

VOLUNTARY ACTION
GWEITHREDU GWIRFODDOL

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MERTHYR TYDFIL
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MERTHYR TUDFUL

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2023-24



Our Impact across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil

This Annual Impact Report covers the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and demonstrates the difference we have made in communities across Merthyr Tydfil.

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.

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The Year at a Glance

712
instances of advice/
support given to
organisations/
stakeholders



95
volunteers
supported
and placed



502 third sector
organisations received
direct advice and support
from us (269 previous year)



£341,221 secured
by **17** organisations
following our support



£327,240 of funding provided to
third sector organisations through
grants schemes administered by us

523 people
attended our
fora and events



56 people
attended
7 training courses



345
members – increase of
5.2% in the year



Foreword from the Chair and Chief Officer

We are pleased to present the 27th Annual Impact Report of Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil for the period April 2023 to March 2024.

It seems that history is repeating itself when we reflect on the past twelve months - we continue to see the ongoing impact that the pandemic; cost-of-living crisis; global affairs and burgeoning austerity is having across our membership and the communities and individuals we serve. With the reduction of accessible grant funding and continuing pressures on public sector budgets, the third sector remains vulnerable in terms of stability, and we have seen an increase in demand for our support around sustainable funding.

We took opportunity in supporting a number of new local collaborations during the year relating to volunteering and were able to support new innovations such as recruiting, training and onboarding volunteers for the inaugural Merthyr Pride Event. We have strengthened strategic connections of our networks and Forums across the local area, particularly with Primary Care and were pleased to have Welsh Government officials request involvement in our Forums to engage with members directly on issues such as the Funding Code of Practice.

Becoming a member of the Merthyr Tydfil Long Term Plan for Towns Board in the Spring brought opportunity to work with partners on a 10 year plan for the local area, and we look forward to continuing this work in the year ahead.

There have been many highlights this year and this report covers just some of our work and achievements during this period. We want to give credit and thanks to our staff for their ongoing hard work and commitment in supporting our members, partners and wider stakeholders. We would also like to thank our Board of Trustees for their continued support and governance.

Finally we must offer our grateful thanks to our main funders; Welsh Government, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board whose investment enables us to continue the great work that we do.



Dr Hefin Jones OBE
Chair

Sharon Richards
Chief Officer

Volunteering

We have a Volunteer Centre as part of our core business to provide information, advice and one-to-one support for individuals wishing to volunteer their time. We also support organisations with recruiting and onboarding volunteers, as well as advertising volunteer opportunities on their behalf. In addition to promoting opportunities at a local level, we routinely utilise the Volunteering Wales website and support individuals to access opportunities outside of the area, if they so wish.

What we achieved:

- Supported 61 individual volunteers and brokered a further 34 into volunteer placements.
- Continued facilitation of a quarterly Volunteer Managers' Forum.
- 25 member organisations promoted their services and volunteering opportunities at our summer Volunteer Fair.
- Introduced a winter Volunteer Fair where 26 organisations attended and 20 individuals expressed interest in volunteering.

"It had a good variety of volunteering opportunities for the community, there was also good use for different organisation/projects to connect. Good information and freebies."

- Held annual Volunteer Awards Event recognising the contribution of volunteers across five separate categories.

- Supported Merthyr College Global Citizenship event, brokering 10 member organisations.



- Via our Employee Volunteering Policy, VAMT staff provided a total of 42 hours to support organisations locally.

"I was looking for a volunteering job, to help me get out of the house, meet new people and learn new skills. Volunteering has helped me make new friends and has improved my confidence and social abilities. It improves my mental health." KP

Case Study / Highlights

- The Volunteer Centre is now collaborating with The College Merthyr Tydfil on their Supported Internship Programme by providing a pathway of volunteering support towards employment for 16-25 year olds who have additional learning needs.
- Another new collaboration is with Active Merthyr 'Volunteer of the Month' programme. The monthly winners will progress to a new category of award at VAMT's formal Volunteer Recognition Awards process and Ceremony in June 2024.

Merthyr Pride

The inaugural Merthyr Pride event was held in summer 2023 to champion visibility, inclusivity and cohesion in community. VAMT played a crucial role in coordinating volunteers and facilitating pre-event training sessions; providing detailed resource materials to ensure volunteers' needs were met. Regular check-ins prior and during the event meant that volunteers felt supported throughout and were prepared for their individual and collective tasks.

