

## AGM 2023

This year's AGM was held at Merthyr Tydfil Football Club on 28th September, and was officially opened by His Worship the Mayor, Cllr Malcolm Colbran who during his address highlighted the extreme challenges of recent years due to austerity, the pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis. He then recognised that 'VAMT's continuing work in supporting the voluntary and community sector to deal with these challenges has become increasingly important' and gave thanks to all the VAMT team for their extensive work and commitment.

Guest speaker Mark Brace, Head of Wales Safer Communities Network, and Chair of Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board (PSB), presented information on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; work of the PSB and its connection with the third sector. Mark explained that a PSB priority going forward is to raise awareness of their work via an extensive engagement plan which will include developing links to third sector organisations with support from VAMT. An event will be held in November to progress this.

The event was sponsored by Melrose IT Solutions to whom we are grateful.





## Recognising those that make a difference to community sport and physical activity!



### *Do you know someone who can be our next winner?*

As part of Active Merthyr's Volunteering Programme we want to celebrate the contribution of all sports volunteers throughout the borough. Therefore, every month we will select a volunteer who has made a significant contribution to a sports club/physical activity setting within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

The winner will receive a framed certificate, a £100 supermarket gift voucher, entry into Volunteer of the Year Award and they will also be featured across all Active Merthyr's social media platforms.

#### Process

- On the 1st of each month the nomination forms go live for 2 weeks
- 3rd week of the month the panel meet to select a winner of that month
- 4th week the winner will be presented with a framed certificate and a £100 supermarket voucher during their community session. They will also get publicised via Active Merthyr's social media platforms.

#### Nomination Criteria

To be eligible to win the volunteer of the month the following criteria will/must be followed;

- Individuals cannot be nominated by themselves, a family member or anyone sitting on the selection panel
- The nominee must have volunteered within Merthyr Tydfil
- The nominee must have at least 6 months volunteering experience
- The nominator must have known the nominee for at least 6 months
- Paid workers are not eligible for the reward
- Personal details provided on all nomination forms may be used for the winner to be publicised on social media. If you are not willing for any information to be shared in this way or if you do not wish media organisations to contact the nominee or nominator, please contact Active Merthyr before completing the nomination form
- All information must be up to date and provide an accurate and honest representation of the nominee
- If the nominee is unsuccessful, you are welcome to re-submit the nomination for the next month
- The panel will select the winner based only what's written on the nomination form
- The panel's decision is final

To apply please follow the link below or follow Active Merthyr on social media.

English form - <https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/do-it-online/request-or-apply/active-merthyr-volunteer-of-the-month-nomination-form/?lang=en-GB&>

Welsh form - <https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/do-it-online/request-or-apply/active-merthyr-volunteer-of-the-month-nomination-form/?lang=cy-GB&>

@ActiveMerthyr

@ActiveMerthyr

email: [Active.MerthyrTydfil@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:Active.MerthyrTydfil@merthyr.gov.uk)

[www.activemerthyr.co.uk](http://www.activemerthyr.co.uk)

Here are the winners so far this year



Alex Bateman, Treharris Athletic Western FC Mini and Junior - July Volunteer of the Month



David Cope, Merthyr Tydfil Squash Club - August Volunteer of the Month



Joanne Jones, Merthyr Tydfil Swimming Club - September Volunteer of the Month



Peter Thomas, Penydarren Boys & Girls (Football) - October Volunteer of the Month

## Hot off the Press!

### The National Lottery Community Fund to double the amount of funding available to grassroots projects from late Autumn !

National Lottery Awards for All will be **doubling** the amount groups can apply for from £10,000 to **£20,000** and doubling the term from 1 year to **2 years** with these changes coming into effect from Autumn this year.



The UK's largest community funder unveils its new strategy and first new funding moves. The strategic shift sees a significant boost for grassroots community groups while The National Lottery Community Fund says a focus going forward will be on four key missions where it wants its funding to make the biggest impact:

'Turbo charging' support for grassroots: doubling the amount and term of funding available through flagship small grants programme, National Lottery Awards for All £15 million for a new programme to connect communities as the funder seeks to tackle some of the big social issues facing UK communities today £9 million boost for climate action, one of the funder's four key missions, bringing total investment this year to £35 million New strategy 'It starts with community' will underpin efforts to distribute at least £4 billion of National Lottery funding by 2030.

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-wales>

## Mental Health

Have Your Say Day took place on World Mental Health Day (Tuesday 10th October 2023) at our offices. It was a chance for people to come together and share their views and experiences of Mental Health services in Merthyr Tydfil.

The event was organised by the Community Mental Health team, which is made up of representatives from Cwm Taf Morgannwg health board, Merthyr County Borough Council and VAMT. The event was very well attended which may have been due to the abundance of cakes, biscuits, fruit and sweets!!

People were able to give their feedback on services in many different ways. There was a post box for suggestions, a Jamboard (digital post it notes) a word cloud and several written options including stickers and emoji's to assist with creative suggestions and solutions.

There was an option of a written survey and an online survey to complete if people were unable to attend on the day. We have received a vast number of responses and these will be shared with Welsh Government.

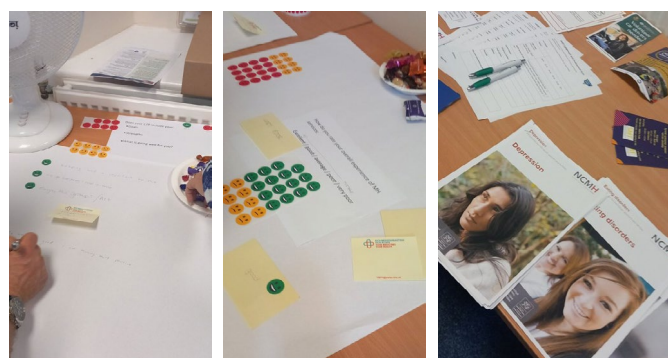
Following the event we will inform all participants of the outcome as we committed to demonstrating that people are listened to using the 'you said – we did' approach.

**We expect this to be an annual event so watch this space for the 2024 event date to be revealed.**



At VAMT we have many opportunities for people to be involved in planning, shaping and developing Mental Health services in Merthyr Tydfil. If you would like to be involved, please contact **Sharon Jones**.

