

VOLUNTARY
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VOLUNTARY ACTION
MERTHYR TYDFIL
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MERTHYR TUDFUL

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2022-23

CELEBRATING

25
YEARS



Our Impact across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil

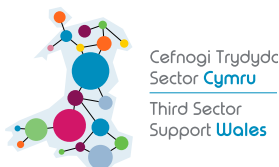
This Annual Impact Report demonstrates the difference we have made in communities across Merthyr Tydfil during the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) is an umbrella organisation for third sector organisations. We strive to increase the extent, quality and impact of voluntary action in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil by supporting, representing and assisting third sector organisations and volunteering. We work with the sector and partners to effect change by enhancing the wellbeing of individuals, organisations and communities.

None of our work would be possible without the support of our funders to whom we are extremely grateful:



VAMT has 328 members and is connected with many more through local, regional and national partnerships/networks. We are part of Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW), a partnership between Wales Council for Voluntary Action, County Voluntary Councils and Volunteer Centres throughout Wales. The collective endeavour of TSSW is to support the third sector via four key pillars of activity themed around volunteering; good governance; sustainable funding, and engagement and influence.



Visit www.vamt.net for more information or to become a member.

You may follow us on the following social media:



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DURING 2022-23...

...we have given
support and advice to

527
members and
stakeholders



...we have supported
and placed

116
volunteers
into volunteer roles



269

third sector
organisations have
received direct advice
and support from us



...we have supported third
sector organisations to secure

£1,500,176
in funding



£353,454 of funding has
been provided to third sector
organisations through grants
schemes administered by us

414 delegates
have attended our
fora and events



We have provided
training courses for
25 participants



Our membership has
increased by

11% to 328



Foreword from the Chair and Chief Officer

It is our pleasure to present to you the 2022-23 Annual Impact Report of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil. We send our grateful and sincere thanks to all our staff, trustees, and partners who have continued the journey with us over the last year.

Despite our optimism in our last report, we recognise that the effects and fall-out from the last three years are still felt across the third sector and also our public sector partners. Recovery from the pandemic appears to be ongoing, the cost-of-living crisis is still biting and worsening, and there is real concern now of the longer-term impact on individuals, organisations, and communities.

Recruitment is just one difficulty borne out of the current economic situation and a challenge that is nation-wide yet appears to impact the third sector at a time when they are better understood for their service delivery, and more relied upon, than ever before.

Short-term funding arrangements are evidently bringing an increased fragility to the sector at a time when public sector partners are themselves financially challenged. One, two, or even three-year funding cannot be considered long-term and sustainable, and it makes planning for the future incredibly difficult. It is an old argument that still rumbles on and so we welcome the upcoming review by Welsh Government of the Third Sector Scheme and Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector. We look forward to working with our statutory partners to embed any changes to the Code.

This year has been significant, in that VAMT and all our Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) colleagues celebrated the 25th anniversary of county voluntary councils, and volunteer centres in Wales.

A tremendous amount has been achieved by our team in the past twelve months and we are incredibly proud of them all. We have reviewed and streamlined our networks and fora; increased our membership significantly; and continued to provide support on a local and regional basis.

Whilst our core work continues around volunteering, governance, sustainable funding, and engagement and influence, we are pleased to be working with new partners, which brings opportunity to introduce new roles to the team in the coming months.

So, here's to an exciting year ahead and we look forward to working with you all.



Dr Hefin Jones OBE
Chair



Sharon Richards
Chief Officer

VAMT's 25th Anniversary

This year marked 25 years since the introduction of County Voluntary Councils across Wales. A low key celebration was held to coincide with the Annual General Meeting and we were pleased to have our former Chief Officer, Ian Davy, deliver a presentation of reflection of the achievements and challenges of the organisation throughout the years.



25 Notable Achievements/Events

- 1. 1997** Introduction of County Voluntary Councils, coterminous with Local Authority regions. Merthyr Tydfil office opened with Ian Davy as lead officer.
- 2. 1997–2000** Established a Volunteer Bureau, an outreach office in Treharris, and appointed a development officer via EU funding.
- 3. 2000** Developed a Compact Agreement with the Local Authority; one of the first in Wales.
- 4. 2000** Volunteering celebrations take place in Cyfarthfa Castle.
- 5. 2001** Introduction of the Voluntary Action Fund, a significant development at the time, providing £150,000 annually for the sector.
- 6. 2001–2008** We have an increase in staff thanks to Objective One, Building Stronger Bridges, Carers support, and increased WG funding.
- 7. 2002** Saw the Voluntary Action Centre opened by the then First Minister Rhodri Morgan.
- 8. 2002** Welsh Government flagship anti-poverty programme (Communities First) commences – with VAMT hosting two of the areas of investment.
- 9. 2002** Had a carnival procession through the town to celebrate Volunteers' Week.