Aaron Evans of Merthyr Pride said "without volunteers the event simply could not go ahead".

"It was good to have a town centre presence, for people to be able to pop in as they went about their daily business."



Good Governance

Our work in supporting members to achieve and exercise good governance accounts for 16.5% of our interactions across the year. Our Development team provide a range of 1:1 support including information, advice and guidance relating to business planning; development of policies and procedures; and support/access to a range of training and development opportunities.

What we achieved:

- Celebrated Trustees' Week with a calendar of support opportunities for our members. Formal training sessions covered "becoming a Trustee"; Safeguarding and Diversity, and an informal 'cuppa and catch up' session provided opportunity for networking and sharing experiences.

"It was a pleasure to meet yesterday. To realise how achievable our dream to build the best squash and rackets club in Wales can be is such a massive motivator."

Merthyr Squash Club

- The "Good Governance" section of our website offers a range of information and tools to support Trustees in their roles, and we routinely signpost to additional resources via the TSSW Knowledge Hub.
- Collaborated on a number of external Partner Grant Panels. This included pre-grant panel support to Merthyr Tydfil Community Trust and agreement for VAMT to become a panel member in 2024/25. Other grant panel support includes Merthyr Valleys Homes' grant and the Shared Prosperity Grant panels for Sport and Social Economy. We continue to have representation on the CTM Carers Steering Group and support any grant panels awarding funding via this workstream.
- In collaboration with Democratic Services MTCBC we reinstated a structured process of engaging and appointing third sector representation and involvement in Scrutiny Committees. We held two information sessions and secured a new representative for the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

- Supported the establishment of a range of new organisations/community groups, which led to another year of growth in our membership.

"I really appreciate your help and advice and the quick turnaround. I know Jonathan and Paul really appreciated the time you have given us and felt reassured by your level of knowledge." Valleys Steps

"... can't thank you enough for all the support you have given me & the charity over the last few months". Willows Centre

Case Study

We were approached for help by Treharris People Together as they wanted to apply for funding to provide activities for group members. However, unable to locate a copy of their Constitution, we were able to provide advice, guidance and support in developing a new governing document, and also a series of policies and procedures. We also offered training to members to ensure their understanding of the policies and their overall responsibilities as a Committee. With a clear governance framework in place we then provided advice on suitable funding routes, and supported them to complete a grant application form. The result of this was an award of £2,300 which will enable them to provide outings and activities for members who are otherwise socially isolated.

Influence and Engagement

VAMT exercises a range of approaches for engaging with member organisations and partners as demonstrated below:

What we achieved:

Newsletters/Bulletins

- **3 editions** of our formal newsletter "Inform"
- **6 Funding bulletins**, with an average of 10 funding opportunities in each
- **24 fortnightly bulletins** which featured in excess of 140 articles.

"I always receive all forms of newsletters from VAMT... I also circulate them to staff and trustees" Cancer Aid Merthyr Tydfil

Social Media

- **4,700 users** to our website and 16,000 page views.
- Our blog was viewed on **2,495** occasions.
- **1500 followers on Facebook**. Our reach increased by 37.8% to 42.4k, and we received 195.4k impressions on our posts.
- We introduced **Linked-In** to our suite of social media platforms.

Events / Networks & Forum Meetings

- **523 participants** attended our events, networks and Forum meetings.

"I really enjoyed my first Forum. The speed round is a great way to share information and for someone new like me to find out what's happening in the locality. It means I know who I need to talk to after the meeting. Very useful". K Hounslow, Marie Curie

Partnership Meetings

- VAMT team routinely engages in around **40 partnerships and planning groups** at a local/ regional level.

Highlights

- Agreement for VAMT Health & Wellbeing Forum to serve as Third Sector Collaborative under the Accelerated Cluster Development Programme.
- Collaboration with Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB on a 'Let's Talk Women's Health' event, exploring what women need to feel 'at their best'. Information gathered will be used by the UHB in future planning. VAMT hosted the event and brought forward innovative speakers from our membership.



- We collaborated with Interlink RCT to introduce, administer and support a third sector grant scheme on behalf of the Carers Trust to provide short breaks for unpaid carers. A total of 11 organisations received funding totalling £80,000, which enabled 622 unpaid carers (including young carers) to access a break.