[sharon.jones@vamt.net](mailto:sharon.jones@vamt.net) Mobile: 07553 102266



**Dear Paul...**

**If I could change one thing about the health board or service, what would it be?**

**Dear Lisa...**

More psychological therapy

Smoking area in Royal Glamorgan Hospital for patients who are detained under MH act

funding for groups

funding for all services for more staff and support

Not to be so isolated

Better transport links

More targeted in person groups

more funding in mental health

More community housing

group debates for subjects that people find important

crisis suit in PCH is not confidential everyone can hear your conversation

less use of antipsychotics

See the same doctors all the time

See the senior managers more

local history groups

More DOCTORS!!!

minibus for day trips

more contact with support workers

nothing

improve on waiting times for therapy

clozaril clinic run longer

recovery star as part of the CTP

drop in centre

more groups

relaxation groups

not such long waits to go into hospital

shorting waiting lists to see doctor

mental health focused groups

education groups for family to understand mental health

A Mental Health Hospital in Merthyr

## Knowledge Hub can give your charity the tools you need

The Knowledge Hub, a free online resource for voluntary organisations in Wales, has been updated with more information than ever.

Managed by Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW), the Knowledge Hub is a platform for people working or volunteering in the Welsh voluntary sector. Here you can access information and guidance, as well as online learning courses on a range of topics that are vital to running a successful organisation.

Click on this link for more information: [thirdsectorsupport.wales](http://thirdsectorsupport.wales)

### A big help for small organisations

A big part of the voluntary sector in Wales is made up of smaller organisations, which face their own unique challenges. With this in mind TSSW has launched [new guidance and information aimed specifically at small organisations](#).

From guidance on governance and safeguarding, to sustainable funding, working with volunteers and more, all of this has been designed with the aim of helping you run your organisation.

This won't just benefit smaller organisations though. TSSW, a network of support organisations comprising of WCVA and County Voluntary Councils (CVCs), can help all sorts of organisations in the Welsh voluntary sector, with learning and information as well as help with finding funding, safeguarding advice and more.

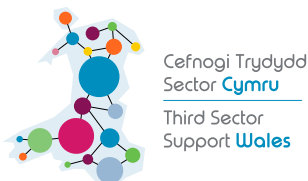
### A resource for learning

As well as new advice and guidance pages, there are also free online courses on a number of subjects, from developing a fundraising strategy to explaining the safeguarding responsibilities of your staff – all of which you're free to complete at your own pace, anywhere, any time.

The Your Networks section of the website also lets you connect with people working all throughout the sector in Wales, and is a place where you can start conversations, ask questions and share ideas to help and learn from each other.

This all comes with improvements to the site and updates to content that make it easier to find the information you're looking for.

[Register for free today](#) and you can stay informed, improve your knowledge and connect with others.



## ABOUT THIRD SECTOR SUPPORT WALES



[Watch the video >](#)

Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales. The network consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). TSSW is improving how it provides services digitally, and is committed to ensuring its digital platforms are inclusive and bi-lingual.

Other TSSW digital platforms include:

#### [Funding Wales](#)

Funding Wales is a free tool to help voluntary organisations find funding for their cause. You can search hundreds of grant and loan finance opportunities from local, national and international sources, from small grants to large capital projects.

#### [infoengine](#)

infoengine is the directory of third sector services in Wales. infoengine highlights a wide variety of excellent voluntary and community services that are able to provide information and support so that you can make an informed choice.

#### [Volunteering Wales](#)

Volunteering Wales is a digital volunteering platform. The platform hosts hundreds of volunteering opportunities from across Wales in one place, making it easy to find and recruit volunteers – or start on your own volunteering journey.



## Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club sailor receives a Lifetime Commitment Award from the Royal Yachting Association (RYA)

**Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club are delighted to announce that Mark Govier has been awarded a Lifetime Commitment Award from the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) in recognition of his outstanding voluntary commitment to Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club (MTSC) over the course of his lifetime.**

**The annual RYA Volunteer Awards recognise all those who have made a difference in helping others get on the water, contributing to the sport across the UK.**

Mark's journey with MTSC started in the 1970s/80s as a young person with a passion for sailing. Over the years, he has made significant contributions to the club, serving on the committee and driving its growth from humble beginnings to a well-known sailing club in Wales and England. In the 1990s, Mark took up the role of Secretary and became an ambassador of the club, dedicating his spare time to help novices, both young and old, learn how to sail after obtaining his sailing instructor licence.

Mark has become a central figure in the sailing club, organising events for the club every year and establishing partnerships with external agencies. Mark freely shares his passion and knowledge for sailing with novice and seasoned sailors alike. The club has also benefited greatly from his professional electrical engineering background.

Mark has shown exemplary leadership and a lifelong commitment to boating. Making a difference, helping others get on the water and contributing to the sport. Mark has consistently delivered 100% commitment to the club, always with a smile.

Upon receiving this award Mark said " I am honoured to receive the RYA Lifetime Commitment Award. I have been helping in the running of MTSC for over 30 years, and have seen first-hand the impact, sometimes small, sometimes large, that our sport can have on people's lives. I am grateful for the support of my family, friends and club members who have helped me achieve this milestone. I will continue to work hard to promote sailing and am committed to helping the next generation of sailors achieve their dreams".



Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club is set in the idyllic Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons National Park), making it a stunning place to sail, with breathtaking scenery. If you are interested in finding out more about sailing please contact the club via our website <https://www.mtsc.org.uk>



## Merthyr Tydfil Borough Credit Union

**Merthyr Tydfil Borough Credit Union was set up in 1998 by a volunteer steering group to tackle social and financial exclusion due to the prevalence of payday lenders and residents becoming victims of loan sharks (unlicensed lenders).**

The Credit Union (MTBCU) offers affordable loans and savings accounts guided by values to provide the community with safe, convenient savings and affordable loans. We pride ourselves on offering everyone a fair deal regardless of your financial background.