- 10. 2003** Introduced a Volunteering Awards ceremony to recognise the contribution of volunteering within our Borough.
- 11. 2007** Established an Outstanding Contribution to Volunteering award to commemorate our late colleague, Nicola Park.
- 12. 2009** Led on facilitating third sector involvement in scrutiny functions, following an event we organised with the Local Service Board.
- 13. 2010** Organisation grows to a record 38 staff!
- 14. 2011** Development of Commission Accomplished – Code of Practice for Commissioning Third Sector Services, which underpins the revised Compact Agreement.
- 15. 2013** Received the 400,000th funding Award by National Lottery, to manage MAGNET, a consortium of seven projects, delivered over five years.



16. 2014 Key partner in Cwm Taf Integrated Care Fund (ICF). Co-lead on pilot of Community Co-ordinators for Merthyr Tydfil and RCT, linking older people with community activities; a project which is still going strong.

17. 2014 Administering ICF Community Capacity Grant Schemes – initially £150k rising to £240k, with expansion and new opportunities developed in dementia, befriending and capital in subsequent years.

18. 2017 The volunteering awards develop as Third Sector Excellence Awards with Michael Sheen, as President of Wales Council for Voluntary Action, supporting the event in his first official engagement.



19. 2018 New collaboration with Lloyds Bank Foundation led to them choosing Merthyr Tydfil as an area to deliver their People & Communities Programme – one of just 6 in the UK and the only one in Wales!

20. 2019 Obtain funding to host a regional development post to support the Cwm Taf Public Service Board priority of Tackling Loneliness & Isolation.

21. 2019 Community Zone developed in Gurnos with VAMT contracted for information, advice and assistance and subsequently community development support.

22. 2020 Retirement of Ian Davy, Chief Officer after 31 years' service, with a leaving 'do' on Teams.

23. 2020-21 Multiple grant schemes administered in response to the Covid crisis; Small Grant, Comic Relief Emergency Fund, Health Funding, Welsh Government Emergency Fund, and Welsh Government Covid Recovery Grant.

24. 2020-21 CTM Public Health Team invite us to host a worker to support Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to engage with the Covid vaccination programme.

25. 2022 New service model around mental health enables us to have dedicated support officers for Merthyr Tydfil, funded by Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB.

OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS...

...we have supported the sector to access
£17,252,778

...we have administered
£4,150,049
in grant funding

...we have placed
3,763
volunteers

...we have supported
3,436
voluntary organisations and groups

...we have given help, support, and advice no fewer than
53,618 times!

Volunteering

Providing individuals and organisations with information and advice on volunteering and good practice is an essential area of our support.

The Volunteer Centre provides information, advice and support for individuals wishing to volunteer. It also provides information and advice to organisations on recruiting and onboarding volunteers, as well as advertising volunteer opportunities on their behalf. We routinely promote opportunities available via the Volunteering Wales website.

We actively encourage participation in our Employee Volunteering Policy and all staff have volunteered to support member organisations during the year.

What we achieved:

- Over the course of the year the Volunteer Centre provided support to **75** individual volunteers and then brokered and supported a further **41** to undertake volunteer placements.
- Convened and facilitated **3** Volunteer Managers' Fora for our members for the purpose of promoting best practice, policy advice, sharing information and networking.
- The Volunteer Centre administered a Youth Led Grants programme, convening and supporting a panel who assessed grant applications and awarded a total of **£5,450** to **6** organisations.

A major event in our calendar is the celebration of Volunteers' Week, held each year during the first week of June. This year we organised a Volunteer Fair in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre which was officially supported by the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan. The Fair provided opportunity for members to promote their services and volunteering opportunities. 12 members participated and all reported benefit in engaging with new potential volunteers and also service users.



High Sheriff Maria Thomas, and Suzanne Davies, Chair of VAMT, visit the Home Start Cymru stand at the Volunteer Fair.