"Thank you for letting us present and for joining in with our activities. It's a great Forum, we are looking forward to making contacts and doing something in this area. Thank you for putting us in touch with your funding officer". T Davies, Clock Cricket

Sustainable Funding

Our support in relation to sustainable funding accounted for 22% of our interactions across the year (higher than when the pandemic was at its height - 15.8%). This is unsurprising given the ongoing financial crisis and shrinkage of accessible funding sources.

What we achieved:

- **17 organisations** collectively secured **£341,222** of funding following our support
- **75 people** attended our "Meet the Funder" events
- We administered a range of grant schemes across the local and regional area, and allocated a total of **£327,240 to 34 organisations**

"Many thanks for this lovely news! We're looking forward to making a positive difference to people's lives with this grant".
Gellideg Foundation Group

Local Grant Schemes

- **Loneliness & Isolation Grant (11 awards)** supported a range of opportunities from which **1053 people benefitted**. Volunteers gave **6841 hours** of support, adding **£95,774 of social value** to the overall grant.

"We were so lucky to have the support of VAMT to help us secure the grant. This means that we are supporting our members and trying to combat the loneliness they are experiencing."



- **Sustainable Food Grant (7 awards)** supported **3591 beneficiaries**, enabling families to save an average of **£26.10**. Volunteers supporting these schemes gave an average of **50+ hours per week** which equates to over **£703 per week in added social value**.
- **Global Village Legacy Fund (4 awards)** – Projects will run up until August 2024.
- **Youth Led Grants (5 awards)** – supporting small volunteering projects led and carried out by young people. Successful awards included workshops on 'survival skills' such as 'how to look after a house' and 'fixing things safely'.

Regional Grant Schemes (Cwm Taf / Cwm Taf Morgannwg)

- Regional Integration Fund **Befriending Support (5 awards)** Volunteers assisting the 5 projects delivered 5324 hours of support which added £74,536 in social value.
- Regional Integration Fund **Community Capacity Grant Scheme (2 awards for consortia projects)** which support people living with dementia and/or their Carers.

Through our **Business & Finance Team** we provided one-to-one finance support, including accounts checking service for two small community groups, plus an accounts and payroll service for one member organisation.

"OMG I have received a email to say that we have been granted the funding. Thank you so much for all your help. Much appreciated."
😊😊 Greenwood Golden Oldies

Case Study

We worked with Jerusalem Baptist Church Trustees who wished to develop another church (Bethania) in the community of Aberfan to offer a large number of community based services in an area of multiple social and economic deprivation. We met with the Trustees on a number of occasions to provide support in identifying suitable funding opportunities. We were able to provide advice and guidance around funders' expectations regarding outcomes and on the governance needed to accompany grant application. Following our support the Trustees submitted an application to the Community Facilities Grant Programme, and were successful in achieving £200,000 in autumn 2023. Refurbishment of Bethania is underway and completion anticipated in 2024.

Plans for future periods

Our core priorities will include:

Governance:

- Providing information, advice and support to our members and their Trustees on effective governance.
- Continued mapping of the training needs of members, and the ongoing development of our training offer to meet identified needs.
- Progressing our work in relation to diversity, equality and inclusion.

Sustainable Funding:

- Working with funders of our existing project staff to sustain services.
- Increase our Meet the Funder sessions to increase awareness of potential support available to our members and communities.
- Working with new funders to increase our capacity.

Engagement and Influence:

- Continued facilitation of a range of third sector networks to provide engagement opportunities for both our members and our partners.
- Continued development of our Health & Wellbeing Forum as a third sector collaborative supporting the Accelerated Cluster Development agenda.
- Development of a Third Sector Leaders' Forum
- Ongoing collaboration with Interlink RCT and BAVO in relation to regional partnerships.

Volunteering:

- Ongoing provision of 1:1 information, advice and support for individuals wishing to volunteer.
- Supporting organisations who wish to benefit from volunteer involvement and/or undertake corporate volunteering activities.
- Continued facilitation and support in relation to volunteer recruitment, training and onboarding for the annual Merthyr Pride event.

Added value through project-funded work

VAMT currently have staff delivering particular projects which align with our overarching core business. Their work includes:

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

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

- ◆ 355 referrals received - 39% of which are self-referrals
- ◆ 188 referrals made
- ◆ 386 social prescribing /signposts to third sector support - more than double the previous year.