Since 1998, we've grown to almost 3,500 Members including 1,500 junior Members and we now offer our services to those living and working in Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

When a member deposits money into savings, these are then used to make loans to other Credit Union members. Any profits made during the financial year is shared equally to our members by way of dividend (T&Cs apply).

Unlike banks, we're owned and controlled by our members and encourage all members to have their say on how the Credit Union should be run by attending our AGM. MTBCU is covered by the FSCS exactly the same as banks & building societies.



## What We Do?

It's free to join and our Savings accounts include adult and junior, Christmas, Rainy Day and Prize Saver where you can win up to £5,000 each month.

Our Loans are tailored for all needs, they include a standard loan, a family loan that's paid back with Child Benefit, a low rate secured loan Members can have against their Credit Union savings and debt consolidation loans.

The Credit Union has online banking and we have recently rolled out an App for our Members making checking balances, transferring money and applying for loans more convenient.

We're also part of MoneyWorks Wales, an employee loans and savings scheme that deducts money directly from their pay helping them manage their money better.

We're keen to teach the next generation about money and get them into good financial habits which is why we run a School Savings scheme where primary school children save weekly. The scheme is run by volunteers and supported by Credit Union staff.



To join the Credit Union or find out more about the range of services we offer check out our website [www.mtbcu.org.uk](http://www.mtbcu.org.uk).

The Credit Union is open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 2.30pm at 139 High Street in Merthyr Tydfil.



## Hope Church - Out For An Hour

Out for an hour is a twice weekly friendship group held in the basement of Hope Church every term time Monday and Thursday from 10am-11.30am.

We welcome anyone over the age of 18 who is lonely, isolated, or would just like to get out of the house.

We are Dementia Friendly and a registered Warm Space, which will continue through the coming winter season.

We love any excuse for cake, and always have plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits. We are a free group, with voluntary donations towards refreshments welcome.

As well as a good cuppa and a chat we have art, craft, board and card games, knitting, crochet, felting, music, Wi-Fi and more.

In this autumn term we've been making autumnal decorations using painted printing leaves to go on the hand made wreaths.



We've also held a MacMillan Coffee Morning to raise money for this cause which is close to a lot of our members' hearts.

Access the basement through the middle doors at the front of the building, using the lift or stairs.

Our lovely volunteers will give you a very warm welcome. If you'd like any further information please give **Heidi** a call on **07790 801686**.



## Hope Pantry likes to be prepared!



**This Christmas if you can donate any of the items for the 12 Days of Christmas appeal, they would be very appreciated.**

Please drop items into Hope Pantry when you pass, the building is open for donations on

**Mondays & Thursday 9-12pm**

**Tuesday & Friday 9-3pm.**

Christmas can be a difficult time for many who are on a tight budget. Hope Pantry are collecting items to make the festive period a little easier.

If you can donate any of these items to Pantry by 1st of December, we would be very pleased to receive them!

- 1 Biscuits (Tin/Box)
- 2 Chocolates
- 3 Sweets
- 4 Crisps/ Snacks (No Nuts)
- 5 Gravy
- 6 Cranberry Sauce
- 7 Pickles
- 8 Jam/ Marmalade
- 9 Corned Beef
- 10 Chocolate Spread
- 11 Custard
- 12 Squash/ Juice/ Pop

hope church merthyr

High Street  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 8UG  
07790801686

**12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS**

hopepantry@  
hopemerthyr.org.uk

Give **Heidi** a call on **07790 801686** with any queries.



## NEW HORIZONS

New Horizons are joining the mental health study with University College London and The Retreat Clinics.

The study is testing mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) delivered via virtual reality (VR) - <https://youtu.be/sUFRwHGqBXg>



If you are a adult anxiety or depressive symptoms and would like to take part in the home based study or would like to know more information about the study contact us at:

✉ [info@newhorizons-mentalhealth.co.uk](mailto:info@newhorizons-mentalhealth.co.uk)  
 ☎ 01685 881113  
 🌐 [newhorizons-mentalhealth.org.uk](http://newhorizons-mentalhealth.org.uk)



## NEW HORIZONS

### Managing Anxiety

**Starting Thursday 9th November 2023**

**12.30pm - 3pm**

**for 6 Weeks**

**At the Red House Merthyr Tydfil**



To sign up for the course please contact us on the below details or scan the QR code

✉ [info@newhorizons-mentalhealth.co.uk](mailto:info@newhorizons-mentalhealth.co.uk)  
 ☎ 01685 881113  
 🌐 [newhorizons-mentalhealth.org.uk](http://newhorizons-mentalhealth.org.uk)



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



## Taff Bargoed Development Trust



### The Helen Thomas Community Fund and who we've supported this year.

The Helen Thomas Community Fund started in 2019 when our Solar Array was created. The money generated throughout the year is then put aside by the Trust ready for grant applications. Each year the theme of the grant changes, and this ensures that every community group can have the opportunity to apply.

This year we have focused on the community and events.

Starting with Taff Bargoed Foodbank - it's scary knowing 70% of people that are utilising this resource lie within the Treharris, Trelewis and Bedlinog areas. A cost-of-living crisis, climate change affecting produce, and food prices still rising, we no doubt will see a larger increase in people joining.

We have been working closely with Alison from the Foodbank each month to donate food for the families in the area, who are struggling to cope. With the colder weather nearing, we have already seen an increase in demand from the Foodbank.

With limited funds, we would love to see support from anyone in the community who can help the Foodbank and the people in need going forward. I'm sure the Foodbank would be more than appreciative if you just popped in with any produce you can offer. A tin or two is always welcome.

We have also had the opportunity to give some other amazing donations this summer. We funded the neighbourhood watch group summer events, that over 500 people attended. We funded Treharris Community Together for another family event. We donated money towards catering for those who attended Treharris Boys and Girls Club centenary event. The Trust also donated funds in support of a new kitchen being built at Treharris Phoenix Rugby Club.

We will continue to help the community where we can in the future.

For more information on the Trust, please follow us on our Facebook page – Taff Bargoed Development Trust, or to sign up as a member via our website – [www.tbdt.co.uk](http://www.tbdt.co.uk) where you can find information on the Trust and updates.

## Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust Fundraising Quiz Night

**A "Quiz Night" will be held on Wednesday 15th November at 7pm at the West End Bowls Club, The Walk, Merthyr Tydfil.**

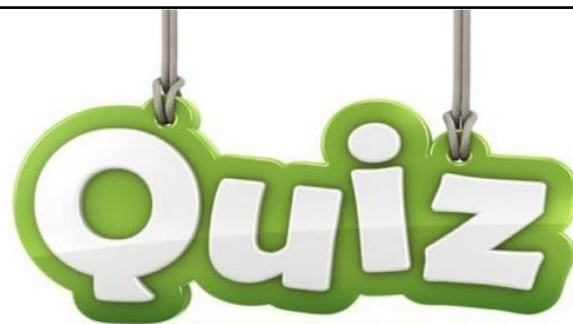
The event is to raise funds for the Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust.

The Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust is a charitable trust that supports local voluntary and community groups. It makes small grants to small groups that make a big difference to them. It only supports groups operating in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

For more information on the Trust click on [www.merthyrcommunitytrust.co.uk](http://www.merthyrcommunitytrust.co.uk). Please support us by coming along and entering a team.



If you require further information or a booking form then please contact  
**Ian Davy** on **07966 698017** or at [ian.davy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ian.davy@hotmail.co.uk)



## Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind – Chat To Me

**Chat To Me** is our new phone and online service providing advice and information to people struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

Our friendly and experienced mental health and wellbeing adviser is available to help you find the support you need.

This service operates between 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday.

Chat To Me is funded by our amazing community fundraisers and supporters. We have invested income raised to be able to provide this essential phone and email support service to people across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Our mental health and wellbeing adviser will:

- Actively listen to you and provide compassionate support
- Signpost you to services within Mind or to other services in your area
- Help you to identify the support that you need
- Help you to improve your mental health and wellbeing

 Cwm Taf Morgannwg

### Chat To Me

Our free and confidential mental health advice line is open  
Monday - Friday 10am - 4pm

**Call us on 01685 707480**

Option 1

We're a registered charity in England & Wales (No. 1123615)

- To access this service, simply call us on **01685 707480** and press **option 1** or email us at [chattome@ctmmind.org.uk](mailto:chattome@ctmmind.org.uk)

For more information, please visit our website at [www.ctmmind.org.uk](http://www.ctmmind.org.uk)





**Merthyr  
Housing**  
Where People  
Come First

**Tai Merthyr**  
Lle Daw Pobl  
yn Gyntaf

## Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association

**Cosy and Warm  
Sessions @ Kevin Ryan  
Court**



**Starting Wednesday the 3rd of  
October 10.30am to 12.30pm**

Join us each Wednesday for a Slow Cooking Session and a chance to catch up. Free Slow cooker will be provided for new members and free weekly ingredients will be provided.

Booking essential on 01685 352800 Option 0.



**Cosy and Warm  
Sessions @ Treharris**



**Starting Thursday 12th of October  
10 am – 12pm**

**@ Treharris Boys and Girls Club**

Join us every Thursday for a Slow Cooking Session and a chance to catch up. Free Slow cooker will be provided for new members and free weekly ingredients will be provided.

Booking essential on 01685 352800 Option 0.



**Cosy and Warm  
Sessions Aberfan and  
Merthyr Vale**



**Starting the Week of 2nd of October**

Join us for a weekly Slow Cooking Session and a chance to catch up. Free Slow cooker will be provided for new members and free weekly ingredients will be provided.

Booking essential on 01685 352800 Option 0.

Venue, date and time to be confirmed.



**Cosy and Warm  
Sessions @ Dowlais  
Engine House**



**Starting Monday 2nd of October  
11.30am – 1.30pm**

Join us each Monday for a Slow Cooking Session and a chance to catch up. Free Slow cooker will be provided for new members and free weekly ingredients will be provided.

Booking essential on 01685 352800 Option 0.



Thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, this autumn and winter, we can once again offer our Cosy and Warm sessions. For Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Tenants, new members will receive a free slow cooker and we will also provide those who attend with free weekly ingredients. If you are worried about your rising food and energy bills, our staff will on hand to help and support you.

Booking is essential and please let us know of any allergies of dietary requirements when you book.  
**To book, call 01685 352800.**



**Christmas Hampers 2023**

This Christmas Ty Pantri is offering great value meat, fruit and veg hampers to make your preparation that little bit easier.

### Our Christmas Hampers will be back again this year.

We have teamed up with Browns wholesalers to provide quality fresh fruit and veg and Craigs Meats for our meat hampers.

This offer is open to all those living in Merthyr Tydfil, and you are able to join our savings club to spread out the costs. You can pay by cash, card at our offices or you can pay via PayPal [mtha@mtha.org.uk](mailto:mtha@mtha.org.uk).

Those who claim healthy start vouchers, you can also use your pre-paid card to pay the costs.



3kg Turkey crown  
Pigs in blankets  
(frozen)  
Joint of beef to feed 6

All this for  
**£60**

Meat  
**£30**

#### Vegetables

Potatoes  
Mid pots  
Carrots  
Sprouts  
Parsnips  
Onions  
Swede  
Cabbage  
Broccoli  
Cauliflower

#### Fruit

Apples  
Bananas  
Grapes  
Satsumas  
Oranges  
Lemon  
Lime  
Melon

#### Salad

Lettuce  
Tomatoes  
Cucumber  
Beetroot  
Cress  
Spring Onions  
Red Onions  
Mushrooms  
Peppers

Fruit & veg subject to  
seasonality / cost



Veg  
**£30**

Ring 01685 352800 to order and set up your savings club.

Hampers must be paid for by 15/12/2023  
Pick up days and times will be confirmed

Healthy Start card payments accepted







## Friends of Nant Llwynog Park

Parks and open spaces, like Nant Llwynog, are a valuable resource for health and recreation, as well as a notable resource for wildlife and biodiversity. They are also an educational facility and it is encouraging when schools and youth groups attend to discover their secrets. There are more visits now to the park since it is more welcoming and has so many interesting features. In this respect, we were delighted that the site won the Green Flag Award 2023/24. It is for the fifth consecutive year, and is a Keep Wales Tidy initiative in which we are always pleased to take part. The Award has a number of key criteria which we have to meet each year in order to pass the vital tests.