We utilised our social media pages to highlight volunteering undertaken across member organisations and accepted 'thank you' film clips from newsreaders at ITV Wales who wanted to formally recognise and celebrate the volunteering efforts undertaken across the Borough.

"I'm new to volunteering ...I suffer with anxiety and depression and I felt that I needed something to try and encourage me to build up my confidence again."

"It gets me out of the house and makes me feel good helping others."

"I wanted to help others especially those who are struggling and needed some support."

"Volunteering has been a great way for me to make friends. It's got me out of the house and it's given me a focus."

Good Governance

Providing information, guidance and development support on governance issues is an essential part of what we do and helps improve the skills, knowledge and expertise of those who lead community groups and voluntary organisations within Merthyr Tydfil.

We continue to disseminate information to members via a range of different communication channels, ie, via direct emails, blog, and website. Also, we encourage and signpost organisations to use the Governance resources available via the TSSW Knowledge Hub. Our website has a particular section dedicated to "Good Governance" and offers a range of information and tools to support trustees in their roles.

As an organisation, we have a long history of administering grants and over time we have developed a very robust governance framework, ensuring transparency of process, exercising due diligence in terms of financial accountability; and ensuring monitoring and reporting reflect original project intent.

What we achieved:

- Continued to secure a range of grant funding opportunities for member organisations and are pleased to report positive discussions with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Dementia Steering Group.
- We have administered a Community Capacity Grant Scheme (Dementia) for a number of years across the Cwm Taf region and have submitted a proposal to bring equity of opportunity across the entire Health Board footprint. The proposal has been agreed and will bring forward a grant scheme with increased funding of **33%** for the 2023-24 period.
- We have been administering a Befriending Grant on behalf of the CTM Regional Partnership Board for many years, and since funding and reporting requirements changed under the Regional Integration Fund, we have been facilitating a six-weekly meeting for the grant recipients to come together and be supported with grant/funding compliance around monitoring.

*"We would not have been able to set up properly without the support and guidance that VAMT gave us."
(Rhydfach Rebels)*

Squirrels Friends Transgender Network wanted to set up a face-to-face support group in Merthyr Tydfil to combat the social isolation and loneliness which a large number of trans people experience. As they had no funding to establish this, they met with us and we were able to help them create a constitution and a variety of policies. Following this, they were able to access funding opportunities.

With our assistance, Squirrels Friends Transgender Network now has a constitution and policies including safeguarding, health and safety and GDPR. We also provided them with a training session to ensure that they understood the implications of the policies.



Squirrels Friends Transgender Network has recently been shortlisted for a prestigious National Diversity Award.

Sustainable Funding

We continue to provide information, advice and support to members, to ensure they have skills, knowledge and ability to develop financial resilience and capacity to sustain their organisations. This year we introduced a regular Funding Newsletter for members, which has received positive feedback.

What we achieved:

- **£1,500,176** of funding was secured by **11 organisations** following our support compared with the previous year (£1,193,609 for 36 organisations).
- We also administered a range of grant schemes across the local and regional area, allocating a total of **£353,454** to **35 organisations**.
 - ◆ Loneliness & Isolation Grant (11 awards) in conjunction with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
 - ◆ Regional Integration Fund to retain Befriending Support (6 awards)
 - ◆ Regional Integration Fund Community Capacity Grant Scheme (6 awards)
 - ◆ Comic Relief Community Fund across Cwm Taf Morgannwg (12 awards)
- A funding event was held in June 2022 for members to engage with Funders including National Lottery Community Fund, Sport Wales, and Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The event was attended by **20 individuals** who were able to engage with funders on a one-to-one basis.
- **A further £10,000** acquired from Feeding Britain was distributed to food pantries throughout the borough to enable them to provide additional support during the cost-of-living crisis.

"VAMT has helped us a lot, without them we would not be having all these activities and be able to get out and about in the community." (Greenwood Golden Oldies)

Thanks to a WCVA small grant we held two community-based engagement events to help inform the refreshed Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. Information gathered was fed into WCVA for collation as a TSSW response.