Calon Las Community Hub: via Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

This Officer provides information, advice and support for group development; funding and involvement with local activities, as well as managing the social media accounts for the Hub.

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

Continued support of LBFEW and their People & Communities Project in Merthyr Tydfil, including scoping work to bring relevant partners together as a Steering Group.

Mental Health: via Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Facilitation of local events during Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day. A key development has been working with service users and carers to design a rewards and recognition framework to ensure that individuals taking part in engagement, involvement and co-production activities are suitably rewarded.

Community Resilience Officer: via MTCBC

The remit of this role is to support third sector organisations to respond to the cost-of-living crisis. Work to date includes mapping provision of warm hubs/spaces across the Borough and working with groups to enhance their projects' sustainability.

Case Study

The Community Coordinator identified the need for bereavement support in Merthyr Tydfil. Long waiting lists with mainstream services, up to two years in some cases, meant that people were on waiting lists without any support. The CC contacted Marie Curie who were looking to expand their work in Wales. Marie Curie provided bereavement support training which the CC was able to attend. They met to discuss what type of support was best for Merthyr Tydfil and after consulting with others decided on a bereavement support group. Sharon Jenkins from Marie Curie says:

"We took a partnership approach whereby our training and the VAMT Community Coordinator's local knowledge came together to provide something specific for Merthyr. We now have a pool of volunteers that can run the group."

The group has been running for just over a year and almost 50 people have been referred for support.



Statement of Financial Activities

Including Income and Expenditure Account

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	2024	2024	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
Income from:				
Charitable activities	294,980	719,724	1,014,704	935,972
Other activities	39,212	-	39,212	41,476
Investments	12,207	-	12,207	4,468
Total income	346,399	719,724	1,066,123	981,916
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	371,287	523,523	894,810	1,003,499
Net gains/(losses) on investments	7,718	-	7,718	-3,273
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers	(17,170)	196,201	179,031	(24,856)
Gross transfers between funds	99,528	(99,528)	-	-
Net movement in funds	82,358	96,673	179,031	(24,856)
Fund balances at 1 April 2023	807,851	128,356	936,207	961,063
Fund balances at 31 March 2024	890,209	225,029	1,115,238	936,207

Balance Sheet

AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets				
Tangible assets		77,915		80,148
Investments		91,738		84,020
		<u>169,653</u>		<u>164,168</u>
Current Assets				
Debtors	38,387		38,250	
Cash at bank and in hand	959,897		776,422	
	<u>998,284</u>		<u>814,672</u>	
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year				
		52,699		42,633
Net Current Assets		<u>945,585</u>		<u>772,039</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>1,115,238</u>		<u>936,207</u>
Income funds				
Restricted funds		225,029		128,356
Unrestricted funds		890,209		807,851
		<u>1,115,238</u>		<u>936,207</u>

The VAMT Team

Claire Williams	Health & Wellbeing Manager
Ellie Luke	Business Support Officer
Emily Whiteman-Cranston	Community Resilience Officer
Faye Johnson	Mental Health Development Officer
Frances Barry	Lead Officer – Volunteering & Communications
Ian Howell-Morgan	Local Implementation Lead
Karen Vowles	Lead Officer – Community Development
Laura Johnson	Business & Finance Manager
Lesley Hodgson	Community Coordinator
Sharon Jones	Mental Health Service User & Carer Involvement Officer
Sharon Richards	Chief Officer
Susan Jones	Calon Las Community Development Officer

Trustees and Charity Administration

Charity & Company Name	Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil
Charity Registration Number	1118403
Company Registration Number	6058360
Registered Office	89-90 Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UH
Trustees	Dr Hefin Jones OBE, Chair Michael Ronan, Treasurer Anne Roberts MBE Kayleigh Nor-Val Nicola Mahoney David Hughes from 28.11.23 Tanya Edwards to 30.01.24
Chief Officer / Company Secretary	Sharon Richards
Banker	HSBC, 127-128 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8DN
Auditor	Mitchell Meredith Limited, St David's House, 48 Free Street, Brecon, Powys LD3 7BN in collaboration (from 1 January 2024) with RCH Chartered Accountants, Wellfield House, Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells LD1 5HG

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of our funders, without whom, our work would not be possible:



VAMT is 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/influence.



VAMT has 345 members and is connected with many more through local, regional and national partnerships/networks.

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

You may follow us on the following social media:

