a difference in your local community
- Increase your circle of friends
- We provide lunch and refreshments, certified training, polo shirts and badges and will pay reasonable travel expenses

Please pop into to meet the team at:

Greenhill Manor Care Home
Duffryn Road, Pentrebach,
Merthyr, CF48 4BE

Telephone for an application form 01685721046

Alternatively you can telephone 01277 655655 to request a volunteer application form or apply on line
www.hallmarkcarehomes.co.uk/join-our-team

making people feel special
activity | independence | excellence | dignity

Corporate Volunteering – What does it mean and how can you get involved?

Corporate volunteering can be defined as workplace-based initiatives where employers provide support or encouragement for its employees to volunteer for the local community.

Corporate volunteering is a way for businesses or third sector organisations to contribute to the community. They often encourage their employees to volunteer by allowing paid time off which they use to volunteer at either a charity of their choice or one nominated by the employer

If your organisation/business is interested in signing up to Corporate Volunteering but you're not quite sure how to go about it then please contact **Frances Barry** on **07958 132822** or email **frances.barry@vamt.net**

Alternatively if your organisation would like a small team of volunteers to help out on a 'one off' basis, for example, painting, gardening or fundraising then again please contact Fran (details above).



If you are interested in finding out more about any of these roles contact Frances Barry at Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil
frances.barry@vamt.net or telephone 07958132822.

Fran can offer a friendly chat and give you much more information about opportunities which are out there – why not give her a call?

Volunteering Wales is a digital volunteering platform from Third Sector Support Wales.

The website link for Merthyr Tydfil is
<https://merthirtydfil.volunteering-wales.net>

Whether your organisation is looking to recruit volunteers or if you are thinking of volunteering and would like more information around registering on the website, Fran can also help you.



Networking Event

On Thursday 23rd June 2022 VAMT held a Networking Brunch event for members. As the team at VAMT has evolved considerably over the past few years it was an opportunity for organisations working in the area to meet VAMT staff, hear about our current projects and network with other organisations.

During the event we asked members how VAMT could support them?

You said:	Our response:
1. Support our organisation to recruit volunteers and help to identify appropriate areas for peer led support groups (Versus Arthritis)	Our Volunteering Officer Fran is available to support you with recruiting volunteers, contact her via email: frances.barry@vamt.net
2. More networking opportunities and signposting	<p>We run a number of networks and Fora for members where networking is encouraged</p> <p>Our Community Coordinator Lesley routinely signposts people to services and activities within the Borough, make sure she's aware of what your organisation/group offers – Lesley.hodgson@vamt.net</p> <p>Also, we'd encourage you to register your services/activities on InfoEngine – a directory of third sector services in Wales. https://en.infoengine.cymru/ If you would like help with this then contact us on 01685 353900</p>
3. Events / training that helps up stay up to date with changes in legislation particularly relating to volunteering & charity law	<p>Contact frances.barry@vamt.net for dates of our Volunteer Managers' Forum.</p> <p>Also, we will be undertaking a training needs analysis of our members to identify needs and inform a training plan. Contact Karen.vowles@vamt.net for more information.</p>
4. Creation or lobbying for a volunteer database / central management system	We routinely promote the Volunteering Wales website and developments around this are discussed in our Volunteer Managers' Forum meeting
5. Volunteer and board recruitment	We are happy to support your volunteer and Trustee recruitment and would encourage you to make an individual appointment with Fran – frances.barry@vamt.net
6. Networking events and promoting third sector organisations working together	We are planning a timetable of networking events which will be scheduled on a quarterly basis – dates are being finalised and will be circulated to members shortly.
7. Refer participants and promote our events and activities	All members and stakeholders are able to send information to VAMT for sharing via our social media platforms.
8. Facilitate our foodwise, get cooking and JCP Programmes	We are unable to facilitate the programmes for you, however, we would be happy to promote them to our members and contacts.
9. Networking and partnership events without duplication (VAMT has a great established network) Citizens Advice	We are interested to hear from members if there are particular themes you'd like us to cover. Contact 01685 353900 or enquiries@vamt.net

10. Run courses / classes in the community for organisations. Help promote classes. Tell us what people want / need re: education (Adult Learning Wales)	We are happy to promote opportunities via all of our networking events / social media. Sign up to our blog to receive information regularly
11. Join our membership as a partner organisation (Adult Learning Wales)	We've done it!
12. Recruit volunteers, train/ team build volunteers, help us expand (Merthyr Naturalists Beacons Bees)	We are now working on a 1:1 basis providing support as requested.