The Public Services Board (PSB) approached VAMT, Interlink and BAVO with a request to develop an interactive mapping tool to visually present thematic activity and help assist and evidence delivery of the regional Wellbeing Plan and objectives. The PSB provided funding for a VAMT officer to undertake training on QGIS. Activity mapped related to warm hubs which had developed in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

"Honestly Karen, we are so so grateful to you and all at VAMT & Comic Relief for your amazing grant at the start of this year (2022/23)! It really has been transformational!" (Jody Barnes, Operations Manager, Rhondda Netball)



Influence and Engagement

We continue to be actively involved in a significant number of partnerships and planning groups at a local or regional (Cwm Taf Morgannwg) level including the Regional Partnership Board and Public Service Board. We also directly influence national developments via TSSW.

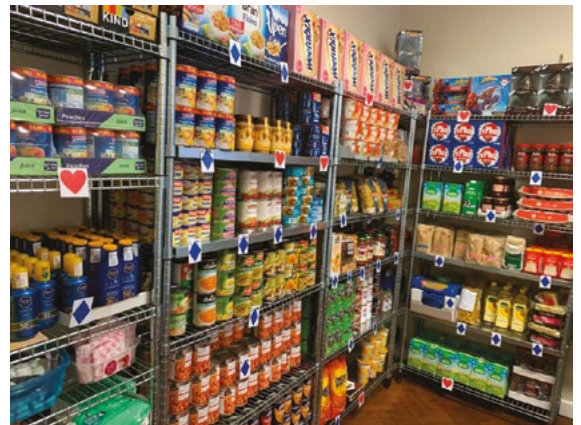
We facilitate a range of third sector networks/ fora which are highly valued. These provide an opportunity for partners to engage with the third sector; networking opportunities amongst third sector organisations; and a chance to share information and plan for the future. Over the year we reintroduced face to face meetings, and participant feedback welcomed the ability to meet in person again. We received similar feedback from the 414 people who attended workshops and one-off events we organised.

"The Befriending Network has been most valuable for networking with other organisations The link with funders and regional partnership boards is essential for long term planning." Helen McShea, Reconnect 50+ Project coordinator

What we achieved:

- Produced **3** editions of Inform Newsletter over the course of the year as well as introducing funding and general information bulletins which were disseminated to members more frequently.
- There were **4,821** new users to our website and **14,207** page views.
- Our Facebook followers rose to **1,267** and we achieved **517.5%** increase in our reach of Facebook posts.
- Through Twitter we obtained almost **9,000** impressions on our activity, with most impact aligned with World Mental Health Day.
- Outside of the TSSW structure, we routinely engage in over **30** partnerships and planning groups at a local/regional level.

We collaborated with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council on their Cost-of-Living Summit Event in November 2022 which was held in the Orbit Business Centre and was attended by multi-agency professionals. The event outcomes identified four areas of concern which were: fuel poverty; food poverty; household bills; and health and wellbeing. We agreed to utilise our existing Food Prosperity Network and Health and Wellbeing Forum and their respective membership to convey information, advice and support available to individuals, as well as gather intelligence around support being offered by member organisations.



"I wanted to thank you again for the role you undertake - in both reforming practice at a local level, and sharing insights to reform policy at a national level - to eliminate hunger from Merthyr Tydfil." Andrew Forsey National Director, Feeding Britain



Added value through project-funded work

We enhance our core capacity with additional staff delivering against particular project areas; some grant funded and some with Service Agreements. The outline of all projects align with our overarching core business.

These projects contribute to our engagement with individuals in the community, our members and our partners. Their work this year includes:

Community Coordinator: via Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Integration Fund (RIF)

The Community Coordinator providing support to those aged 50+ to access services and activities in the community to benefit their health and wellbeing.

What we achieved:

- Received **344** referrals (**23%** increase on the previous year)
- Made **213** referrals
- **191** signposts to third sector support

We are witnessing a greater complexity in the referrals being received, where mental health issues are routinely more prevalent. Investment in additional and specific training for our Community Coordinator has been key.

Comments from Community Coordinator project (social prescribing):

- *I'm sorry to phone and moan at you but I feel comfortable talking to you, and when I'm talking to you I get my head straight... there's no point in keeping this stress all to myself. Now I need support!*
- *I attended the group and really enjoyed it, and met up with some people that I knew 70 years ago. Wonderful!*
- *There was no support and then you rang and now I have so much going on I get confused by it all, I'm not complaining it's just boom and there the support was!*

Mental Health: Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Two roles, covering both service user/ carer involvement and development, work in partnership with equivalent roles in both Bridgend and RCT Voluntary Councils to provide a regional response to the mental health agenda.