We also planted some more fruit trees near the entrance, being rare varieties of apple, pear, plum, cherries and damson. This was again with the support of Cwm Taf Nature Partnership, and we thank them for it. It has added immeasurably to the facilities at the park and there will be more in the future.



We look to provide some raised planters soon which will allow children and adults to plant flowers and vegetables for themselves and create more areas for bees and other pollinators. At all times, we work closely with the Borough Council to meet the objectives of their Open Spaces Strategy and those of the Community Council. We thank them for their helpful cooperation.

The influx of school visits has included year 4 and year 11 pupils and they have all been given tasks to do, with prizes for the winners. These are all nature based as are the quizzes we set for them. They allow the children to learn and understand concepts about natural history and conservation as well as sustainability and evolution. Outdoor classrooms create a different environment in which they can play and learn.



This year we have improved the access to the site by upgrading the pathways with new material, stone dust, kindly provided by the Cwm Taf Nature Partnership. Also the top wooden bridge needed repairs as steps were broken. This has now been improved with a new ramp, allowing access by wheelchairs and buggies. The work was entirely done by a small team of volunteers, with expert support. It has also helped with regular visitors and rambler groups.



**For more information please contact**  
[edawson1215@gmail.com](mailto:edawson1215@gmail.com)



## New Pathways

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September, New Pathways were delighted to present **'It Takes 30 Years': The Sexual Violence Conference**. The event invited survivors, experts and professionals to come together and share their knowledge and experience, both as a celebration of New Pathways' 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to promote awareness of the challenges that still lie ahead.

The day began with a welcome from CEO, Jackie Stamp and Deputy CEO, Mike Wilkinson. Throughout the day, guests were treated to informative discussions from experts in the sector, with insightful and powerful talks from two survivors.



*Conference delegates*



*Umbrella Cymru Information and Stand*



*CEO, Jackie Stamp, welcoming guests to the Sexual Violence conference*

### Guests

The Sexual Violence Conference was not only an opportunity to celebrate the work of those in the sector, but also the work of organisations that help services to become more inclusive and accessible to survivors.

We were joined by staff from BAWSO, who provides specialist support to survivors of domestic and other forms abuse from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds; Umbrella Cymru, the gender and sexual diversity support specialists; Stori, who deliver the Spectrum Project, a whole school approach to healthy relationships; Stepping Stones (all the way from North Wales), who offer free counselling and informative resources to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and Cyfannol Women's Aid, which supports survivors of VAWDASV from across Gwent.



*Support staff from New Pathways*

### Workshops

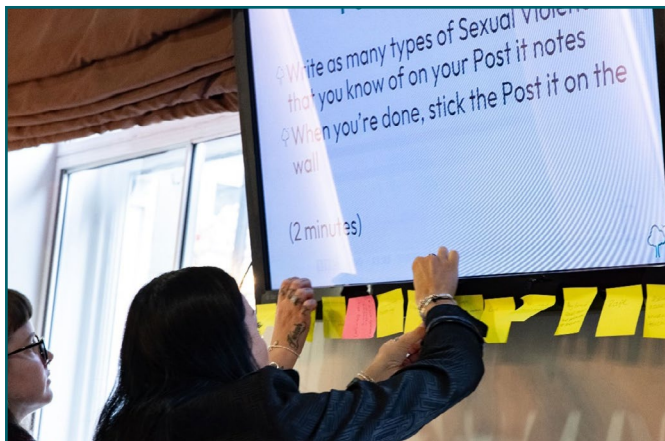
Along with the presentations, there were also five workshops covering a variety of topics relating to sexual violence, with specialist staff leading discussions in their area of the sector. They included:

- Survivor Panel Discussions: How can it take 30 years or more to disclose? What can be done differently to support survivors of sexual abuse?
- Preventing Future Harm: How do we address Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Children and Young People?
- Welsh Sexual Assault Services Programme: Shaping the Future of Sexual Violence Services
- Dealing with Disclosures: What to do when someone shares an experience of sexual violence
- Older People and Sexual Violence



*WSAS Welsh Sexual Assault Services Programme Workshop*

*"It was such a privilege to be a part of the survivor panel, we had such valuable discussions. The part that will stay with me was the talk surrounding the responsibility survivors feel they have to shoulder to advocate for themselves and find help, whilst also feeling the impacts of trauma. I came away feeling passionate about how we need to help ease that burden as a society and make help more readily available."* - Rosie Johnson, Client Voice Development Officer for New Pathways, Facilitator of the Survivor Panel Discussions



*Dealing with Disclosures Workshop*

*"The key messages from our Dealing with Disclosures workshop were to emphasise that; "You are safe - You are believed - You are in control." We had some interesting conversations and discussions including why myths around rape and sexual violence are still believed and perpetuated, how this makes it more difficult for a victim-survivor to disclose and how we can break down these barriers. Many delegates expressed that it was great to hear that they are doing the right thing for their clients."* - Rhianydd Lewis, Social Care Trainer at New Pathways, Facilitator of Dealing with Disclosures



*Bethan Dear with the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Councillor Bablin Molik, who came to present the awards(right)*

## The Pathways Awards

The New Pathways Awards were founded to recognise the hard work, passion, dedication and vision of individuals and teams who have made a significant contribution to the sexual violence sector. There were five categories;

- **Award for Individual Excellence in SV Support:** Winner – Sally Howells, Highly Commended – Police Constable (Gwent) Ceri Lloyd and Detective Chief Superintendent (South Wales) Phil Sparrow
- **Strategic Impact Award:** Winner – Johanna Robinson, Highly Commended – VAWDASV Coordinators and Moondance Foundation
- **Team/ Project Award for Excellence in SV Support:** Winner – Sexual Violence & Misconduct Support Service, Aberystwyth University, Highly Commended - The Support, Wellbeing, Advocacy, Enablement (SWAN) Project; Swansea University Welfare Team; the ISO Accreditation Team and the Sexual Violence & Misconduct Support Service, Aberystwyth University
- **Pathways Innovation Award:** Winner – Bethan Dear, Highly Commended - The Sexual Violence & Misconduct Support Service, Aberystwyth University and Lilith Gough
- **Libby Jones Outstanding Contribution Award:** Winner – Detective Chief Superintendent (South Wales Police) Phil Sparrow, Highly Commended – Chief Constable (Gwent Police) Pam Kelly and Helen Gordon



*All the winners*



## Rotary Club of Merthyr Tydfil

On the 12th August we took up 3 tables in a "Table Top Sale" at All Saints church hall Dowlais. It was a good occasion meeting friends, old and new, and selling goods donated by members for our charity funds. It raised the sum of £140. Thanks to all those who organised the event.