Feedback from participants on the day included:

'The time went so quickly. An hour went just like that. So much to talk to people about because it's been so, so, long since we've had this type of event.'

'Lovely to see everyone face to face, although I'm so used to seeing people on teams – I knew the faces and not the names!'

'It was really, really, useful! I thought I had my finger on the pulse, but I've met four new organisations today. Thank you!'

'I've passed on loads of information and had loads of information. I am trying to get to meet as many people as possible and make connections, so this has been really useful.'

'It was good, some of the usual suspects but lots of new people too which is just what we need.'

'I work outside Merthyr, so it was really useful for me to come along and meet everyone and make those face-to-face connections.'

VAMT says goodbye to staff



Hilary Edwards

End of another era as Hilary Edwards left VAMT after 17 years of service. We are grateful for the significant contribution she has made within the organisation; her expertise in supporting our members; and in strengthening partnership working within and across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and with our CVC counterparts.

Hilary has been instrumental in the collaborations that have developed with many partners over the years. In recent times she has worked with Lloyds Bank Foundation and Feeding Britain, which has benefitted our member organisations and also the wider Borough and economy greatly. We wish her well for the future.

Bravon Mushiringani

Bravon was only with us for a short time and was employed as the Black, Asian Minority Ethnic Engagement Officer. He helped to run the BAME drop in service at VAMT and also helped to set up the Merthyr Malayali Community Association. We wish Bravon all the best for the future.



VAMT - Supporting Community Mental Health

What is Mental Health?

"a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" – WHO – World Health Organisation.

What part will VAMT (Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil) play in promoting and supporting services around mental health?

We are working in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and local third sector organisations to contribute to local and regional plans to improve mental health and wellbeing. Looking at proactive and co-productive way to empower people to support their mental health needs.

Mental Health Development Officer –

Faye Johnson. faye.johnson@vamt.net

Supporting, developing, and connecting third sector organisations to provide opportunities for mental health support within the community. Identify opportunities and gaps in provisions and link the work of specialist mental health services with the wider third sector within the community.

Mental Health Service User Involvement

Officer – Sharon Jones. sharon.jones@vamt.net

Working and connecting with Service Users of all ages across the Merthyr Tydfil community, supporting them to have a voice and offer opportunities for them to feedback on mental health services they have encountered.

Youth Led Grant Scheme – Apply Now !

Grants of up to £1,000 are available

The Youth Led Grant Fund is administered by VAMT on behalf of WCVA and Welsh Government. The purpose of the grant is to fund exciting and worthwhile projects that create more volunteering opportunities for young people aged 14-25 within the Merthyr Tydfil area.

The Youth Led Grants Scheme will only fund projects which contribute towards the seven Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) goals. (Please note: not all projects will have to deliver against all seven goals).

1. A Prosperous Wales
2. A Resilient Wales
3. A More Equal Wales
4. A Healthier Wales
5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities
6. A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language
7. A Globally Responsible Wales

The funding will only be allocated to projects that will be led by young people aged 14-25 and it will be the responsibility of the young people, with the help of the organisation to fill in the application form. Closing date for applications is Friday 23rd September.

For an application pack or further information please contact Frances Barry on 07958 132822 or email frances.barry@vamt.net

Future Dates of Forums and Networks

Health and Wellbeing Forum

This Forum is open to third sector colleagues and aims to provide a platform for providing third sector services operating locally and regionally. It further serves to ensure engagement with the sector around strategic developments within both Merthyr Tydfil County Borough and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board area.