A key focus in Merthyr Tydfil has been bringing attention to the mental health agenda by hosting networking events and promoting local activities/ services during Mental Health Awareness Week, mapping and engaging with individuals and groups to establish interest in a Service User Involvement network. Also, successfully developing a film to show volunteering as a positive impact on mental health.

Calon Las Community Hub: via Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Localised to the environs of Calon Las Community Hub for benefit to those living and/or working within the Gurnos area of the Borough. This Officer provides a range of information, advice and support for group development; funding and involvement with local activities, as well as managing the social media accounts for Calon Las.

Local Implementation Lead: via Lloyds Bank Foundation England and Wales:

This part-time role provided connection between Lloyds Bank Foundation Development Team and local partners, to progress the LBFEW work around systems change and children and young people's mental health.

This secondment concluded at the end of Q2 when the incumbent returned to their substantive role and this gave opportunity for Lloyds Bank Foundation England and Wales to reassess the work programme with partners.

VAMT has agreed to host a new full-time Local Implementation Lead role for 2023-24 to continue this collaboration.

Tackling Loneliness and Isolation Development Officer: via RIF

The role aligns to the Public Services Board's theme of tackling loneliness and isolation and a key feature of the role has been the collaboration with Public Service partners, eg, Fire Service, who identify lonely/isolated individuals and refer them to the Tackling Loneliness and Isolation Development Officer as a conduit to Community / Wellbeing Coordinators within CVCs.

Recruitment has proven incredibly difficult and the post has been largely vacant during the year.

Plans for future periods

Our core priorities will include:

Governance:

- Providing information, advice and support to our members and their trustees on effective governance.
- Reviewing our own organisation's approach to Trustee Recruitment, Training and Development.

Sustainable Funding:

- Working with funders of our existing project staff to sustain services.
- Working with new funders to increase the support available to our members and communities.

Engagement and Influence:

- Continued facilitation of a range of third sector networks to provide engagement opportunities for both our members and our partners.
- Ongoing representation of the sector at Strategic Partnerships and Planning Groups at a National / Regional and Local level.
- Collaboration with Interlink RCT and BAVO in relation to regional partnerships and joint service delivery across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg footprint.

Volunteering:

- Providing information, advice and support to people wishing to volunteer
- Supporting organisations who wish to benefit from volunteer involvement and/or undertake corporate volunteering activities.

Statement of Financial Activities

Including Income and Expenditure Account

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2022
	£	£	£	£
Income from:				
Charitable activities	295,513	640,459	935,972	971,538
Other activities	58,347	-	58,347	42,631
Investments	4,468	-	4,468	2,435
Total income	358,328	640,459	998,787	1,016,604
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	384,954	635,416	1,020,370	867,874
Net gains/(losses) on investments	(3,273)	-	(3,273)	6,886
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers	(29,899)	5,043	(24,856)	155,616
Gross transfers between funds	86,257	(86,257)	-	-
Net movement in funds	56,358	(81,214)	(24,856)	155,616
Fund balances at 1 April 2022	751,493	209,570	961,063	805,447
Fund balances at 31 March 2023	807,851	128,356	936,207	961,063

Balance Sheet

AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets				
Tangible assets		80,148		81,731
Investments		84,020		87,293
		164,168		169,024
Current Assets				
Debtors	38,250		164,965	
Cash at bank and in hand	776,422		668,755	
	814,672		833,720	
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(42,633)		(41,681)	
Net Current Assets		772,039		792,039
Total assets less current liabilities		936,207		961,063
Income funds				
Restricted funds		128,356		209,570
Unrestricted funds		807,851		751,493
		936,207		961,063

Trustees and Charity Administration

Board of Trustees 2022-2023

Suzanne Davies
Tanya Edwards
Dr Hefin Jones OBE
Nicola Mahoney
Kayleigh Nor-Val
Anne Roberts MBE
Michael Ronan

Company Secretary	Sharon Richards
Charity & Company Name	Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil
Company Registration Number	6058360
Charity Registration Number	1118403
Banker	HSBC, 127-128 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8DN
Auditors	Mitchell Meredith Ltd, St David's House, 48 Free Street, Brecon, Powys LD3 7BN