On the 4th Sept Clive Pugh was presented with a new Rotary neck tie by Colin Parker having complained the previous week that his tie was 40yrs old.



If anyone is interested in joining Rotary or attending a meeting will they please contact Ian Hopkins on 01685 384413 Mob 07920131582 or [ianjudymerthyr@gmail.com](mailto:ianjudymerthyr@gmail.com)



### Rotary

MERTHYR TYDFIL  
District 1150



On the 11th September we had a visit from our District Governor for 2023/4, Mary Adams. She spoke to the members about the many projects being undertaken by various clubs and the promotion of Rotary International President Gordon MacInally's aim of "CREATE HOPE in the WORLD". Various members gave reports of projects that we as a club are actively involved with, such as the Merthyr and Cynon Foodbank, and the maintenance of the Macmillan, the Butterfly and the old Dementia gardens at Prince Charles Hospital.



Picture shows Mary Adams visiting the gardens with Tony Williams and Peter Brill. Rtn Huw Williams gave her a vote of thanks as the official Town Crier.

## Snakes 'N' Ladders- The Other Pandemic - What is happening?

We're excited to update you on the work of 'Snakes 'N' Ladders – The Other Pandemic', which is a five-year Lottery funded project. The project is partnered with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, Barnardo's Cymru, Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum and more recently, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and the Lloyds Bank Foundation.

It is with great excitement and a sense of achievement that we have completed the first year of the project, the research and 'listening' phase. We work in coproduction with a cohort of young people aged 11-25 years of age who formed a Youth Advisory Panel. They consulted with their peers about their experiences of mental health, wellbeing, and resilience, by asking questions in a variety of schools and youth settings across the borough. The purpose of the consultations was to identify the challenges faced by young people, and changes that need to be made.

We gained a large amount of information based on lived experiences and have formed a delivery plan based on the top priorities identified by young people.

All partners are fully committed to supporting the plan and to continue working together with young people into the next stage; where we test and pilot some of the ideas and solutions they proposed. We recognise that 'the plan' is not set in stone and will have to be fluid depending on what occurs over time.

As a partnership, working directly with young people, we will test theories and potentially make legacy change across the borough.

If your organisation is involved in working with or supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing, please register an interest in joining us for the sharing of the key messages from the first year of the project at our 'Snakes 'N' Ladders – The Other Pandemic Conference Event on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at the Orbit Centre Merthyr Tydfil.

***'The young people would love to share their voice and the next steps of the project with you.'***

**Please contact Hayley Pandolfo ([Hayley.pandolfo@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:Hayley.pandolfo@merthyr.gov.uk)) to register interest and find out more information.**

### Acknowledgement:

As a result of the wonderful work Samee Furreed completed as the Chairperson of the Youth Advisory Panel, in June 2023 Samee was awarded the 'Volunteer of the Year' award at the VAMT Volunteer Recognition Awards.



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
County Borough Council





## Home Start Cymru, the National Charity with a local heart, supporting families across Wales.



Home Start offers support, friendship and practical help to parents with young children in the local community. To help give children the best possible start in life, Home Start supports parents as they grow in confidence, strengthen their relationship with their children and widen their links with the local community. Family pressures can sometimes be difficult to manage without emotional and practical support around you.

Home Start Cymru volunteers understand how hard it can be to be a parent. They work alongside parents in their own homes, helping them to cope with the stresses and strains of life.

They make sure parents have the skills, confidence and strength they need to nurture their children. Our volunteers are trained and are given support and guidance from our highly skilled and experienced volunteer team and local coordinators in their area.

Volunteering is a great way to use your skills and meet new people, while making a difference to families. Our volunteers provide companionship, a listening ear, offer compassion and support to families. You don't have to have a child of your own to get involved, you simply have to care.

As a volunteer, you will support families with individual one-to-one home visiting or remotely, through weekly contact and a wide range of targeted support for parents and their children.

Can you spare 2-3 hours per week to make a difference?

**For further information, please contact:**  
[volunteering@homestartcymru.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@homestartcymru.org.uk)

*'Thank you so very much to the Home-Start Cymru Volunteer Team, for their fabulous guidance and training to become a volunteer. They made my journey stress free and easy to navigate. I am so looking forward to supporting a family!'*

*'So grateful for the experience and all the support I received during volunteering for Home-Start Cymru. I would recommend to anyone that they join the organisation, I will be singing Home-Start Cymru's praises!'*

## South Wales Valleys Samaritans

Do you have a few hours to spare each week? Volunteer with us and, as a Samaritan volunteer, you'll be there for people when it matters most.

The South Wales Valleys hub of Samaritans is based in Merthyr for phone shifts, but carry out outreach activities, aimed at raising awareness, all over the South Wales Valleys. There are lots of ways you can volunteer for Samaritans, it all depends on your strengths, the areas you're interested in, and how much time you've got to give.

- Samaritans is a charity working in the UK and Ireland to reduce the number of people who die by suicide and help those struggling to cope.
- Samaritans' vision is that fewer people die by suicide.
- Every day, Samaritans volunteers respond to around 10,000 calls for help.

Do something you're proud of - Ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Volunteer with us, click [here](#) to find out more and apply.



## Volunteering in action at Railway Café Tea Rooms, at Dowlais Community Centre

The Railway Café Tea Rooms is based at Dowlais Community Centre with peaceful views of the surrounding area and Dowlais Community Centre Green Flag award winning garden which is a hub in the community for local residents.