Wednesday 9th November 10am – 12 noon

Wednesday 8th February 10am – 12 noon

It's facilitated by Claire Williams, Health and Wellbeing Manager, contact claire.williams@vamt.net for further information.

Befriending Network

Tuesday 4th October 10am – 12 noon

The Befriending Network was established in June 2021 and is open to Third Sector organisations operating befriending services in Merthyr Tydfil.

It's facilitated by Claire Williams, Health and Wellbeing Manager, contact claire.williams@vamt.net for more information.

Volunteer Managers' Forum

Wednesday 21st September 10am – 12 noon

Wednesday 16th November 10am – 12 noon

Wednesday 18th January 10am – 12 noon

The Forums take place at the Voluntary Action Centre.

The Volunteer Managers Forum is facilitated by Frances Barry, please contact her at frances.barry@vamt.net if you are a Volunteer Manager and would like to find out more.

CTM Mental Health Forum

Wednesday 14th September 10am – 12 noon

Wednesday 7th December 10am – 12 noon

Contact Faye Johnson for more information faye.johnson@vamt.net

Karen Vowles leads and facilitates on the following Networks and Forums, please contact Karen on karen.vowles@vamt.net for further information

Funding Fayre

In person at VAMT 21st September 10am – 1pm

these will be held quarterly giving an opportunity to meet funders and discuss potential funding bids and ideas.

Food Prosperity Network

Online meeting – 15th September 10:30am – 12 noon

Merthyr Tydfil Food Prosperity Network is an emerging coalition of organisations in Merthyr Tydfil with the aim to support residents and communities' access healthy affordable food.

The Network is supported through Food Sense Wales and the South Wales Food Prosperity Network and registered with the Food Power Programme which offers financial assistance for amlocal level action around the development of food poverty alliances. VAMT is currently providing the secretariat for the fledgling group, which was established in November 2018 and includes Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association, Merthyr Valleys Homes and Wales and West Housing Association.

Environment & Green Spaces

Online meeting – 20th September 10am – 12 noon

The Environment and Green Spaces Network was established in 2017 and is primarily a virtual network, however it has held meetings to showcase projects and discuss issues such as the Valleys Regional Park.

It is primarily a third sector network and is made up of organisations and community groups concerned with environmental and conservation issues. Events have been facilitated jointly with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Trustees Week

7th to 11th November

Trustees Networking meeting

7th November 10am – 12 noon at VAMT

Offering training and support sessions for the week beginning 28th November based on feedback from Trustee week responses.

Befriending Week

taking place this year 1st – 7th November and the theme is "Celebrating Making Connections"

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Don't forget our AGM!

VAMT's Annual General Meeting will be taking place on
Thursday 29th September at Merthyr Football Club.

10:45 arrival 11:00 start

Guest speaker – Maria Thomas, High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan

Attendees are then welcome to join staff and guests for a carvery lunch
Recognising and Celebrating 25 years of County Voluntary Councils in Wales, a
reflection of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil's work since 1997.

Staff will be available for any help and advice you may need.

To register your attendance please contact 01685 353900 or
email ellie.luke@vamt.net



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MERTHYR TUDFUL**

That's all from VAMT for now. Tell us what you think of this way of keeping
you up to date with what others are doing.

Don't forget, if your organisation is not a member, why not join us and
keep up to date with all the latest news, funding opportunities,
and other opportunities that are out there.

Why not subscribe to our blog?? <http://vamtnetworknews.blogspot.com/>

YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

If you would 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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Karen Vowles
Community Development
Lead Officer

Tim Carter
Local Implementation Lead

Ellie Luke
Business Support Officer

Sharon Jones
Mental Health Service User
Involvement Officer

Faye Johnson
Mental Health Development
Officer

Helen Roberts
Loneliness and Isolation
Development Officer

Board Members

Suzanne Davies

Anne Roberts

Kayleigh Nor-Val

Michael Ronan

Nicola Mahoney

Hefin Jones



Cefnogi Trydydd
Sector **Cymru**
Third Sector
Support **Wales**

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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.