The Railway Café Tea Rooms works closely with Merthyr College. The learners studying Independent Living Skills participate in work experience and access a range of community facilities to increase their skills, to work towards supported employment, or where appropriate employment without support. The placement has enabled the learners to gain Level 2 Food Hygiene and work experience. This has boosted many of the learner's confidence and some have gained placements at the local hospital. One of the learners has continued to volunteer with the Railway Café Tea Rooms since leaving college.



The Railway Café Tea Rooms also works closely with Dowlais Primary School to give work experience to pupils from Years 5 and 6. The learners can serve customers with the guidance and support from the Railway Café Tea Rooms staff.

The Café hosts the Carers STAR Project which is run by Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind. The group provides support and assistance to adult carers living in Merthyr Tydfil. The project provides information and advice and can signpost carers to a range of other local services. The project works with carers on a one-to-one basis and hosts a carers get together for a coffee, cake and a chat every Thursday 2pm – 4pm

**If you would like to volunteer in the Railway Café Tea Rooms call 01685 377688 or email [emma.leonard@stephensandgeorge.co.uk](mailto:emma.leonard@stephensandgeorge.co.uk)**

## Volunteer at Dowlais Community Centre – make the difference in your community.

Dowlais Community Centre is currently actively looking for volunteers to help us with a number of projects, these include our #nophonesorcomputers afterschool clubs and holiday discovery club.

These may be of interest to students or an individual who has free time or wants to gain experience as well as the opportunity to meet new people.

To thank volunteers for their time we offer benefits such as a free gym membership for the on-site community gym as well as opportunities to attend trips and training which will grow skills and experiences.

We also have volunteer positions for our growing community gym. We have a variety of machines of which a good percentage of members will need help utilizing. Our volunteers are always on hand to help and advice customers and ensure the gym is as clean and as safe as possible.

Other opportunities include volunteering at our Book Shop, Gardens, Café and Admin/Reception.



**If you would like to find out more about these opportunities, please contact us on 01685 377688 or email [charity1@stephensandgeorge.co.uk](mailto:charity1@stephensandgeorge.co.uk)**



## Could you support someone over 50 who is feeling isolated and lonely?

**welcome**  
**friends**  
**cyfeillion**  
**croesawgar**

Our Welcome Friends project urgently needs volunteers in Merthyr. Could you spare an hour a week to visit and befriend a lonely, isolated elderly person? We provide training and regular support as well as travel expenses.



— “ —  
We both look forward to meeting each other and having a chat and a good laugh!”  
— ” —

- Evelyn, 93

### Get in touch!



[01495 366062](tel:01495366062) || [07377 692404](tel:07377692404)



[welcome.friends@volunteermatters.org.uk](mailto:welcome.friends@volunteermatters.org.uk)

**VOLUNTEERING** **MATTERS**

## HEARTBEAT 95

**Could you take on the role as a Treasurer?**

Heartbeat '95 is a local registered charity formed to support the Cardiac Rehabilitation Services at Prince Charles Hospital. It is affiliated to the British Heart Foundation. It supports the Cardiac Service by helping to fund exercise classes and provide financial support for specialised exercise instructors for the classes within the community and to provide specialised equipment for these classes.

Our classes are at the Willows, Troedyrhiw and the Michael Sobell Leisure Centre in Aberdare.

Our classes are also open to members of the public who have no cardiac problems but feel they would benefit from a regular exercise programme. We are looking for someone who would be willing to help us out as Treasurer.

For further information please telephone

**Alun Quartermaine, Chairperson on 07779 209354, or Philip Sands, Secretary on 07415 605039**



## Would you like to volunteer in Merthyr:

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council currently hold  
two volunteer sessions:  
10am-12pm  
Wednesday/Thursdays**

Various tasks can include meadow/woodland management, tree planting, bulb planting, weeding, invasive work, seat/sign installation etc.

**Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear to every session.**

If you have some spare time and would like to help out please email:

[gillian.hampson@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.hampson@merthyr.gov.uk)

## Volunteer with Llamau

Llamau is a leading Homeless Charity in Wales supporting the most vulnerable young people and women. We are particularly well known for working with those most at risk, care leavers, people who have been involved in the criminal justice system, people who have experienced domestic abuse and people who have had chaotic and disadvantaged lifestyles.

**Llamau**

Imagine a World Without  
Homelessness

## The Helpline

In 2019 the Youth Homelessness Helpline was launched after several youth homelessness charities came together to form **End Youth Homelessness Cymru**.

It is the first out-of-hours helpline for young people run in partnership with Shelter Cymru. It is one project within the early identification, intervention and engagement services at Llamau. These services are right at the heart of the mission to end youth homelessness in Wales.

The Youth Homeless Helpline is there to provide a friendly, holistic service to young people during a very frightening and confusing time.

The Youth Homeless Helpline relies on volunteers to ensure that we can be there for young people when they need it the most. We are looking for volunteers who are driven to end youth homelessness in Wales. The circumstances surrounding a young person's homeless situation could be dictated by a number of reasons, so you need to be a good listener with an empathetic, non-judgmental approach.

Full training and ongoing support is provided.

For more information please contact [KatieVawdrey@llamau.org.uk](mailto:KatieVawdrey@llamau.org.uk)



## CWTCH CYMRU

(Communities Working Together Can Help)

### VOLUNTEER WITH US TODAY

Help us to make a difference and push back against arthritis.

- Lead volunteers
- General support volunteers
- Support volunteers
- Engagement volunteers
- Social media and communications volunteers
- Volunteer speakers



**CYMRU  
VERSUS  
ARTHRITIS**



Supporting people living with arthritis

[walesvolunteering@versusarthritis.org](mailto:walesvolunteering@versusarthritis.org)

0800 756 3970

[www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org)

Versus Arthritis: Registered Charity England and Wales No. 207711, Scotland No. SC041156.  
Versus Arthritis: Eusen Gofrestredig yng Nghymru a Lloegr Rhif 207711, Yr Alban Rhif. SC041156.

### Spread the Word in Your Community: Carers Wales are recruiting Volunteer Champions



Carers Wales are recruiting volunteer Community Champions. As a Community Champion, you will help connect carers to valuable support and information by distributing Carers Wales materials (leaflets, factsheets, posters) across your local community, and host information stands in community spaces. Raising awareness across your community, will help us to reach more unpaid carers in Wales and make them aware of the support and services available to them. This volunteering role is remote (Wales wide) flexible and fully supported.

To find out more visit: [Volunteer with Us](#) [Community Champion](#)  
or email [volunteer@carerswales.org](mailto:volunteer@carerswales.org)

## CTM Mental Health Forum

**December meeting - in person.**  
**Dates to be confirmed**

To join the Forum or for more information contact [sharon.jones@vamt.net](mailto:sharon.jones@vamt.net)

## Health and Wellbeing Forum

**At the Voluntary Action Centre, 10am - 12pm**  
**Wednesday 15th November**  
**Wednesday 21st February 2024**

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.

To join the Forum or for more information contact [lesley.hodgson@vamt.net](mailto:lesley.hodgson@vamt.net)

## The Children, Young People & Families Forum

**At the Voluntary Action Centre, 10am - 12pm**  
**Thursday 14th December**  
**Thursday 14th March 2024**

To join the Forum or for more information contact [ian.howell-morgan@vamt.net](mailto:ian.howell-morgan@vamt.net)

## Volunteer Managers' Forum

**At the Voluntary Action Centre, 10am - 12pm**  
**Wednesday 13th December**  
**Wednesday 20th March**

To join the Forum or for more information contact [frances.barry@vamt.net](mailto:frances.barry@vamt.net)

## Merthyr Tydfil Food Prosperity Network

**via Teams at 10am**

**Monday 6th November**

VAMT approached in Autumn 2018 by Food Sense Wales to establish a network, focused on food poverty in Merthyr Tydfil, a partnership approach involving third and statutory sectors.

The Network has gone from strength to strength supporting affordable food provision such as Food Pantries and Food Banks to develop, support each other, share good practice and ensure a co-ordinated approach to supporting communities and families. This was particularly evident during the pandemic and now during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

To join the Network or for more information contact [karen.vowles@vamt.net](mailto:karen.vowles@vamt.net)

## The Environment & Green Prescribing Network

**via Teams 10am - 12pm**

**Tuesday 28th November**

A network which invites organisations and community-based groups working in and supporting the Merthyr Tydfil Borough, around environmental, conservation and outdoor based activity, engagement and education. Sharing and developing opportunities for green social prescribing activities for the benefit of people's health and wellbeing across the Borough. A network which invites organisations and community-based groups working in and supporting the Merthyr Tydfil Borough, around environmental, conservation and outdoor based activity, engagement and education. Sharing and developing opportunities for green social prescribing activities for the benefit of people's health and wellbeing across the Borough.

To join the Network or for more information contact [info@vamt.net](mailto:info@vamt.net)



# INFORM

VOLUNTARY  
ACTION  
GWEITHREDU  
GWIRFODDOL

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil • *Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Merthyr Tudful*

## New Staff at VAMT



**Emily Whiteman-Cranston** is the new Resilience Officer at VAMT. She commenced her role at VAMT on Monday 2nd October. She will be supporting a wide range of community groups and hubs to tackle the cost of living crisis. You can connect with Emily either via email: [emily.whiteman-cranston@vamt.net](mailto:emily.whiteman-cranston@vamt.net) or by phone on **07879 606385**.



**Ian Howell-Morgan** started in the role of Local Implementation Lead on 9th October. The role is to support Lloyds Bank Foundation's Development Team to develop and deliver their asset based 'system change' work with charities and a wide range of partners in Merthyr Tydfil. Ian will be facilitating our Children, Young People & Families Forum and is already spending time familiarising himself with the services available in Merthyr along with connecting to partners. You can connect with Ian either via email: [Ian.Howell-Morgan@vamt.net](mailto:Ian.Howell-Morgan@vamt.net) or by phone on **07766 428763**.



## Goodbye to Faye

We would like to wish a fond farewell to Faye Johnson our Mental Health Development Officer since January 2021. Faye has been instrumental in bringing partners together and raising awareness of the provision of mental health support services within the area. Although Faye leaves us for pastures new she will still be working within the 3rd sector and we have no doubt our paths will cross again.

## BLOG AND BULLETIN UPDATE

Keep up to date with all the latest news via our Blog and Bulletins.

New Blog is up and running, have you subscribed yet?

Click [vamt.net/en/updates/](http://vamt.net/en/updates/) scroll to the bottom of the page, enter your email address and click "subscribe".

If there is anything you would like to share on our Blog or in the Bulletin then please email Fran at [frances.barry@vamt.net](mailto:frances.barry@vamt.net)

**That's all from VAMT for now.** We welcome any comments on this newsletter, they can be submitted to [info@vamt.net](mailto:info@vamt.net)

## YOU CAN BE PART OF THIS MAGAZINE TOO!

To feature in the next edition of Inform please submit your articles to [frances.barry@vamt.net](mailto:frances.barry@vamt.net) by Friday 12th January 2024

### Voluntary Action Centre

89-90 Pontmorlais, High Street,  
Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UH

Tel: 01685 353900

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

[www.vamt.net](http://www.vamt.net)

## VAMT Team

### Sharon Richards

Chief Officer

### Laura Johnson

Business & Finance Manager

### Claire Williams

Health and Wellbeing Manager

### Frances Barry

Lead Officer – Volunteering and Communications

### Karen Vowles

Lead Officer – Community Development

### Susan Jones

Community Zone Development Officer

### Lesley Hodgson

Community Co-ordinator

### Ellie Luke

Business Support Officer

### Sharon Jones

Mental Health Service User Involvement Officer

### Emily Whiteman-Cranston

Resilience Officer

### Ian Howell-Morgan

Local Implementation Lead Officer

## Board Members

### Dr Hefin Jones OBE

### Anne Roberts MBE

### Kayleigh Nor-Val

### Michael Ronan

### Nicola Mahoney

### Tanya Edwards



Cefnogi Trydydd  
Sector Cymru  
Third Sector  
Support Wales

Registered Charity No: 1118403 • Company No: 6058360.

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.